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Fiction and the nation: the construction of Canadian identity in *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Home Journal* during the 1930s and 1940s

This article presents original research on the mainstream Anglophone Canadian magazines *Chatelaine* and the *Canadian Home Journal* and the way in which they constructed a particular Canadian identity as a result of their own need to market themselves as distinct from American magazines. This identity was necessarily inflected by the expectation that the magazines' audience consisted of the white, middle-class consumers to whom the magazines' advertisers sought to appeal. Fiction played an important part in this process, as magazines were key purveyors of fiction in Canada. Intriguingly, citizenship was at the forefront of how fiction was discussed, as authors' own Canadian identities were highlighted as a common bond between author and reader. The fiction itself was defined by two key traits – its ability to provide an accurate portrayal of a particular region and the way of life of Canadians who inhabited it, and its treatment of an issue or event presumed to be of relevance to readers. This article explores the short stories 'The Black Siberians' by Beryl Gray and 'Spring Always Comes' by F. Marjorie Jordan, which are representative of these central themes. Examined together, these two works trace out the way in which mainstream periodical literature urged Canadians to think of their nation, and of themselves, with the desire to attain a better life through hard work, an attention to community-building and a willingness to surrender one's personal history and/or heritage in exchange for a desirable future, all coming to the fore as quintessential Canadian qualities.

Keywords: periodical culture, English-Canadian literature, women and reading, national identity formation, ideologies of nation and modernity, citizenship

The fiction of the mainstream Anglophone women's magazines *Chatelaine* and the *Canadian Home Journal* throughout the Great Depression and the Second World War was positioned by the editors of both magazines as quintessentially Canadian and therefore of importance to readers.[1] While these magazines were separate entities, published by different publishing

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houses that were in competition with one another, and run by their own unique editorial staffs, the *Journal* and *Chatelaine* were remarkably similar periodicals. They printed advertisements for the same businesses, they were structured in essentially the same manner and they addressed their intended readers with the same ingratiating tone. Most important of all, they both marketed themselves to Canadian readers on the strength of their Canadian contents. When it came to fiction, they published many of the same authors and chose to highlight the nationality of these authors in editorials and profiles of writers. Roughly one-third of the contents of each issue consisted of short stories and serialised novels, and editors were at pains to promote this fiction as literature that was of national significance. In considering this process, the importance of magazines as purveyors of fiction in these decades should not be underestimated. The cheap paperback novel had yet to rise to prominence, and magazines filled a demand for inexpensive fiction by delivering it each month to households across Canada. Intriguingly, the attention paid by the magazines to marketing themselves as Canadian fed into the nature of this fiction, with three factors underpinning its definition as Canadian literature: the citizenship of the author, the author's accurate use of regional setting and the story's engagement with an issue or event thought to be relevant to the lives of most readers.

This way of situating the fiction dovetailed with the magazines' broader capitalisation on their Canadian identity as a means of separating themselves out from stiff competition from similar American periodicals.[2] Articles abounded on Canada's different regions and ways of life, and ongoing portrayals of different Women's Institutes and clubs across Canada were presented as a part of a large, inter-connected community. Advertisers, in turn, put a Canadian spin on the way in which they marketed their products, noting that goods were manufactured in Canada, using Canadian materials.[3] During the War in particular, readers were encouraged to support the war effort by investing in everything from Victory Bonds and tinned lobster from the Maritimes,[4] resulting in a consumer-based nationalism in which women – presumed to be the nation's consumers – were the key participants.[5] In effect, the magazines so thoroughly invested themselves in the question of nationhood that they participated in the construction of a mainstream Canadian identity. Fiction was central to this construction, for it had the power to present an endless array of imagined characters and settings that repeatedly set out a normative identity that was white, middle class (or aspiring to become middle class), English-speaking and happy to embrace modernity.

Positioning authors as citizens

Chatelaine and the *Journal* were filled with works written by individuals who had either been born in Canada or who had emigrated from Europe and gained Canadian citizenship. Notably, writers of non-European origins are not represented, thus eliding the diversity of the Canadian population in favour of generating an identity that was inherently white. The writers chosen for publication ranged from celebrity authors who have since become canonised authors, such as Martha Ostenso, Mazo de la Roche and L.M. Montgomery, to now-obscure authors such as Beryl Gray, Louis Arthur Cunningham and F. Marjorie Jordan. All were introduced in either an editorial column or a blurb that appeared next to the story, and these introductions highlighted the author's nationality as Canadian and went on to identify the region of Canada in which they lived and worked.

The *Journal*'s publication of a new story, 'The Use of Her Legs', by the celebrated author L.M. Montgomery, was, for instance, prefaced by a photograph of Montgomery with an editorial caption beneath it that described Montgomery as the 'beloved Canadian author of *Anne of Green Gables* amid the wild flowers she loves' (Tait 2 1936). The photograph was positioned directly to the right of the page's header, which read 'Canadian Home Journal: Canada's National Woman's Magazine'. In the same issue, the editors placed a photograph of the artist C.R. Wilcox, who painted many of the illustrations that accompanied the fiction, to the left of the header. Wilcox, the *Journal*'s editor C. Wilma Tait noted, was 'a native son of Nova Scotia, now resident in Toronto, who is busy these days painting the illustrations for Louis Arthur Cunningham's serial novel, *Fog Over Fundy*' (p. 2). Cunningham, for his part, was a hugely popular writer for the *Journal*. He published, on average, one serialised novel, several short stories and one or two articles each year in the magazine. The juxtaposition of the photographs, captions and magazine header created a series of visual and textual links between authors and artists (Montgomery, Wilcox and Cunningham), the Canadian context in which they worked (the Prince Edward Island setting of *Anne of Green Gables*, the Toronto workplace of Wilcox and the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick featured in Cunningham's latest serialised novel) and the means through which their work circulated (a magazine produced by Canadian editors and distributed to Canadian readers). By introducing the different contributors to readers in this way, the editors generated a lens through which the fiction could be interpreted. The focus was on a sense of national community and,

importantly, this community was grounded in the engagement of readers with art and literature that was made by Canadians, for Canadians.

In keeping with this, the editorials introduced authors in a way that instilled both national pride and a feeling of personal connection between the author and the reader. As Byrne Hope Sanders, *Chatelaine*'s editor from 1929–51, put it in the March 1939 editorial of *Chatelaine*,

> A famous Canadian name appears in this issue. Dorothy Roberts Leisner, whose story, 'The Dress with the Blue Flowers', is her first published fiction, is a daughter of Theodore Goodrich Roberts, and a niece of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, accepted as the ideal of Canadian literature. I think you'll find a quality in this young Canadian writer's work which will give you pleasure. If you do, take the trouble to drop her a note to say so. Canadian magazines are doing steady work in presenting the work of our young writers, as well as the stories of those who are far-famed. It's an enriching experience to have a story published in a national magazine – but an infinitely greater one to have letters of appreciation and interest from men and women throughout the Dominion. Impresses the editors, too! (p. 2)

Beyond connecting writers to readers, Sanders's editorial also set out an ideal standard for Canadian literature in the fiction of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, who had been the first recipient of the Royal Society of Canada's Lorne Pierce Medal for achievement in literature in 1925. Moreover, she stressed the importance of magazines like *Chatelaine* in making newly written fiction from both emerging and established writers available to readers. The relevance of a Canadian readership to these authors was also emphasised in Sanders's suggestion that readers take up the pen and express their 'appreciation and interest'.

This interchange between author and reader, mediated by the editor, was given the feel of a friendly, ongoing conversation. In the editorials, *Chatelaine* and the *Journal* presented themselves as instrumental to the careers of new writers, not only by printing their stories, but by graciously soliciting responses from readers that could tell these new writers both who their audience was and what that audience thought of their efforts. Viewed from a rather cynical vantage, this kind of feedback could help authors fine-tune their 'product' in a way that made it more marketable. It also assisted editors in determining which fiction would appeal to the widest range of readers, thus boosting sales of the magazines and giving them a sense of which writers to publish regularly. From a more generous vantage, the bond shared by the magazine, its creative artists and its readers fostered a body of literature

that was both popular and of a 'high standard'.[6] Moreover, readers were encouraged to consider their opinions valuable and welcome, with the result that readers from across Canada were included in a national discussion. Their participation in the creation of Canada's literature also granted them a dignity normally reserved for literary critics. Indeed, the act of writing a letter offered the potential for a reader to become a published amateur critic in the letters-to-the-editor pages. In this way, the literary choices made by magazine staff became part of an ongoing, dynamic process of developing this particular branch of Canadian literature. This development was fostered by discussion among author, publisher and audience. While these three groups were never on the same footing – the editor, after all, had the power to determine which stories to publish and which readers' opinions to value most – the way in which editors discussed authors and addressed readers made everyone a part of a community working towards the same goal: a national literature everyone could take pride in and enjoy.

Through this process, the nation was configured as an imagined community – that is, a far-flung population of individuals who believe themselves to be engaged in what Benedict Anderson describes as the 'steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity' of modern life that assured readers that their experiences and anxieties were not only represented in print, but also read about by the other citizens who made up their nation (1991: 25–6). Sanders, who was particularly keen to solicit letters from *Chatelaine*'s readership, placed herself at the centre of this imagining. While she never excluded non-Canadian readers, the implication was that *Chatelaine* readers, like *Chatelaine* authors, were Canadian. Her request for letters drew a boundary around the Canadian readership that, indirectly, made Canada a topic for discussion because the literature being discussed was so intimately linked to the nation.

Authenticity

The authentic representation of location – those places that lay within the boundary drawn around Canadian readers – was equally important to the generation of an imagined community. Indeed, as Janet B. Friskney and Carole Gerson observe,

> In 1938 the literary editor of the *Canadian Home Journal*, Margaret Lawrence, [wrote] that 'Canadian editors are always specially interested in the work of their own writers', but 'they find a dearth of really acceptable material that

> will stand up against the pressure of competition from across the line, and … they like a Canadian locale if it is authentic and not just "dragged in".' (2007: 131)

The reference to 'competition from across the line' raises the question of just how much fiction by Canadian writers, as opposed to American ones, the magazines chose to publish. While Lawrence's quotation implies that the *Journal* was likely to publish an American story over a Canadian one, stories by Canadian authors typically made up at least four out of the five works of fiction (if not all of them) featured in each issue. The competition among authors to get something into print seemed to revolve rather more significantly around establishing a rapport with the editors, as the wealth of stories published by certain authors (Louis Arthur Cunningham, Leslie Gordon Barnard, Madge Macbeth and Beryl Gray, to name a few) indicates that the editors singled out certain writers upon whom they relied for both quantity and quality of material. To return to the question of authenticity and locale highlighted by Lawrence, the home of the author was very often the location represented in her or his story. In this sense, the accurate representation of place was presumed to be based on lived experience. In forging these connections between author, authenticity and place, the magazines were careful to represent regions from all across Canada. Such regional representation served the educative function of teaching readers about Canadian geography and culture, on the one hand, whilst drawing all of these regions together and representing them as a unified whole, on the other.[7]

The efforts made to achieve regional representation could become conflicted terrain, as the discussion surrounding Beryl Gray's story 'The Black Siberians' makes evident. Based in Vancouver, Gray was one of *Chatelaine*'s most frequently published writers. Her story 'The Black Siberians' appeared in the August 1934 issue of *Chatelaine*. It was set on some islands off the coast of British Columbia and it focused on the marriage of a young woman, Canadian by birth, into a family of Russian immigrants. The story begins in Vancouver, relating how Elinor, an office worker, becomes infatuated with Berkh, an accountant who works for the same firm that she does. They marry and she follows him to his family farm, where she fails to find the pastoral idyll she had imagined. Rather, Elinor's description of life there is grim:

> She had [en]visioned something in the nature of a rich, handsome country estate – something vaguely sunny perhaps, like she had seen in glamorous

> films of Southern ranchlands – and shared Berkh's keen desire to leave the city and return to the life he knew so well. While this – snow, ice, and cold; sheep with their grimed, matted coats huddling together under their crude sheltering for warmth; and a farm in many ways as primitive as forty years ago – was the reality she must inure herself to face as Berkh's chosen wife. (1934a: 10)

The cultural and social background of Berkh's family is also alien to Elinor, and she soon feels lonely and miserable. Berkh, unable to cope with her unhappiness, grows to care for her less and less, and she begins to spend more and more time with Berkh's cousin, Ivan. After several months on the island, Elinor learns that Berkh has been seeing another woman. Deceived as much by her own romantic imagining of coastal farmland that encouraged her to marry Berkh in the first place, as she is betrayed by romantic love itself, Elinor decides to leave the island. In a stroke of poetic justice, the unfaithful Berkh drowns soon after Elinor discovers his affair. She returns to Vancouver a free woman, in this sense, but a year after her departure, Ivan turns up at the business offices to which she has returned to work, vowing his love to her. The story ends with Elinor's decision to marry Ivan and return with him to the island, this time with a more realistic vision of the life to which she is going.

In the October 1934 rendition of 'The Last Word: Our Readers Have It' (*Chatelaine*'s letters-to-the-editor page), a reader identified as only 'Disappointed Reader, Victoria', sent a sharp criticism of this vision. In her words,

> Why do you publish such stupidly un-Canadian stories as 'The Black Siberians' by Beryl Gray? I live on the B.C. coast and was very disappointed with this story. What are the 'Black Siberians' anyway? The lady who wrote this cannot possibly know much of her country, for there is absolutely no trace of farming of any kind on the islands of the north B.C. coast. On the southern islands only – those between Vancouver and the mainland – there is farming, but these are settled by English families, and the climate is as mild as the south of France. The northern islands are uninhabited except for periodic logging camps and fisherman. They are nothing but rock and timber with no cleared land or grazing on them, and to keep sheep would be an impossibility. This writer's 'local color' is so irritatingly vague besides being quite wrong in essential facts that I cannot understand why you boost her every story as Canadian. (1934: 74)

Despite Sanders's emphasis on readers' opinions, and despite the accuracy of the readers' description of the islands west of British Columbia, *Chatelaine*

chose to give the last word to Gray. Prefaced with Sanders's statement that Gray was one of *Chatelaine*'s most popular writers, Gray began her response by defending her writing as fiction, not fact, arguing that 'fiction is hardly in the same class as geography or natural history' (p. 74), and that she was therefore free from the demands of stringent accuracy. While this statement runs counter to the expectation that fiction be authentic in its use of setting, Gray in fact goes on to assert governmental authority over the geography and culture that she has portrayed:

> Through the courtesy of a friend of mine in the Parliament Buildings at Victoria, I have checked the points [the reader] mentioned and really cannot feel that I have been as desperately inaccurate as she imagines. As you will see from the replies of the various Departments interested, that in addition to English families farming on the Gulf islands are Swedes, Germans, Norwegians, and Roumanians [and that] sheep farming is carried [out] on Hardwicke Island and on the islands adjacent by people of varied nationalities. … And as for my title 'The Black Siberians', has the good lady never heard of the 'black earth lands across Russia and Siberia?' (1934b: 74)

While Gray's apparent ignorance of the difference between Parliament and Legislature may well have caused further irritation to the reader, the debate over geography and the nationality of the characters in 'The Black Siberians' was effectively ended by Gray's rebuttal.

The response to 'Disappointed Reader' illustrates two important things about the use of setting. First, fiction was granted the dubious luxury of being an untrustworthy genre. While the editors laid claim to their selections of fiction as authentic portrayals of Canadian life, they inevitably had recourse to reminding readers that stories were imaginative rather than scholarly works, and could therefore misrepresent regions and cultures in ways that might easily escape the notice of less critical or less knowledgeable readers. If the writer was popular, as Gray was, possible inaccuracies were more likely to be defended than reprimanded. Second, and more importantly, the response of 'Disappointed Reader' indicates the primacy of accurate settings and representations of nationality – and Canadian life as a whole – to many readers. If a story was perceived to be inauthentic, some readers would reject it as 'un-Canadian', and promptly write to the editors to tell them so.

Aspiration and community: tales of immigration

Gray's story picks up on another theme that was prominent in the fiction of *Chatelaine* and the *Journal*: immigration. While the fiction could, and did, take up topical themes ranging from the latest fashions from Paris to the effects of the Second World War, certain topics were perennial favourites. The arrival of new immigrants and their progress in becoming truly Canadian was one of these, with immigration discussed as the foundation for Canadian life. Authors, too, could be featured in versions of this narrative, thus suggesting a direct correlation between lived experience and fiction. The editorial for the March 1935 issue of the *Journal*, for instance, celebrated the editors' discovery of a new author who was also a 'new Canadian':

> Some little time ago we received 'The Emancipation of Happy', found on page 7, and feeling that we had discovered a new writer, we wrote to the author, Carl Kristiansen, asking him to favour us with his photograph and a brief biography. Imagine our feelings of satisfaction when we learned that not only had we discovered a new writer but a new Canadian as well. (Tait 1935: 2)

The editorial goes on to explain that Kristiansen had emigrated from Denmark to Canada in 1914, and since then he had worked as a day labourer in Nova Scotia, British Columbia and the Prairies. In the late 1920s, he studied commercial art at the Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary and at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The piece concluded with a quotation from Kristiansen in which he says,

> I am very happy and proud to have my first story published in a magazine maintaining so high a standard as *Canadian Home Journal*. I do hope that your readers will like the story of 'Happy', so that you shall not regret giving me my first opportunity as a writer. (p. 2)

As the discussion of Kristiansen's biography makes clear, one key to being identified as a 'Canadian' author was citizenship, and this status did not entail having been born and raised in Canada. The celebration of Kristiansen as a new author and a new Canadian fed into a construction of Canada as a nation of immigrants, all of whom had a right and, in this case, an opportunity, to express their ideas and experiences in the national medium of magazines. It is important, too, that Kristiansen had lived in several distinct regions, as it suggests that he had come to know

Canada well since his departure from Denmark. Most important of all, Kristiansen's biography communicates a desire for upward mobility and the power to improve one's circumstances in Canada through hard work and the good use of opportunity. Beginning as a labourer, Kristiansen moved on to receive an education. Now, with the help of the *Journal*, his literary aspirations were being realised. These twin ideas of self-improvement and the attainment of upper mobility are central to the representation of Canadian life in magazine fiction.

Throughout the Depression and the Second World War, the fiction printed in *Chatelaine* and the *Journal* was often about new Canadians who had emigrated from Europe to Canada in the hope of building a better life. For these characters, a better life was achieved through a mixture of determination, hard work and, above all, a willingness to embrace Canada as one's new homeland while letting go of one's heritage. Immigration, then, was granted two symbolic purposes in the fiction's treatment of Canadian identity. First, immigration gave Canadian citizens the common bond of a shared experience; second, it gave newly arrived Canadians a 'blank slate', as they broke with their past and worked to formulate an identity that was suited to their new social, cultural and geographical environment. Notably, the representation of immigration experiences excluded non-European immigrants as well as First Nations people. The explanation for this exclusion lies in the type of audience that the publishers of *Chatelaine* and the *Journal* – as well as the advertisers who purchased advertising space in the magazines and thereby kept them in print – wished to attract. The most desirable audience was an audience with disposable income to spend on consumer goods, and the readers most likely to fall into this category during the Depression and the Second World War were European in origin. The fiction of *Chatelaine* and the *Journal* thus wove together Canadian identity with representations of immigration, the cultivation of an audience that was white and middle class and the commercial demands of staying in print.

The economic stratification of the Canadian audience in this way is not coincidental. From the turn of the twentieth century to the beginning of the Depression, the Canadian government actively recruited immigrants in an effort to populate western Canada. Immigration policies placed different nationalities in a hierarchy, with British immigrants being the most preferable, followed by northern and western Europeans, then by eastern and southern Europeans; Jews, Asians and Africans were ranked as undesirable. Within Canada itself, non-British immigrants, First Nations

people and Canadian-born individuals with non-European backgrounds faced varying degrees of racism that affected their employment, mobility and social acceptance. In their need to cater to a relatively affluent audience, *Chatelaine* and the *Journal*, not to mention the other mainstream magazines of the era, participated in a politics of exclusion. This exclusion took the form of an absence rather than a presence; that is, the magazines did not encourage racist attitudes in their readers nor did they adopt an overtly racist stance to any given ethnicity. Instead, the magazines simply excluded non-white, non-English-speaking Canadians from their pages and avoided the question of racial politics as a topic of discussion.[8]

Magazine fiction, then, represented Canadians to themselves as white, English-speaking and middle class (or striving to become middle class), and forward-looking. Further to this, the pursuit of a comfortable, secure or even affluent lifestyle are figured as key desires that defined the quest for a better life in Canada. Canada, in turn, was portrayed as a nation that offered opportunities and rewards to those who were willing to work for them. That said, the fiction typically pulled away from idealising a completely individualistic, success-seeking way of life, positioning community-building as equally elemental to the Canadian way of life. Immigrants who came to Canada and successfully integrated themselves into the nation were also expected to contribute to the nation in ways that made their own individual desires secondary to the needs of their local communities. These communities, in turn, were figured as small pieces that, as a whole, made up a unified Canadian nation.

'Spring Always Comes' by F. Marjorie Jordan, a short story that was awarded the Toronto Women's Canadian Club's annual prize for literature in 1940, illustrates these points. The short story, which appeared in the August 1940 issue of the *Journal*, features the Brenzova family. They escaped from Czechoslovakia just before the beginning of the Second World War. The story takes place in one day, yet it encapsulates the key events of the family's past and their hopes for the future. Thematically, it presents the expectations imposed on immigrants wishing to create a life for themselves in Canada. These expectations include a rather individualistic work ethic and a willingness to surrender one's heritage in order to become fully Canadian. To be fully Canadian, according to the story, is to be English-speaking, self-reliant and perpetually engaged in building a better life for oneself. That said, the story also pinpoints a tension between the individualistic desire for self-improvement and the expectation that one contribute to one's community. In this way, individual accomplishment is

granted meaning as not only an element of Canadian identity, but also as a means of contributing to strengthening the Canadian nation by building communities.

The Brenzova family consists of three people – Marika (the narrator, wife and mother), Andrej (her husband) and Jan (their seven-year-old son). The story hints at their former wealth in Czechoslovakia, noting that Marika spent hours playing the piano and that she had a British governess who taught her to speak English when she was young. Andrej was a successful businessman. In their departure for Canada, the Brenzovas were forced to give up their wealth and social status in the hope of finding both security and freedom. In the face of these losses, they have worked hard on the farm that is now their home, and they have been able to save enough money to pay for their farmland and two horses. After providing this brief family history, as it was informed by the events of the Second World War, Jordan shifts the focus of the story to the events of one spring day. It is the day on which the Brenzovas plan to take their savings to the bank to purchase their land and horses, an act that symbolises both their permanent residency in Canada and, in turn, the finality of their break with their Czechoslovakian heritage.

The pivotal nature of the day causes Marika to reflect on the trauma of immigration as it is mingled with her hopes for a future in Canada. Watching the sunrise, she thinks,

> No longer need she say, sternly [to herself]: 'I will not think of that', in fear that deep, nostalgic longing for Czechoslovakia would leave her weak and despairing. For, in wonder and strange peace, the day had come when she could look upon all that had passed, and be strong. … It was because the new world about her had miraculously become very dear, and as full of warmth and sunlight as a spring day, breaking upon the grey chill of winter. (Jordan 1940: 8)

These reflections tie together Marika's frame of mind and the Canadian landscape as a series of transitions through which she, as an immigrant, has integrated herself into her new country. While her memories of Czechoslovakia once left her 'weak and despairing', she realises that her nostalgia for her homeland has lessened. In its place, she accepts the 'new world' as her own, realising that it has become 'very dear' to her. Not coincidentally, her previous despair is symbolised by the harsh Canadian winter, while her feeling of strength emerges with the arrival of spring. In this way, Marika's reflections mark her bond to the physical geography of Canada,

thus connecting her personal identity to the land in which she is immersed. Canada, through this connection, is set out as a nation with the power to heal and strengthen its new immigrants, yet this healing requires that immigrants psychologically break with the past.

Jordan marks the Brenzovas' separation from their heritage through the figure of Marika's son, Jan. As he joins her outside on the spring morning, Marika considers how healthy and happy he appears to be, and she credits Canada for her son's well-being. In her words,

> less than a year ago he had been white and frail and silent, bewildered through all the suspense and strain of their escape. Now he was a sturdy little boy, loving the farm … shouting and laughing … *Canada had done this for Jan!* (p. 8)

As with Marika, Canada has strengthened Jan, yet this strength exacts a cultural price. Jan remembers little of Czechoslovakia or of the Slovakian language. In this sense, he is fundamentally cut off from his family's past. Yet, Marika feels satisfaction in knowing that her son 'did not speak in Slovak … already he was a little Canadian' (p. 8). To be a Canadian is, in her eyes, far better than being Czechoslovakian, and the story suggests that one cannot be both. Immigration, then, entails an assimilation into the mainstream Anglophone culture. Indeed, Marika is grateful for her knowledge of English because it has made her integration into Canada much easier than it otherwise might have been. Jan, as a child, also symbolises the future, and his status as 'a little Canadian' suggest that Canadian identity hinges on a privileging of the future over the past. To put it another way, Jordan presents Marika Brenzova's vision of a prosperous and safe future for their son, and her acceptance that he is no longer Slovak but Canadian, as the defining qualities that make her and her family successful immigrants to Canada.

Integration into their new nation, however, demands more than this psychological transition from new citizens. Marika's daily life has been a series of trials since she and her family have arrived on their farm, and she is well aware of the psychological and physical strain that have gone into their adaptation to Canadian life. According to Marika,

> Because they had worked hard and been brave, spring had come for them. There was money to buy the horses, to pay on the land, and some day … if she worked hard enough, there would be money for a piano. (p. 8)

The passage baldly states the prerequisites for immigrants who wish for a better life – courage and hard work. In this sense, 'Spring Always

Comes' is a didactic story that outlined the expectations placed upon new immigrants while simultaneously stressing the rewards of meeting those expectations. Significantly, the passage leads up to Marika's hope that in the future she will be able to afford the cultural luxury of a piano. Such an acquisition would symbolise the Brenzova's achievement of a degree of social and economic stature, yet Jordan is careful to detail the toll that such an achievement can take. This toll, for Marika, is taken through her hands, which have been damaged by her work on the farm. Where her hands were once soft and dexterous, they are now calloused and sore, and she is not even certain she will be able to play the piano if they are able to purchase one in the future. As a result, the piano takes on a doubly symbolic value, as it comes to represent not only Marika's vision of the future, but also the sacrifices that she and her family are making for that future.

The ability to improve one's living conditions through one's own efforts, then, is set out as the defining feature of Canadian life. To this end, 'Spring Always Comes' shows the Brenzovas working towards aquiring the accoutrements of a middle-class existence, such as a piano, and this work and hope defines their sense of selfhood and purpose in Canada. Indeed, Marika envisions Canada as the site of future prosperity and happiness for her family:

> She could see the new warm shining house down by the elms …. There would be deep, colorful chairs, one on each side of a fire, where they would sit together … Marika stood still, the sunlight streaming in on the dish of butter in her hands … but above all else, far more to be treasured than a luxurious world such as they had known in Bratislava, there would be the happiness that comes with freedom. (p. 9)

Marika not only privileges Canada over her European past, she also sets out the Canadian nation as essentially defined by what might be considered the intangible ideal of 'freedom'. Jordan, however, makes the loosely defined concept of 'freedom' into a tangible set of rules in her treatment of the Brenzovas. 'Freedom' for them is a combination of security from ideological conflict and the violence of the War and the willingness to work constantly to improve their circumstances.

This improvement will be more fully realised, in Marika's view, when she, Andrej and Jan go into town to pay for their land and horses. When they arrive in town, however, the bank is closed and the horse dealer is away. The family returns home disappointed and finds that one of their neighbours, a fellow Czechoslovakian refugee named Stephen, has

collapsed on the road leading to their farmhouse. The Brenzovas take him to their home and revive him, after which he explains that both his house and his tobacco crop have burned down in a fire. Without the crop, he will have no money to bring his wife Katya, who has barely escaped Poland and who is now staying in England, to join him in Canada. Marika imagines Katya, 'trapped by the invasion. All alone, her flight to Hungary had been futile. For months, Poland's agony had been hers' (p. 18). Marika concludes that Stephen needs her family's savings more than they do. By making this decision, she becomes a heroic figure, yet her heroism is not tinged with yet another element of self-sacrifice; rather, the decision is a celebration of how good Canada has been to the Brenzovas and an expression of Marika's faith that Canada will continue to give her family the means to provide for themselves in the future. Marika's final words, 'Spring will come again for us!', affirm her desire for a future in Canada and her assurance that the future will be a prosperous one.

Marika's decision signals two key ideas. First, 'Spring Always Comes' is a tale of individual accomplishment and, second, the value of that accomplishment ultimately lies in its power to contribute to building a community. Faced with the dilemma of furthering their own gain or strengthening their ties with other new immigrants to Canada, the Brenzovas choose to aid a member of their community. 'Spring Always Comes' is thus a story that sets up Canada as an ideal place, yet Canada is also a work-in-progress that is only as good as its citizens. By setting out the tension between individualistic self-improvement and the sharing of prosperity, and by having the Brenzova share the money they have earned, Jordan privileges community-building over individualism. Indeed, the community becomes the backdrop that makes the efforts of the Brenzovas meaningful, as it is this community that gives them the chance to counter-act some of the effects of the War in Europe and express their love for, and dedication to, their new country.

Conclusion

The editors of *Chatelaine* and the *Canadian Home Journal* paid close attention to promoting authors and their works in terms of their Canadian identity. It was, on the one hand, a savvy marketing strategy that helped distinguish Canadian periodicals from American ones in the literary marketplace and, on the other hand, a preoccupation that generated an imagined community

that was clearly delineated as white, English-speaking, self-reliant, engaged in building a better life for oneself while contributing to one's community. The nation was never complete. Rather, it was an entity that was renewed each day through the activities of each of its citizens. The magazines stepped in to show citizens to themselves, and to each other, with fiction serving as a means of putting lived experience, such as immigration, into the wider context of national life.

Notes

1 There is much to be gained from the in-depth study of other mainstream Anglophone Canadian magazines, including *Saturday Night*, *Maclean's* and the *National Home Monthly*, particularly in relation to the development of middlebrow culture in Canada. For the purposes of this article, however, I wish to maintain a clear focus on *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Home Journal* because their contents, intended audience and editorial aims overlapped in so many ways, and these points of connection, because they sought to cultivate a particular mentality among readers, speak directly to the construction of a mainstream, middle-class Canadian identity with which I am concerned.

2 Fraser Sutherland points out that, in the 1920s, American magazines outsold Canadian ones four to one (1989: 113).

3 For example, an advertisement for Campbell's Soup that appeared in the June 1932 issue of *Chatelaine* noted that the soup was made from 'vegetables grown right here in our own brilliant Canadian sunshine and vigorous Northern climate!' and were intended for 'Canadian kitchens'.

4 For instance, the August 1940 issue of the *Journal* ran a full-colour ad for Canada Brand Lobster that appeared on the back cover. Commissioned by the Minister of Fisheries, the advertisement promoted the purchase of tinned lobster as a means of directly supporting a Canadian industry and the people involved in it. As the advertising copy stated, 'Canada's lobster industry is facing a serious emergency caused by the loss of overseas markets affected by the War. … If every woman will buy at least one can of lobster now … a great step will have been taken to save this valuable Canadian industry. Women of Canada – we need your help!'

5 Mary Etta Macpherson, who co-edited *Chatelaine* with Byrne Hope Sanders during the War, noted that Canadian women did 85 per cent of the consumer buying in the country. She argued that it was imperative for women to support Canada's wartime economy by buying Canadian-made goods and keeping up-to-date on rationing (1942: 2).

6 This aim of publishing works that successfully balanced their popularity with markers of high literary status can be understood as an aim that underwrote many texts that critics are beginning to classify as 'middlebrow culture', an exciting new area of scholarly research. As Faye Hammill observes, 'the scholarly map is being redrawn now, as the analysis of the middlebrow becomes increasingly crucial to the whole enterprise of cultural and literary studies. The middle is connected in myriad ways

to the canonical and to the popular, and now, instead of being avoided by scholars, it has become the most exciting location for literary and interdisciplinary study.' See Hammill 2011: 232.

7 It is worth noting here that a percentage of the fiction was indeed set abroad, although it nearly always featured Canadian citizens. There are a few exceptions to this – Michael Arlen and Warwick Deeping, for instance, published works set in Britain in the *Journal*. Much more common, however, were holiday-themed stories that featured Canadians visiting cosmopolitan centres, such as New York, London and Paris, or going on vacation to places such as the much-advertised Bermuda.

8 See Coleman 2006 and Devereux 2005 for insight into the representations of whiteness that shaped literature in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century.

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