The Nature of Adventure: Outdoor-Sportswriting and the American Northland, 1890-1910

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Abstract

As outdoor-sportswriters looked to the Arctic at the turn of the twentieth century, they shaped new ways of understanding a region that was far away from the everyday experiences of most of their readers. This article is a study of those writings and the complex ideas of the natural world that emerged from stories of northern adventure. In some cases, as writers followed in the footsteps of scientific expeditions and mining prospectors, they produced accounts that gave expression to the cultural impulse of imperialism. They often approached the Arctic environment as a challenge to human mastery—and yet the forbidding landscape often made clear the limits of conquest in the face of nature even as they struggled to impose themselves upon it. Others sought to reimagine the Arctic landscape as a land of romantic mystery and enchantment. Meanwhile, some writers attempted to come to terms with the environment, to seek accommodation with the unforgiving climate, and to come to terms with nature. Few readers would themselves ever set sight on the Arctic, and so these writings present historians with an opportunity to understand how outdoor sport, travel, and adventure shaped a nuanced appreciation of the natural world.

Keywords

Outdoor-sportswriting; Arctic travel and adventure; environmental awareness

Capturing the attention of an American public fascinated by tales of exploration and survival in the North, Dillon Wallace's *Lure of the Labrador Wild* quickly became a bestseller when it appeared in 1905. It was the story of a man who crossed the line separating tourism from adventure, encountering the elemental power of nature in a northern wilderness most of his readers knew only from the printed page. Wallace himself was only a recreational sportsman—a New York lawyer by profession, approaching middle age—but his life had taken an unexpected turn after he agreed to join his friend, outdoor-sportswriter Leonidas Hubbard, on an expedition to Lake Michikamau in 1903. With the dauntless optimism of plucky amateurs, the two had set off together with their Métis guide, George Elson. However, they quickly became lost in uncharted waterways, and Wallace's book is in many ways a catalogue of the misadventures that followed—their struggle through an unyielding landscape, their battle against adverse weather, and their desperate flight homeward with dwindling rations and fading strength. In Wallace's book, Hubbard emerges as the expedition's tragic hero: his childhood dreams of adventure, rekindled while working at *Outing* magazine with acclaimed outdoor-sportswriter Caspar Whitney, end on the Labrador trail when exhaustion and starvation claim him. It is also a tale of quiet courage—of Elson, who braves blizzards to raise a search party in the final days, returning too late for Hubbard, but just in time to save Wallace. And at the centre is Wallace himself—an ordinary man who valiantly endures the wilderness and discovers a truth about the natural world.[1]

[1] Dillon Wallace, *Lure of the Labrador Wild* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), 258-270. 'Fear Explorers Are Lost', *New York Times*, 1 November 1903; 'Labrador Explorers' Fate', New York Times, 14 November 1903; 'Leonidas Hubbard May Be Safe', *New York Times*, 28 November 1903. 'Labrador Explorer Dies of Starvation', *New York Times*, 23 January 1904. All <www.nytimes.com>. For sales of *Labrador Wild,* see N.A., 'Books That Sell Well',

The Lure of the Labrador Wild made Wallace's name with its seemingly authentic descriptions of the North, bringing both the landscape and his tale of outdoor adventure vividly to life. The book immerses the reader in an environment that is irresistible in its overwhelming power and beguiling allure. The men lose their bearings in a vast and unfamiliar landscape. They face long and arduous portages as they make their way upstream. They negotiate boglands and forests. They traverse gullies and ridges. Insects plague them. Winds and snows assail them. As the trail nears its fatal end, the weather closes in on Wallace. He becomes lost in a 'maze of whirling snow'. He staggers 'blindly and desperately, through thick clumps of fir trees'. He is reduced to rags as his trousers are shredded by thorny undergrowth. He crashes through the ice of frozen rivers and plunges into numbing water—leaving what remains of his clothes frozen stiff. Yet, for all that, the wilderness enchanted him and exerted a force of attraction to the end. 'The smoke of the camp-fire is in my blood', Wallace wrote, even after the ordeal. 'The fragrance of the forest is in my nostrils'. And he discovered in that wilderness the meaning of fellowship. 'Only men that have camped together in a lonely, uninhabited country can in any degree comprehend the bond of affection and love that drew Hubbard and me ever closer to each other' he declared, 'as the Labrador Wild lured us on and on into the depths of its desolate waste'.[2] Wallace's ability to conjure the image of the North in the popular imagination in this way was a large part of his appeal: he described a place where the natural world revealed itself in thrilling stories of outdoor adventure.

A sequel soon followed, *The Long Labrador Trail* (1907), describing his return journey to the North. He then went on to publish books about his travels in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains, and meanwhile wrote more than twenty generic boys' adventure books between 1907 and 1932—drawing directly on his own personal experiences of the North and bearing stirring titles like *The Wilderness Castaways* (1913), *Grit A-Plenty* (1918), and *The Testing of Jim MacLean* (1925). That said, his nonfiction stories were no less intended to thrill his readers. Tellingly, *The Long Labrador Trail* carried a frontispiece illustration—'The Perils of the Rapids'—which would not have been out of place in a dime novel, and his descriptions freely shifted between journalistic realism and a style recalling the remarkable escapades of an R. M. Ballantyne adventure story (Figure 1). By the time he rounded out his career with *The Camper's Handbook* in 1936, *The Lure of the Labrador Wild* had gone through over twenty editions, and Wallace had long since acquired a reputation as both a distinguished outdoorsman and gripping adventure storyteller whose words transported readers to the landscape of the North.[3]

New York Times, February 18, 1905. <www.nytimes.com>. Caspar Whitney, *On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-Eight Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Wood-Bison* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1896). Whitney's *Snow-Shoes* was originally published in serial in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine.* For the run of *Harper's,* articles, see Whitney, 'On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-Six Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Wood-Bison', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* 92:547 (December 1895), 92:548 (January 1896), 92: 549 (February 1896), 92:550 (March 1896), 92:501 (April 1896): 10-27, 208-223, 359-377, 493-508, 717-732. For this and all further reference to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* see <babel.hathitrust.org>.

[2] For quotes, see Wallace, *Lure,* 258, 260, 339.

[3] All Dillon Wallace, *The Long Labrador Trail* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1907); *Beyond the Mexican Sierras* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910) <archive.org>; *Saddle and Camp in the Rockies* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1911); *Packaging and Portaging* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1912) <archive.org>; *Wilderness Castaways* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1913) <archive.org>; *Grit A-Plenty: A Tale of the Labrador Wild* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1918) <archive.org>; *The Testing of Jim MacLean: A Tale of the Wilds of Labrador* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924); *The Camper's Handbook* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1936). For Wallace's obituary, see N.A., 'Dillon Wallace, 76, Author, Explorer', *New York Times,* September 29, 1939. <www.nytimes.com>.

[Figure 1. ‘The Perils of the Rapids’. From Dillon Wallace’s *Long Labrador Trail.*]

Wallace’s stories spoke to the historical moment, and he joined a wide range of writers whose words brought the North vividly to life for readers living far away, to the south, in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. This was a time when the North had acquired a particular cultural significance for Americans. Scientific exploration and imperial competition, the race to the North Pole, and the rush for gold in the Klondike all pointed the way northward, and intrepid outdoor-sportswriters headed to the ‘Northland’—as it was often called—of the Subarctic and Arctic regions of Canada and Alaska in search of stories. Leafing the pages of their articles and books, middle-class readers could follow them in journeys of imagination, leaving the comfort of the armchair for remote lands that they would hardly contemplate visiting in reality. Without leaving home, they could follow an expedition to a remote peak, navigate the icy tundra, or hunt the elusive musk ox. Along the way, they might learn about the limits of human endurance and could find encouragement to reflect on the raw power of nature—finding expressions of both triumphalism and humility in the face of the wilderness.

That said, despite its cultural significance, American outdoor-adventure writing—as a genre—has not always been fully appreciated. While Heather Green and Tina Adcock looked at early tourism to the North, for example, the cultural importance of outdoor-adventure writing has remained relatively overlooked. Or, equally, while Jen Hill described the importance of the Arctic in the British imperial imaginary, the contribution of outdoor-adventure writing to shaping American culture has received less consideration.[4] The following discussion is an attempt to remedy that omission by explaining how outdoor-adventure stories like *The Lure of the Labrador Wild,* and other writings in the genre, shaped American ideas of the North. It is about the writing that sustained fantasies of travel—blending tourism and adventure for readers seeking escapism.

Something of the cultural significance of those fantasies is perhaps suggested by John Urry’s work on tourism and ‘the tourist gaze’. He argued that tourists develop ideas about landscapes not only during their actual travels, but ‘through a variety of non-tourist practices’—including the consumption of media, which support ‘daydreaming and fantasy’ and encourage the anticipation of both ‘intense pleasures’ and also the engagement of ‘different senses from those customarily encountered’ in everyday life.[5]

All of which is, indeed, very historically pertinent when it comes to thinking about stories of outdoor adventure. The idea of finding, in the North, a place that overwhelmed the senses and assailed the body could have a distinct attraction for Americans living through the rapid changes of the modern age. As T. J. Jackson Lears observed, the cultural malaise of the moment, at the turn of the twentieth century, was a feeling of ‘weightlessness’, arising from a sense of detachment from

[4] Heather Green, ‘“Game which the pampered pleasure seekers seek”: Hunting Tourism, Conservation, and Colonialism in the Yukon Territory, Canada, 1910-1940’, *Journal of Tourism History,* 13:2 (2021):138-164. For polar exploration, see Michael F. Robinson, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Tina Adcock, ‘The Maximum of Mishap: Adventurous Tourists and the State in the Northwest Territories, 1926-1948’, *Histoire Sociale/Social History,* 49:99 (2016): 431-452; 434, 438. Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

[5] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Tourism in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990), 2-3.

tradition and a yearning for spiritual meaning and—crucially here—authentic physical experience.[6] Stories of northern adventure allowed readers to indulge in fantasies of travel in a land where nature would awake their senses and reconnect them to the world.

As much as historians including Marguerite Shaffer, Lawrence Culver, and Henry Knight Lozano have used promotional materials to understand how tourism has framed the landscape, then, so the outdoor-adventure genre can be understood as a powerful influence on cultural perceptions of place.[7] But, more particularly, it is argued here, this is a genre that fostered an understanding of place and environment together. While William Philpott argued tourism should be considered 'not just social or cultural but deeply *environmental*' in the way it informs the meaning of a landscape, so outdoor-adventure stories encouraged readers to imagine encounters with nature in their vicarious travels to the North.[8] Indeed, it is suggested here, it was by vividly evoking a sense of place in stories of the Northland that writers invited readers to contemplate what William Cronon called 'the human place in nature'.[9]

To be more precise, though, those authors were not engaged in the work of wholly inventing a genre as much as implicitly Americanising travel stories of the North. They followed a broader tradition with European roots—the trace of which is often there to be discerned in their writing. As H. Arnold Barton has shown, for instance, eighteenth-century Scandinavian travel writing often portrayed the North as a land of heroism and disaster—'a Hyperborean wilderness' and a place 'of exotic adventure' in which to explore a strange environment and encounter unfamiliar peoples—and this pattern of representation can also be found in the American stories discussed below.[10] Like their European predecessors, American authors also represented the North as a place of contradictions. It was a site of desolation and death, but also purity and harmony. It was a land of darkness and sunlight. Its perceived ambivalence expressed an essentially Romantic sentiment. As Kathryn Walchester has argued, the Scandinavian North was often conceived as a place to escape from modernity, a simple world of abundant wildlife, untouched by industrialisation. Similarly, Victorian travellers from Britain were drawn to its bleak, moody landscapes as they went in search of untamed nature.[11] Inheriting these traditions, American writers adapted them to their own purposes as they looked northward in anticipation of adventure in the wilderness.

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[6] T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.
[7] Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001). Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Henry Knight Lozano, *California and Hawaii Bound: U.S. Settler Colonialism and the Pacific West,* 1848-1959 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021). Henry Knight Lozano, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2013).
[8] William Philpott, *Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country* (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 2013), 9.
[9] William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', in William Cronon (ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995): 69-90.
[10] H. Arnold Barton, *Northern Arcadia: Foreign Travelers in Scandinavia, 1765-1815* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 1, 81.
[11] Kathryn Walchester, 'The British Traveller and Dark Tourism in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Scandanavia and the Nordic Regions', in Philip R. Stone, Rudi Hartmann, *et al* (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 103-124. Kathryn Walchester, *Gamle Norge and Nineteenth-Century British Women Travellers in Norway* (London: Anthem Press, 2015), esp. 111. Peter Davidson, *The Idea of the North* (London: Reaktion, 2005).

As an outdoor-adventure writer in the US, Wallace stood in good literary company. In the 1900s, he was one of a number of writers known for their real-life outdoor exploits, and for crossing between nonfiction and fiction, often blurring the distinction between the two in tales of travel, sport, and adventure. It was a list that included the likes of Stewart Edward White, Jack London, Emerson Hough, and Zane Grey, for example—and Agnes Laut too, a Canadian woman who notably asserted her presence in an otherwise male-dominated, US cultural space. These were names familiar to readers of US outdoor-sports magazines, in which practical instruction, consumer advice, news and public advocacy mixed with nature writing, travel writing, and adventure stories, nonfiction and fiction alike. *Outing,* where Hubbard had worked, was in the 1900s among the best-selling of such titles, but there were many others, from the venerable *Forest and Stream* to the three magazines that would come to dominate the market, *Sports Afield, Field and Stream,* and *Outdoor Life*.[12]

There was some cross-over here with the writers of the exclusive Boone and Crockett hunting and conservation club (Caspar Whitney of *Outing* and George Bird Grinnell of *Forest and Stream* were both members). But while Christine Bold has shown how that club's luminaries, including Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, and others influenced the development of a peculiar kind of Western formula or genre, outdoor sports magazines opened a more expansive vista, from the hunting grounds of the Adirondacks to salt-water fishing in the Gulf; westward to the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada, and (relevant here) northward to Alaska and Canada.[13] Western tropes abounded in the pages of outdoor magazines, for sure, but they also expressed a larger preoccupation with outdoor life and the natural world.

Tellingly, the writers who appeared in outdoor-sports magazines were, like Wallace, celebrated as much for bringing the wilderness to life as for their storytelling. In recommending White's novel *The Riverman* (1909), for instance, *Outdoor Life* praised the author's 'familiarity with all things out-of-doors' which 'is brilliantly shown' in descriptions, 'full of the smell of the river and the woods'.[14] The magazine expressed a similar view of *The Cabin* (1911)—another of White's books 'through which blows the fresh breeze of the mountain and the forest'.[15] While, for those who yearned for 'the glory of life in God's outdoors', Zane Grey would 'take you there tonight', an advertisement for *The Man of the Forest* (1920) promised.[16] It was their firsthand experience of the wilderness that gave their writing a presumed authenticity. White also published an outdoor handbook, *Camp and Trail,* for the *Outing* imprint, for example, while Grey established himself with a nonfiction account of his time with 'Buffalo' Jones, *The Last of the Plainsmen,* and wrote prolifically about hunting and fishing for outdoor-sports magazines.[17] Similarly, Jack London was

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[12] For a discussion of the history of these magazines, see Malcolm McLaughlin, 'American Recreation: Sportsmanship and the New Nationalism, 1900-1910', *Journal of American Studies*, 54:5 (2020): 839-869.
[13] Bold, *Frontier Club,* 14-54.
[14] 'Books for the Sportsman', *Outdoor Life,* 23:1 (January 1909): 97. For this and all further reference to *Outdoor Life,* see <www.archive.org>.
[15] 'Books for the Sportsman', *Outdoor Life,* 28:2 (August 1911): 202.
[16] Advertisement, *Outing,* 76:2 (May 1920): 116. For this and all further reference to *Outing,* see <www.archive.org>.
[17] Stewart Edward White, *Camp and Trail* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1907). For a representative selection of Grey's hunting and fishing writing, see the collected volume, George Reiger (ed.), *Zane Grey: Outdoorsman* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972). See also Zane Grey, *The Last of the Plainsmen* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1908). For Grey's contribution to fishing stories, see Malcolm McLaughlin, 'Reel Adventures: Fishing, Fantasy, and Sportswriting, 1890–1910', *Journal of Sport History* 51:3 (2024): 1–17.

admired for carrying a pack over the Chilkoot Pass; Agnes Laut for her travels in her native Northwest Canada and elsewhere.[18]

As such, it was writing that appealed to changing tastes at the turn of the century. Conventionally, the sort of sensationalism associated with adventure stories had been considered disreputable, 'low-brow' entertainment. But, as magazines bridged journalistic realism and sensational storytelling, they were able to package socially acceptable thrills for a respectable, middle-class readership. They possessed a quality the English author H. Rider Haggard ascribed to timeless explorers' tales—being 'partly true, and partly the effort of imagination'.[19] Outdoor-sports magazines were not the only publications to be exploiting that market demand, it should be said, and general-interest magazines were adopting a related strategy at this time. As Karen Roggenkamp has shown in her study of *Cosmopolitan's* 'dignified sensationalism', for example, travel writing could likewise provide an opening for adventure and excitement in journalism.[20] Meanwhile, Caspar Whitney's account of his snow-shoe expedition to the Barren Grounds first appeared in *Harper's* magazine. But while those titles incorporated adventure from time to time, outdoor-sports magazines traded more squarely on those grounds. So, for a parent who resisted the guilty pleasure of reading their own child's copy of *Ungava Bob,* possibly, *Outing's* serialisation of *The Long Labrador Trail* might prove similarly stirring. Perhaps it would bring to mind memories of their own childhood, of reading the northern adventure stories that established the genre to which Wallace would later contribute, from Captain Marryat's *Settlers in Canada* (1844) to R. M. Ballantyne's *Young Fur Traders* (1856) or *Ungava* (1857), to which Wallace owed an undoubted debt. Theodore Roosevelt was the most prominent American of his generation to relate his lifelong enthusiasm for the outdoor life to a childhood love of such adventure stories, although he was surely not alone.[21]

What emerges from this body of writing is not quite the conventional picture of the American or southern understanding of the North. These were regions that could at times appear as the playgrounds of wealthy tourists, coming in pursuit of game, playing the role of adventurer, laying claim along the way to an identity fused from the most atavistic ideals of white, masculinity in the age of American imperialism—presenting a picture of US culture that has been reflected in different ways in the work of historians including Richard Slotkin, Gail Bederman, and John Pettegrew, for example.[22] Still, this does not describe the whole picture. Many writers were

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[18] For expressions of admiration, see, for Jack London, N.A. 'Some New Books', *Outdoor Life,* 14:1 (July 1904): 472, and for Laut, N.A., 'Outdoor Men and Women', *Outing,* 47:4 (January 1906): 472-480.
[19] H. Rider Haggard, *She: A History of Adventure* (London: Random House, 2013. Originally 1887), 3.
[20] Karen Roggenkamp, 'Dignified Sensationalism: *Cosmopolitan*, Elizabeth Bisland, and Trips Around the World', *American Periodicals* 17:1 (2007): 26-40.
[21] Dillon Wallace, *Ungava Bob* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1907). Dillon Wallace, 'The Long Labrador Trail: The Compact with Hubbard Fulfilled', *Outing,* 48:6-50:3 (September 1906-June 1907): 641-655, 1-14, 159-167, 315-323, 430-439, 656-664, 725-735, 95-101, 191-203, 333-340; 49:1 (October 1906): 6; 48:1 (September 1906): 649, 651; 49:1 (October 1906): 7, 9, 11; 49:3 (December 1906): 316, 317, 320. Captain Marryat, *The Settlers in Canada* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1886. Originally 1844). <archive.org>. Robert Michael Ballantyne, *The Young Fur Traders,* New Edition (Edinburgh and New York: T. Nelson & Sons, 1894. Originally 1856). R. M. Ballantyne, *Ungava* (London: Blackie & Son, 1902. Originally 1857). Roosevelt's boyhood love of outdoor-adventure stories noted in Thomas Ruys Smith, *Deep Water: The Mississippi River in the Age of Mark Twain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019), 94.
[22] Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), esp. 170-215; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign People At Home and Abroad* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Christine Bold, *The Frontier Club: Popular Westerns and Cultural Power, 1880-1924* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press,

motivated by a curiosity about indigenous peoples and their knowledge or technological adaptations to the harsh environment. Or they might feature indigenous or Métis guides in their stories (even if, as in Wallace's book, they were generally assigned a supporting role in stories about white adventurers). But more significantly, these stories opened up a cultural space to question the limitations of American power. Just as Jen Hill suggested R. M. Ballantyne's adventure story *The Giant of the North* (1882) could be seen as a riposte to imperial ambition, tending to show the British Empire as 'fallible rather than always triumphant', so it can be said American outdoor-sportswriters looked to the North as a landscape where nature challenged dreams of mastery. Although outdoor-adventure writing could express the domineering aspects of US culture, it could also give play to a curiosity about unfamiliar lands, reflect upon the power of nature, and in this way even encourage a questioning attitude.[23] Nor did it describe simply the wholly flattened idealised Arctic landscape Jarkko Saarinen and Alix Varnajot have often observed in travel writing—the mythologised place of 'empty spaces, extreme environments and adventurous expeditions in rough, frozen, untouched and uncivilized landscapes'.[24] There was more nuance than that, as is shown here.

All of which is to say, these stories can be understood as an American contribution to changing ideas about nature in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. As they depicted the northerly regions of North America as an embodiment of the wilderness, outdoor-adventure writers often complicated the traditional divide between civilization and nature. To some extent, they continued the Romantic departure from a traditional (European) concept of the world—which, as Keith Thomas put it, had been 'virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature'. Rather, they expressed the intellectual complexity that emerged from the nineteenth century, as the anthropocentric understanding of the world fell away—a context that scholars including Lawrence Buell and Roderick Nash have extensively described. So, for example, while Henry David Thoreau and Charles Darwin both wrote about the interdependence of all living things, they developed quite differently inflected concepts of the natural world—one describing a place of harmony, the other a place of struggle for survival. Yet, while adventure narratives often presented the wilderness as an arena of struggle with the elements and wildlife, or contrastingly as a place of enchantment, they expressed a third vision of the natural world, different again: of the North as a space for reflecting on adaptation and coexistence with nature. In this way, outdoor-adventure stories could speak powerfully to what William Cronon would later identify as the need for humanity to learn to live 'not just in the garden, not just in the wilderness, but in the home that encompasses them both'.[25]

2013). See also Tina Loo, 'Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939', *Western Historical Quarterly*, 32:3 (2001): 296-319; 299. Additionally, see comments of Mikko Saikku, 'Hunting and Wilderness in the Creation of National Identities,' in Mark D. Hersey and Ted Steinberg (eds), *A Field on Fire: The Future of Environmental History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press): 116-125; 116. John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[23] Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 171-172. See also Tina Loo, 'Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939', Western Historical Quarterly 32:3 (2001): 296-319. Additionally, for Ballantyne and his transatlantic context, see Thomas Ruys Smith, *Deep Water: The Mississippi River in the Age of Mark Twain* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 2019), 86-99.

[24] Jarkko Saarinen and Alix Varnajot, 'The Arctic in Tourism: Complementing and Contesting Perspectives on Tourism in the Arctic', *Polar Geography,* 42:1 (2019): 1-16. See also Emma J. Stewart, Daniela Liggett, and Jackie Dawson, 'The Evolution of Polar Tourism Scholarship: Research Themes, Networks, and Agendas', *Polar Geography,* 40: 1 (2017): 1-26.

[25] Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800 (London: Penguin, 1984), 25, 302. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American*

The idealised Northland in its complexity, as described in outdoor-adventure writing, is the subject of the following discussion.

I. Mastery and its Limits

'It is a far away, inaccessible country indeed,' wrote Caspar Whitney in June 1895, resuming his regular amateur-sports column for *Harper's Weekly* with reflections on his recent expedition to the Canadian Northwest Territories, where he hunted musk oxen and wood bison. Having traversed a region 'marked on the maps for the most part as "unexplored"' and observed its landscape, peoples, and wildlife, Whitney predicted his expedition would be 'a boon to geographical societies'. But his story 'On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds', serialised in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* and subsequently published as a book, offered thrills to please a popular readership too. This was a tale of trial and danger, and he promised readers an account of 'the bitter cold and withering storms, the scarcity of food, and […] the absence of fuel', which 'combined to make the venture a continuous and desperate struggle, even, at time, for life'.[26] It was a story of conquest, symbolised by Whitney's successful hunt for musk oxen. Yet, at the same time, his description pointed to the essentially untamed nature of the landscape. It was representative of a certain kind of outdoor-adventure writing, inviting readers to imagine mastery of the wilderness, but also to reflect on the limits of that mastery.

Whitney stepped into territory already claimed by writers, among them the British and Irish explorers and authors who made a Transatlantic literary tradition. By the nineteenth century, that tradition notably included such authors as R. M. Ballantyne, whose *Hudson's Bay* (1848) recounted his time with the Company, a book as exhilarating as any of his later fictional output, and which introduced many of the scenes and characters that would become familiar in his adventure stories: remote outposts and encounters with fur trappers and traders, indigenous and Métis peoples; hunting excursions into the forest, journeys by canoe, and icy overland dog-sled trails. William Francis Butler's winter travels (1874) can be seen in this same literary lineage, as can the writings of Warburton Pike, who completed his own expedition and book, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (1892), some years before Whitney set off.[27]

Culture (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknapp Press, 1995), 55-60. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* Revised Edition (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 145, 156. (William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', in William Cronon (ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995): 69-90; 90).

[26] Caspar Whitney, 'Amateur Sport', *Harper's Weekly,* 39:2010 (June 29, 1895): 619. For this and all further reference to *Harper's Weekly,* see <archive.org>. For the run of *Harper's,* articles, see Whitney, 'On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-Six Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Wood-Bison', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* 92:547 (December 1895): 10-27; 92:548 (January 1896): 208-223; 92:549 (February 1896): 359-377; 92:550 (March 1896): 493-508; 92:501 (April 1896): 717-732. See also Caspar Whitney, *On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds: Twenty-Eight Hundred Miles after Musk-Oxen and Wood-Bison* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1896). <archive.org>.

[27] R. M. Ballantyne, *Hudson's Bay; Or Every-Day Life in the Wilds of North America, During Six Years' Residence in the Territories of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1848). <archive.org>. William Francis Butler, *The Wild North Land: Being the Story of a Winter Journey, with Dogs, Across Northern North America* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874). Warburton Pike, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (London and New York: MacMillan and Co., 1892). <archive.org>. For a summary of various Barrens adventurers during this era, see Margaret Hobbs, 'Purposeful Wanderers: Late Nineteenth-Century Travellers to the Barrens', in Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs, *Nastawgan: The Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe* (Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1985): 57-81. Again, for the transatlantic context, see Thomas Ruys Smith, *Deep Water: The Mississippi River in the Age of Mark Twain* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 2019), 86-99.

At a time of growing US interest in the North, Whitney's expedition took on a competitive edge, and it set him in proximity to some of the American explorers of the Arctic who rose to popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the race for the North Pole. As Michael F. Robinson has explained, there was a shift in American public attitudes and taste during those decades. Where explorers established their credibility with the academy, wealthy patrons, and politicians by asserting the scientific value of their expeditions, popular audiences increasingly demanded to know about the more sensational details of their adventures in the ice. They wanted theatrics, for explorers to appear on stage in furs, and to recount their experiences of starvation, encounters with indigenous people, and the dangers of the trail. They wanted tales of misadventure, adversity, and the struggle for survival, seeing 'exploration as a test of man against nature', as Robinson put it.[28]

Whitney entered this arena as a journalist at a time when *Harper's* chased readers in an increasingly competitive market, and so it served him well to address both popular sensation and 'high-brow' respectability. He was not quite like Pike, who presented himself plainly as a dauntless adventurer. Pike returned without specimens or photographs and carried no scientific instruments. 'Let no eminent geographer waste his time' with his map, he advised. He offered a tale of adventure, of crossing the ice with indigenous and Métis guides in search of game, and of enduring the gruelling winter, frostbite and near starvation.[29] Whitney, in contrast, could satisfy the same appetite for adventure, but by claiming his expedition could make a contribution to knowledge, he could reassure the tasteful, genteel readers of *Harper's* that his writing was worthy of serious consideration, despite its thrilling content.

Hunting was to become symbolic of that struggle for mastery over the wilderness. Colonisation proceeded with self-confident predictions that the Northland would soon be incorporated into the sportsman's domain as a new paradise for hunters, and Whitney's Barren Grounds expedition of 1895 prefigured a rush of interest in Alaska and Northwest Canada that would follow the rush for gold in 1897-1898. It was in March 1898 that J. B. Burnham began a series of articles for *Forest and Stream*, 'Yukon Notes', describing his journey to the region and documenting its natural history. Soon after, Hamlin Garland, on an assignment for *McLure's*, stopped by the offices of *Forest and Stream* to pay his respects before heading out for the Hudson Bay Company overland trail to Dawson City. Satisfied that its own man was already out there and *McLure's* was playing catch up, *Forest and Stream* declared, Yukon was clearly of 'growing interest'.[30] Meanwhile, Alaska, *Forest and Stream* suggested in November 1898, was 'the coming big game country'.[31]

Perhaps. But, for most readers, this Northland remained of interest as a place for vicarious adventure. Descriptions of outdoor sports in Alaska and Northwest Canada had a similar appeal to accounts of African Safari or Eastern tiger hunts at this time. In the range of typical experience, they were no more relatable than oft-published tales of grizzly hunting.[32] Appearing in *Outdoor*

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[28] Robinson, *Coldest Crucible*, 13.
[29] Pike, *Barren Ground,* vi-ix, 248-266.
[30] Series commences with J. B. Burnham, 'Some Yukon Notes—I', *Forest and Stream,* 50:13 (March 26, 1898): 242. N.A. 'Yukon of Growing Interest', *Forest and Stream,* 50:7 (April 23, 1898): 327. This and all further references to *Forest and Stream,* <www.archive.org>
[31] N.A. 'Snap Shots', *Forest and Stream,* 51:21 (November 19, 1898): 401.
[32] For example, Calvin H. Barkdull, 'An Alaskan Grizzly Hunt', *Sports Afield,* 34:1 (January 1905): 64-66. For this and further references to *Sports Afield,* see <www.archive.org>

Life, for example, Dall DeWeese from Colorado described taking a bull moose with huge 65-inch antlers as a trophy, on one visit to Alaska, and recalled the time his wife shot a bear on another visit. Yet, he was presented as an exceptional figure, heroic, eccentric, and someone with substantial wealth to fund his adventures. When J. A. McGuire went to interview him for his *Outdoor Life* profile, he found him comfortably at home in what he called his 'shack'—an ironic term for what was a modern house built in a fashionably rustic style, sitting in the 160 acres of land he still held after selling his 1,500-acre farm. The home featured a spacious, high-ceilinged 'den', with 'rugs made from almost every imaginable animal' and the head of the enormous moose he had killed in Alaska hanging on the walls. A musk ox and a polar bear were still absences in his collection, McGuire noted, and tellingly, in a time when hunters were pushing the envelope, he would need to head even further north if he were to stand a chance of killing either.[33]

If stories of trophy hunting represent one way of conceiving the faraway wilderness of the north, the kinds of descriptions of arduous weather conditions that appear in Whitney's account, and Pike's before him, point to an implicit appreciation of the limits of human mastery. Giving expression to the same fascination with trophy hunting, the *Harper's* serialisation of 'On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds' ends with the slaying of his first musk ox. It was the culmination of the expedition. 'I had now killed this most inaccessible of all game, and therefore attained the prime object of my trip to the Barren Grounds', Whitney wrote, before rounding off his series.[34] Yet, as much as his trophy could symbolise both his own self-mastery, in successfully traversing the ice, and his mastery of this colonised dominion, the landscape was beyond taming.

The point is, this is not a purely triumphalist narrative. Whitney found himself in a 'timberless waste where ice-laden blasts blow with hurricane and ceaseless fury that bid your blood stand still' and 'where death and starvation or freezing dogs the footsteps of the explorer'.[35] He could see only 'the awful ghastliness of the whiteness that encircled us'.[36] He constantly battled against snow-blindness. His skin froze, leaving him 'as blackened and cut up as an alligator'.[37] At one point, the northeast wind blew so keenly it 'cut our faces as with a knife', he recalled. 'It was deadly travelling; nothing to break the fearful blast that drove into our faces with arctic fury'. He despaired, pressing on, 'doubting if there really were to come an end to it all, and I should see the sun shine and hear the birds sing'.[38] By the time the party reached the first trees on the homeward journey 'after twenty-two days of wandering over a desolate waste and in bitterest cold', he recalled feeling elated. The sight of trees was 'like a view of water to a man perishing of thirst'.[39] In the struggle of man against nature, it was nature that had the upper hand. At the same time as his experience of the Barren Grounds environment established his credentials as a capable sportsman-adventurer, he conceded the limits of his mastery. He could negotiate the weather, the cold, and the

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[33] Dall DeWeese, 'A Moose Hunt in Alaska', *Outdoor Life,* 1:1 (January 1898): N.P. Dall DeWeese, 'Hunting Bull Moose in Alaska', *Outdoor Life,* 3:3 (March 1899): N.P. Dall DeWeese, 'A Sportswoman in Alaska', 4:4 (October 1899): N.P. J. A. McGuire, 'Dall DeWeese at Home', *Outdoor Life,* 7:1 (January 1901): N.P. See also Dall DeWeese, 'A Red Letter Day with Alaska Big Game', *Field and Stream,* 2:9 (February 1898): 253-256. For this and all issue of *Field and Stream,* see <www.archive.org>.
[34] Whitney, 'Snow-Shoes' (April 1896): 732.
[35] Whitney, *Snow-Shoes,* 1.
[36] Whitney, *Snow-Shoes,* 208.
[37] Whitney, *Snow-Shoes,* 213-215.
[38] Whitney, *Snow-Shoes,* 257.
[39] Whitney, *Snow-Shoes,* 276.

scarcity of food. But the Barren Grounds was not a place he wanted to linger. He could defy nature, but never truly conquer the wilderness.

That said, Whitney wrote at a time when, in his native US, modern society was encroaching ever more into the nation's wild lands. The very tourism outdoor-sports magazines encouraged had long since made its mark on the East and was busy transforming the West, much of which had been considered wildly inaccessible to tourists just a generation before. By 1890, even before the US Census Bureau had declared the frontier had vanished, Emerson Hough lamented the loss of a 'grand and once trackless' America. The West 'belongs no longer to nature, but to man', he wrote.[40] Meanwhile, the American Northland appeared as a new wilderness, seemingly beckoning adventurous travellers, and promising mystery and enchantment in unspoilt nature.

II. Nature and Enchantment

When he departed for the Adirondacks to research an article that would appear in the November 1900 issue of *Outing,* Leonidas Hubbard confessed he had not been confident of 'being able to meet Nature in her own haunts'.[41] Here, in upstate New York, was a broad region of forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers, but Hubbard presumed it did not match a sportsman's understanding of wilderness. It had long ago become a popular summer retreat for tourists from Boston and New York, and was dismissed as the 'hackneyed, fashion-plagued Adirondacks' by *Forest and Stream* in 1890.[42] But, there were still wild corners to be found, Hubbard wrote, if visitors broke free of the tourist itinerary and ignored warnings 'of dire happenings sure to befall anyone who ventures' off the beaten path. Heading into the deep forest, it was possible to 'commune undisturbed with Nature', he reported. He found 'a thrill in these long tramps'—in leaving the railroad, the steamer, and social convention behind. And in the lonely woods, he found himself following the trail of a mink, then a deer, then a fox; he saw a snake; he cupped a grasshopper in his hands. 'It is at such times that Nature whispers her most precious secrets', he wrote.[43] Hubbard's Adirondack trip encouraged readers to seek enchantment in the natural world, and it revealed something of his taste for adventure. It also hinted at the ways in which outdoor-sportswriting could begin to blur the distinction between tourism and adventure to produce a sentimental ideal of the Northland.

While Hubbard could kindle a sense of adventure in the Adirondacks, against expectation, it was the American Northland that truly fired his imagination. Visiting lower Canada in 1902 for an article published the following year, he was beguiled by the sight of a wilderness that 'starts where settlements end' and 'runs all the way to the pole'. Standing outside on a winter's night, he felt 'a wind like fine shot […] coming down from Ungava' and sensed 'a wolfish presence [that] hangs over the bush ready to seize anyone who ventures beyond the last house'. It was a landscape that brought to his mind a romantic idea of native life. It was a land of 'white wastes […] peopled by nomad families' who 'tramp over the rocks and snowfields and frozen lakes'. Pursuing this fantasy, he went out with a trapper and his companion on a two-dog sled. 'I wanted to go to the bush like an

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[40] E. Hough, 'Fishing Resources of the West', *Forest and Stream,* 34:21 (June 12, 1890): 409.
[41] Leonidas Hubbard, 'Afoot in Nature's Game Preserves: The Adirondack Park Region', *Outing,* 37:2 (November 1900): 196-200.
[42] When reporting the death of George Washington Sears ('Nessmuk'), who had written many sketches of his travels in the region for the magazine in the 1880s. N.A., 'The Death of "Nessmuk"', *Forest and Stream,* 34:16 (May 8, 1890): 305.
[43] Leonidas Hubbard, 'Afoot in Nature's Game Preserves: The Adirondack Park Region', *Outing,* 37:2 (November 1900): 196-200.

Indian', he wrote—literally 'playing Indian', in Philip J. Deloria's terms.[44] On another of his trips north that year, he was told by Hudson Bay Company traders 'There is no more romance in the fur trade of the North'. But Hubbard set out to persuade his readers otherwise, narrating a tall tale of one trader's hairsbreadth journey through the wilderness: travelling with only one companion and packing just blankets, rifles, two weeks' worth of food, and no tent, they got caught in a blizzard, and after giving their provisions away to a starving family they ran out of food on the return journey. It was the stuff of adventure stories, and Hubbard insisted the initials H.B.C. of the Hudson Bay Company, were still 'magic letters in the north country'.[45]

As outdoor-sports magazines increasingly extended their reach into the American Northland, tourism and adventure easily became entwined in this way. Articles about sporting tourism sat alongside descriptions of travel that gave play to fantasies of adventure. Hubbard was a modern journalist of his day, alive to the expanding horizons of American life at the turn of the century, keying into an interest in indigenous cultures in a world being remade by global empires, and documenting his travels with a portable camera. But while an interest in ethnography signified a broadly scientific scope, and while his camera captured scenes with apparent verisimilitude, his journalism strayed into romantic adventure fantasy (Figure 2). Hubbard was indicative of an overall literary tendency of magazines: the entanglement of sport, tourism, and romantic ideas of adventure.

[Figure 2. The sportsman-adventurer. Hubbard 'On the Edge of the Unknown Silent Wilderness'. From *The Lure of the Labrador Wild*.]

Thus, some magazine articles represented Canada as part of a larger North American recreational landscape designed for romance. In 1898, an article on Manitoba concluded by urging readers to recognise 'no dividing line between States and Dominion', and to see Canada as part of 'the whole Great West'.[46] In summer, one *Sports Afield* contribution insisted, the Prince Albert region of Saskatchewan was 'easily reached' and offered fair sport.[47] And descriptions gave a familiar inflection to Canadian hunting culture, whether chicken hunting in Manitoba or paddling a canoe on the headwaters of the Ottawa for a fishing vacation.[48] Or, by the early 1900s, a Canadian canoe trip might be proposed as a suitable activity for a modern, young woman, as the July 1903 issue of *Field and Stream* seemed to suggest, with its cover illustration showing a Gibson Girl, camera in hand, in a canoe.[49] All of which seemed quite within the ambit of aspirational middle-class leisure culture.

But, at times, writers distanced the landscape from everyday life, to play up a sense of mystery or adventure. Thus, a moose hunt in Nova Scotia was said to have resembled the Acadian landscape of Longfellow, in one article. It was a land of unspoilt 'great forests of hemlock, spruce and juniper', populated by 'chivalrous sons of Scottish Highland origin'.[50] Often, vivid descriptions of scenery in

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[44] Leonidas Hubbard, 'The Children of the Bush', *Outing,* 41:5 (February 1903): 529-540. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
[45] Leonidas Hubbard, 'Where Romance Lingers', *Outing,* 43:6 (March 1904): 649-659.
[46] Norman N. Spear, 'Manitoba Memories', *Sports Afield,* 20:3 (March 1898): 210-212.
[47] Gordon Boles, 'Sport in the Canadian North-West', *Sports Afield,* 20:5 (May 1898): 404-405.
[48] R. S. Mason, 'A Manitoba Chicken Hunt', *Sports Afield,* 16:5 (May 1896): 268-270. J. E. Meiers, 'With Rod and Paddle on the Headwaters of the Ottawa', *Field and Stream,* 6:3 (May 1901): 153-159.
[49] J. A. MacKenzie, 'Canoe Cruising in Canada', *Field and Stream,* 8:3 (July 1903):192-194.
[50] Thomas H. Fraser, 'An Acadian Moose Hunt', *Sports Afield,* 19:5 (November 1897): 343-345

this way served to contrast an enchanting landscape with the dreary urban world readers presumably typically inhabited. Thus, to go caribou hunting in the Laurentides National Park might involve a snow-shoe journey through a 'primeval forest, dense almost as a jungle'.[51] Or there was Newfoundland's 'unique wilderness of pine and spruce and desolate mountains' and 'Green marshes with Arctic moss', reached by a route through a 'jungle, stumbling on roots and over briars and rocks' along the way, or by 'canoe against a brawling, ugly current'.[52] As a poem published in a 1905 issue of *Outdoor Life* lyrically expressed it, Newfoundland was where 'Gloom and mystery combined', appearing 'Ghostlike in the moonlight pale' on a hunt for caribou.[53] Meanwhile, in Manitoba, *Field and Stream* promised moose hunting could take the sportsman into 'places yet unexplored by the white man'. It was a real-life adventure, 'playing Indian' with indigenous guides—who left the author with parting gifts of moose-skin clothes and moccasins, beads and feathered headgear, and the honorific 'title of "Naka-pooka," meaning "White Man Moose Killer."' And it was a place apart from the mundane world, a landscape of black bear and timber wolves, where the silence of the night was broken by distant howls, the snorts of deer, or the hooting of owls.[54]

Blurring the boundaries of sporting tourism, magazines published articles that strayed into *National Geographic* territory, encouraging readers to imagine themselves travelling to lands far from the tourist trail. Articles of this sort typically had a claim to authenticity, documenting folkways and customs and natural history, supplemented with illustrations or photographs. But they were surely more effective at spiriting armchair travellers away on imagined adventures than practically informing their vacation plans. This could be said of Felix J. Koch's 'Off with the Newfoundland Sealers' (1908) or George Fisher Chipman's 'The Arctic Mails' (1909), both for *Sports Afield,* for example.[55] Or earlier, serialised in *Outing* during 1895-1896, Ralph Graham Taber's nonfiction account of his travels 'In Rugged Labrador' was of a similar type. He invited readers to imagine themselves there as sporting tourists while imbuing the landscape with a sense of romance. 'It is surprising how little has been written regarding this great and comparatively unknown peninsula of our eastern coast', he wrote, building a sense of mystery. 'Where the mountains meet the sea there are many deep inlets', known to 'Few but the Indians and Esquimaux [Inuit]'. Snow 'furnishes each ravine and chasm with a crystal brook which tumbles merrily down the steep incline, until, plunging over the ocean wall, it breaks into clouds of silvery spray and mist'. Here was an exotic land to explore, scenery brightened by the curlew-berry's 'velvety carpet of brilliant green', in which views of alder, spruce, and hackmatack trees possess a surprising 'picturesqueness and grandeur', and the flowers and blossoms that 'make the hillsides gay' in a way that seemed to defy Labrador's Subarctic climate. It was a land peopled by exoticised Inuit people in furs and skins, cabin-dwelling settlers, Moravian missionaries, fisherfolk, and seal-hunters—and a place of polar bears and ice floes.[56]

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[51] Crawford Lindsay, 'A Caribou Hunt in the Laurentides National Park', *Western Field and Stream,* 2:1 (May 1897): 8-10.
[52] L. F. Brown, 'Sports in Western Newfoundland', *Sports Afield,* 33:4 (October 1904): 295-299.
[53] L. F. Brown, 'Newfoundland', *Outdoor Life,* 15:2 (February 1905): 102.
[54] Grant Brambel, 'A Moose Hunt in the Manitoba Wilds', *Field and Stream,* 1:11 (March 1897): 259-260.
[55] Felix J. Koch, 'Off with the Newfoundland Sealers', *Sports Afield,* 40:3 (March 1908): 208-215. George Fisher Chipman, 'The Arctic Mails', *Sports Afield,* 42:1 (January 1909): 9-16. See also Felix J. Koch, 'The Eskimo Dog at Home', *Sports Afield,* 42:6 (June 1909): 505-508. Additionally, L. L. Bates, 'Habits and Habitat of Alaskan Big Game: Part II—Musk Ox', *Outdoor Life,* 22:1 (July 1908): 3-9.
[56] R. G. Taber, 'In Rugged Labrador', Parts 1-5, *Outing,* 27:1-5 (October 1895-February 1896): 16-23; 91-97; 213-216; 329-331; 388-391.

From one idealised, romantic landscape to another. For Agnes Laut, seeing the landscape through her burgeoning sense of nationalism, the forest held a mythical significance. *The Story of the Trapper,* serialised in *Outing* between 1902 and 1903, was a history of Canadian colonialism told through the mythologised characters inhabiting an idealised wilderness—the *Pays d'en Haut*—existing somewhere between geographical reality and escapist fantasy.[57] Here was a story of hardy Scots traders—the MacDonalds, MacKenzies, MacGillivrays, Frobishers, and MacTavishes whose names might bring to mind the romantic Highlands of Walter Scott or Robert Louis Stevenson. They were joined by buckskinned backwoodsmen, recognisable Canadian counterparts for American readers of James Fenimore Cooper: the *voyageurs* [licensed traders, travelling by canoe], the *coureurs des bois* ['runners of the woods', i.e independent traders], and the *mangeurs de lard* ['bacon eaters', being a disparaging, colloquial name for fur company rafters]—the character archetypes who together constituted 'the entire retinue of cast-off Frenchmen, woods craftsmen who knew every path and stream from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains'.[58] Laut's writing could at times be an invitation to the reader to join these romanticised denizens of the wilderness on adventures in a semi-mythical Northland.

As stories of tourism opened out into myth and fantasy in this way, outdoor-sportswriters reimagined the Northland as an austere but essentially benign pastoral landscape—an idealised free forest, inhabited by trappers and indigenous hunters. It was, essentially, the North reimagined to suit middle-class, American cultural expectations. Yet, outdoor-adventure stories encompassed an imagined landscape that was not only either a place to struggle with nature or to imagine a beguiling, romanticised world of enchantment. Authors at times expressed a third way of conceiving the wilderness—and it was one that came closer to a reconciliation with nature on its own terms.

III. A Home in Nature

Away from the comforts of home, camping has long been described as 'roughing it.' But, as 'Nessmuk' famously advised his readers, 'We do not go to the green woods and crystal waters to rough it, we go to smooth it'.[59] Or, as Horace Kephart put it, the purpose of good woodcraft was to be able to 'bide comfortably in the wilderness'.[60] In the same spirit, Stewart Edward White urged his readers to eat well, devoting chapters of his *Camp and Trail* to cookery. 'In no department of outdoor life does the mistaken notion of 'roughing it' work more harm' than in rudimentary camp cookery, he wrote.[61] Even 'the hardened woodsman', *Field and Stream* advised, 'needs some

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[57] Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: I. The Tracking of the Beaver', *Outing,* 39:4 (January 1902): 470-476. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: II. The Spinster Moose', *Outing,* 39:5 (February 1902): 599-602. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: III. The Wolf and the Indian', *Outing,* 39:6 (March 1902): 701-708. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: IV. The Path-Finder', *Outing,* 40:1 (April 1902): 177-182. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: V. The Buffalo Runners', *Outing,* 40:4 (July 1902): 427-432. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: VI. The Mountaineers', *Outing,* 41:1 (October 1902): 100-106. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: VII. John Colter, the Free Trapper', *Outing,* 41:3 (December 1902): 358-364. Agnes Laut, 'The Story of the Trapper: VIII. Ba'Tiste the Trapper', *Outing,* 41:5 (February 1903): 628-631. Agnes Laut, 'Koot and the Bob-Cat', *Outing,* 42:1 (April 1903): 33-38. Agnes Laut, *The Story of the Trapper* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902).

[58] Agnes Laut, *The Story of the Trapper* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), 4-5, 167.

[59] 'Nessmuk' (George W. Sears), *Woodcraft* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Co., 1900. Originally 1888), 18.

[60] Horace Kephart, *The Book of Camping and Woodcraft: A Guidebook for Those Who Travel in the Wilderness* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1910. Originally 1906), xii.

[61] White, *Camp and Trail*, 115.

comfort'—and those who look forward to 'frosty nights when the stars sparkle like magnesium wire' and 'icy mornings when you brush away the ice film from the lake margin to get your morning dip' should still take a Primus stove, pack soft, warm woollens, and bring a modern sleeping bag.[62] There was practical value to such advice, but especially where articles and stories strayed into the far North, descriptions of camp life served a different purpose, inviting readers to consider the meaning of home in the natural world. Without the physical comforts of the modern American home, outdoor-adventure writers sometimes found solace in familiar domestic routines on the trail, or in the fellowship of camp life. Along the way, they found ways of adapting to the environment and finding an accommodation with the wilderness.

Viewed through the lens of much historical writing, it could appear that the desire to reproduce the familiar comforts of hearth and home while in the woods was at odds with the attitudes often associated with the rugged masculine ideals of the time. After all, historians have often argued that hunting played into the construction of a peculiarly atavistic form of masculinity that celebrated aggression and violence, and which was conceived as a rejection of the supposedly feminine domestic domain and its presumed softening influence.[63] Certainly at times, outdoor-adventure writing conformed to that more domineering mode of male behaviour, but equally (and perhaps more typically in fact) men sought ways of living in nature rather than mastering their environment, and sought to connect life in the wilderness with the routines of the domestic home.

In that spirit, men might express delight in simple domestic work and the chores of camp life, indicating the importance attached to the tasks that made a home in the wilderness. When Leonidas Hubbard documented various scenes with his camera during his fatal Labrador trail, he took interest not just in the arduous business of carrying a heavy pack or portaging a canoe, but also in the drying of clothes, the repairing of moccasins, the preparation of dried fish and the making of bread—or in the quiet moments when the party lounged under mosquito nets. His diary often noted the work of maintaining his kit (particularly his troublesome, often-ripped trousers, which he patched at one point with white duffel: 'looks *distingué*', he wrote). There could be a comforting nostalgia for home in this. For Leonidas Hubbard, the wild goose cooking over the fire 'smells like Christmas'.[64] Similarly, on his second journey, Wallace captured the domestic life of the camp—moments when food was prepared, clothes were mended, hair was cut, and pipes were smoked (Figure 3).[65]

In other moments, camping involved substituting the comforts of nature for those of home, and this became integrated into an understanding of outdoor life in the North too. 'Nessmuk' did much to popularise the idea of building an improvised 'Indian camp' (as he called it) out of hemlock pine boughs, a shelter ('a sort of bear den'), a bed, and a pillow of browse and soft moss. 'You are warm, dry and well-fed', as you sit in camp, he wrote. 'Your old friends, the owls, come near the firelight and salute you with their strange wild notes; a distant fox sets up for himself with his odd, barking cry'. You drop off to sleep, awaking briefly later to revive the fire, and find 'snow is falling' and 'a

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[62] N.A., 'In the Council Lodge: The Sportsman's Camp', *Field and Stream,* 7:6 (September 1902): 365-366.
[63] Slotkin, *Gunfighter.* Bederman, *Manliness.* Pettegrew, *Brutes.*
[64] Caspar Whitney, 'The Leonidas Hubbard, Ju., Expedition into Labrador', *Outing,* 45:6 (March 1905): 643-689; 650, 651, 652, 656, 662, 667.
[65] Dillon Wallace, 'The Long Labrador Trail: The Compact with Hubbard Fulfilled', *Outing,* 48:6-50:3 (September 1906-June 1907): 641-655, 1-14, 159-167, 315-323, 430-439, 656-664, 725-735, 95-101, 191-203, 333-340; 49:1 (October 1906): 6; 48:1 (September 1906): 649, 651; 49:1 (October 1906): 7, 9, 11; 49:3 (December 1906): 316, 317, 320.

deep silence broods over the cold, still forest'. You drop off again, awaking in the morning to appreciate 'You have slept better than you would in your own room at home'.[66] The idealised camp of this sort was a place to imagine living in harmony with nature in a flight from reality into an idyllic fantasy.

[Figure 3. Camp, a home from home. From *The Long Labrador Trail.*]

The forest camp became a recurring motif in outdoor-sports and adventure writing where authors attempted to represent the wilderness as a place to find domestic contentment in nature—to discover shelter, simple camp cookery, the cheer of fellowship. The rustic camp retreat is where readers first encounter Hubbard and Wallace at the beginning of *Lure of the Labrador Wild:* 'a lean-to of boughs' provides shelter as they finish a simple supper of bread, bacon, and tea after a day's walking in the snowy Shawangunk Mountains in New York, and Hubbard first proposes the Labrador expedition.[67] Again, later in Labrador trail, during the happier times on the trail, Wallace wrote, he and his companions found 'our evening fire invariably brought us a feeling of indescribable happiness', as they lay, 'luxuriantly reclining before it on a couch of boughs'. There were the quiet, contemplative hours, smoking, with a pot of tea to hand; Hubbard read Kipling out loud—'And the Red Gods call for you!'—with the northern lights flashing in the sky. 'Thus we sat supremely happy and content until long past midnight, when we went to our tent and our bed of fragrant spruce boughs, to be lulled asleep by the murmuring waters of the creek below'.[68] There is almost an idyllic romance to the idea of being sent to sleep by the sound of a stream, and here Wallace bridged the Adirondacks of 'Nessmuk' and the Labrador of the Hubbard expedition.

Instead of seeing the land as a place to be conquered, or reimagining it as a paradise, writers attempted to accept the rigors of the environment and to see camp as a home within the wilderness, even in adverse weather conditions. Describing her mythologised *Pays d'en Haut,* for example, Agnes Laut presented camp life in the forest as a home nestled within the snowbound landscape. Her trappers spend 'nights in camp on a couch of pines or rolled in robes with a fire to keep the wolves off' in a land of 'endless reaches, white, snow-padded, silent' and 'forests wreathed and bossed with snow'.[69] And for writers who put their minds to it, there was comfort to be found in even the most arduous conditions.

Describing his experience in the far north of Ellesmere Island in 1908, for example—as extreme as it comes—Harry Whitney (unrelated to Caspar) described no idyll. On a hunting trail with Inuit companions, he had to endure long marches through 'piercing wind and driving snow'. Still, there was 'cheer and content[ment]' to be found in 'a comfortable camp' and a meal of bacon, washed down with tea. Although it is hard to imagine, 'our sleeping bags were warm and cozy' that Arctic night, and in the morning they were fully refreshed after their sleep and a hearty 'breakfast of seal liver and seal flippers'. Or, later, when the snow became too deep even for snow-shoes, 'my face and feet benumbed with cold', and all men and dogs together exhausted, they stopped to build an igloo. The snow being too loose, they had to content themselves with a bivouac 'in the lee of an iceberg', which at least 'broke the force of the bitter wind'. There was joy to be found, even at this

[66] 'Nessmuk,' *Woodcraft,* 26-30.
[67] Wallace, *Labrador Wild,* 13.
[68] Wallace, *Labrador Wild,* 73, 85-87. Compare with Whitney, 'Leonidas Hubbard', 661, 669, 671, 677.
[69] Laut, 'Trapper: IV', 177, 179.

extremity. Another stop, after shooting some hares, and it was time for camp cookery. 'I shall never forget the feast', Whitney wrote, as the men tucked into 'seven hares, one seal, about a bucketful of dried walrus meat […], and two large cups of tea'.[70] Companionship and a hearty supper offered cheer in the coldest of climates.

The same sentiment can be found throughout Wallace's account of his second Labrador trail too. Rain could not spoil the mood when he and his companions enjoyed wild-blueberry roly-poly, coffee, and boiled partridge and owl (beware, 'old friends, the owls') by 'a big, blazing fire'. There were 'laughs, and songs and jokes', and as they topped it all off with smoking in the tent at the end of the evening, 'every one pronounced it the best night in weeks'.[71] Or, later on the same long trail, around Ungava Bay, an experience closer to Harry Whitney's Arctic sojourn: when 'the real winter came', Wallace wrote, he was glad of the ice shelter their three Inuit companions rapidly built. It was open at the roof, but Wallace knew to take comfort as he found it when in the wilderness, and at peace in a harsh environment, he lay with his companions. The mark of a true outdoorsman, by this measure, was to accept the wilderness snarling at your door, and to find joy and comfort and contentment all the same; it was, by that standard, truly to know the natural world. 'We huddled close and slept pretty well that night on the snow', Wallace wrote, 'with nothing but flying frost between us and the stars in heaven'.[72]

Conclusion

In the years that followed his traumatic experience on the Hubbard expedition, Dillon Wallace continued to draw on his Labrador exploits in his series of adventure stories, directly, and in startling ways. Often, partway through his stories, the young adventurer must struggle alone through a snowstorm, often closely repeating the same personal experience Wallace himself endured.[73] In *Ungava Bob* (1907), for example, there are passages that unnervingly resemble those final, desolate days of the Hubbard expedition. In 'the blinding, smothering snow storm', Wallace wrote, Bob 'could not see two yards ahead', and although 'the cold was eating to his bones', he 'knew he must keep moving or freeze to death'. But, as 'blindly he plodded along', he grew increasingly weary, and 'it seemed to him he had been walking for ages'. Weakening, 'He stumbled and fell now and again and each time it was more difficult to rise'.[74] Or, in *The Testing of Jim MacLean,* there is disorientation as snow obliterates landmarks. Jim falls through ice into numbing water, his clothes freezing stiff to him. As time goes by he feels 'like one doomed to wander for ever and ever through limitless wastes of snow' (Figure 4). He has hallucinations of his mother, just as Wallace heard his wife's voice and saw her in a vision as his strength faded.[75]

[Figure 4. 'Travelling Through the Snow was Harder than he Expected'. From Dillon Wallace's *Testing of Jim MacLean.*]

[70] Harry Whitney, 'Hunting in the Arctic', Part 1, *Outing,* 55:3 (December, 1909): 259-280.
[71] Wallace, 'Labrador Trail', 49:3 (December 1906): 319.
[72] Wallace, 'Labrador Trail', 49:6 (March 1907): 728.
[73] See, for example, most notably, in *Ungava Bob*, 96-107; *Wilderness Castaways*, 111-123 iThe *Gaunt Gray Wolf* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914)*,* 73, 239-240; *Grit A-Plenty,* 117-123; *Troop One,* 220-231; *Testing of Jim MacLean,* 127-150; *With Dog and Canoe* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1930. Originally 1928), 139-141.
[74] Wallace, *Ungava Bob*, 105.
[75] Wallace, *Testing of Jim MacLean,* 136, 143, 144, 150; *Labrador Wild,* 259-269.

But, as though Wallace was unpacking his experience and the lessons he learned for his young readers, he wrote of moments when his characters discover comfort in ways that recall his happier experiences on the Labrador trail. Simple camp cookery provides cheer. Knowledgeable application of the axe creates a simple shelter. Inuit people offer hospitality, food, warmth and friendly cheer. At a last resort, it is possible to hide under blankets and tarpaulin for warmth against arctic winds. The secret to happiness, for Wallace, was in finding an accommodation with the natural world. It was perhaps a fitting way for him to reconcile himself with the wilderness. His friend had been once beguiled by the mystery of an idealised Labrador, had set out to master an unmapped land, but it was through that experience that Wallace had learned an enduring lesson. Turning away from a cultural impulse toward conquest, he had instead learned to seek a home in nature.[76]

In outdoor-sportswriting, tales of adventure combined with travel writing to feed the imaginative appetite of middle-class readers at the turn of the twentieth century. Along the way, readers could find in descriptions of journeys in the North encouragement to reflect on the meaning of nature. In this respect, it can be said that outdoor-sportswriting shaped an understanding of the North for readers who might rarely leave the bounds of the city, and likely never set eyes on those northerly latitudes. As a focus for both fantasies of travel and adventure and for meditation on the meaning of nature, this Northland was no less important for existing largely in the imagination of readers.

The ideas about nature outdoor-sportswriters described in their tales of the North were at times quite contradictory. It was possible to follow Caspar Whitney on an epic journey that pitched man against nature, a struggle for mastery that ended with trophy hunting, but ultimately expressed the unconquerable power of the wilderness. Or readers might find a fantasy Northland that reimagined the landscape as a place of mystery or a mythical free forest, a benign paradise. There again, it could be a place to become reconciled with inevitability, with the natural environment in all its raw power, and to understand the need to find an accommodation with it on its own terms. These three cultural responses to nature represent resistance to its power, negotiation through the process of reimagining, and finally acceptance.

In each case, outdoor adventure implied an engagement with the natural world, an escape from mundane modernity. Down through generations, those different attitudes to the wilderness would increasingly diverge, and even at the turn of the twentieth century it is possible to discern where they would tend to grow apart. Still, the impulse of outdoor-adventure writing, as an exhortation to get out and ‘meet Nature in her own haunts’, as Leonidas Hubbard put it, or at least to imagine as much, could be the beginning of a journey toward an understanding of the world. Writers frequently misrepresented the land and its people, and readers might obtain quite a misguided view of the world if they consumed only these stories. Yet, there was value in stories that invited readers to question the presumption of human dominion over nature. As they imagined themselves into the landscape and contemplated their place in the world that lay beyond the bounds of the city, readers could discover nature in tales of outdoor adventure.

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[76] Wallace, *Wilderness Castaways,* 174, 235; *Arctic Stowaways,* 192; *Grit A-Plenty,* 125-127.