

# Paul Kane's *Wanderings of an Artist* and the Rise of Transcontinental Canadian Nationalism

**W***anderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America* (1859) helped make Paul Kane (1810-71) a native Canadian, “a founding father of Canadian art” (Royal), and a figure of Canadian nationalism. The solitary wanderer began and ended his travels in Toronto. This was his hometown after immigration from Ireland in about 1819, and again after his travels to upper Lake Huron and Wisconsin in 1845 and to Vancouver Island in 1846-48. It was in Toronto that what were thought to be his most accomplished works came into public possession in 1912, in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum. They taught generations of southern Ontarians what Indians look like, as Katherine Hale’s romantic poem “Cun-ne-wa-bum” illustrates well. As a father of Canadian art and a hardy early Canadian traveller in a vague tradition rooted in the voyageur, Kane served Canada’s need for heroes before and after Confederation. He is not on record as ever having corrected the sobriquet of “first native artist in Canada,” bestowed on him in 1852 ([Hind], “Provincial” 60; qtd. in Harper, “Ontario” 18 and *Painting* 115), seven years before his book identified Little York as his “native village” ([vii]), native not being the complicated descriptor that it is in Canada today. The construction of him as a solitary wanderer and yet a symbol of an entire nascent country grew complicated. So too did the aims of his *Wanderings*. Was it meant to narrate one man’s effort to record Native peoples before the new country engulfed them, or was it meant to achieve a political aim by penetrating a fur-trade empire’s haunts in order to convert them into a transcontinental nation and the last link in the British Empire’s global chain?

On 13 January 1855, Kane was inducted into the prestigious Canadian Institute (“Fourth”), a high honour for someone who as late as 1834 advertised himself as a lowly “Coach, Sign, and House-painter” in the directory for York, which took the name of Toronto later that year (Walton; qtd. in Lowrey 101).

The 1850s were all about change. High-spirited, occasionally high-minded talk of expanding Canada West into Rupert’s Land (the “North-West Territory”) was not uncommon. Trains came to Toronto in 1853. On 14 April 1858, a storm on Lake Ontario created the picturesque Toronto Islands. In 1859, University College opened its doors (Careless 200-02). By 1856, working from his field sketches, Kane had completed one hundred oil-on-canvas paintings for his patron, Toronto lawyer, banker, alderman, mayor (1855), and legislative councillor George William Allan (Harper, ed. 320-21). He also executed copies of twelve of them for the legislature, then located in Toronto (322) (which doubtless had expected to pay for originals). Thus, early on, his visual record was patronized both privately and publicly.

On 13 December 1856, George Brown, editor of *The Daily Globe*, admonished the city’s merchants to begin to take over the North-West, thereby slipping the noose in which Roman Catholic French Canada held them and their legislators. If Toronto were “ever to be made really great,” he fulminated, “if it is ever to rise above the rank of a fifth-rate American town—it must be by the development of the great British territory lying to the north and west, and . . . Toronto is better fitted by situation than any other place to be the depot of the business of that country.” In ways that perhaps *aesthetic* expressions of the inchoate idea of Canada could not, *Wanderings*, published over Kane’s name at the end of this decade of energy and uncertainty, could help attain Brown’s dream. But the dream remained only that for some time. Uncertainty contended with ambition in the 1850s. Budding aspirations of some English Canadians to develop into a continental dominion were not being given voice by John A. Macdonald. He was a survivor-politician of the first water who “seldom went in for big ideas or ‘visions’” (Gwyn 294) and “about territorial expansion . . . said as little as possible” in 1858 and 1859 (223). For over a decade, Macdonald and most of his peers left control over the North-West to the Hudson’s Bay Company, the world’s largest-ever monopoly in terms of geography.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the continent’s republic lurched towards civil war.

When Kane traversed the North-West a decade earlier, its political fate, whether it interested the artist or not, had been similarly far from clear. The Oregon crisis of 1845-46 issued out of President James Polk’s election cry of “Fifty-four Forty or Fight” and resulted *inter alia* in the assignment of

Britain's Sixth Regiment of Foot to Red River in 1846. Thus positioned, this force was deemed able to offer a timely response in case annexation-minded USAmericans in Oregon or the upper Red River valley contested the newly established international border, attempted to destabilize "the allegiance of British subjects" (Morrison 168), or—the Hudson's Bay Company's fear—took up common cause with disaffected Métis traders at Red River (Miquelon et al. 15). In 1847, along with missionaries, Alexander Isbister (1822-83) and other former employees of the HBC attacked the monopoly in letters to the Colonial Office, charging it with failing to provide religious and agricultural instruction to Aboriginal people while keeping them destitute through the sale of poor-quality, high-priced trade goods (including liquor), and for using Native women for sexual recreation.<sup>2</sup> In 1849, the judgment in the trial at Red River found Guillaume Sayer guilty of unlicensed fur trading but, by imposing no fine (Friesen 100-01), effectively legalized interloping<sup>3</sup> in Rupert's Land and so cracked the HBC's monopoly.

Uncertainty over the legality of the HBC's trade monopoly in the North-West arose again in 1857, as *Wanderings* neared publication. A nineteen-member British parliamentary select committee conditionally approved a twenty-one-year extension of the HBC's charter (Great Britain), but an ensuing deadlock arose in February 1858 after a change of government saw Conservative Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton take over from Whig Henry Labouchère as colonial secretary. "Bully" Lytton added to the proposed extension new conditions (such as petitioning the Privy Council to draw the boundary between Canada and the HBC territory). Because the HBC balked and Canada finally decided that Britain, not the province, must argue the matter before the Privy Council (Galbraith 334), the introduction of these conditions resulted in another ten years without any settlement either of the question or of the West.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the HBC had governing powers. In 1849 and 1858 Britain established the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia but initially assigned the government of them to the company, not the Colonial Office, and did so even though the Indian Rebellion of 1857 had forced Britain the next year to take over the government of India from the East India Company and to dissolve that monopoly ("East").

In the spring of 1858, when 20,000 people began the Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes, Britain sent troops to New Westminster to keep the peace. Farther east, on 11 May, the establishment of Minnesota as a state helped fuel fears that the USA would annex the North-West. Meanwhile, after mid-decade, the West was not perceived as a trackless desert, thanks in part

to a report by Lorin Blodget, a climatologist working at the Smithsonian Institution (est. 1846). In 1857, Blodget made what would become a widely quoted assertion about the West: “an area, not inferior in size to the whole United States east of the Mississippi, now almost wholly unoccupied, . . . is perfectly adapted to the fullest occupation by cultivated nations. The west and north of Europe are there reproduced” (529).<sup>5</sup> By this time, inhabitants of southern Canada West were finding it agriculturally crowded and were casting an envious eye westward. So they genuinely felt the threat of the loss to the United States of any arable land on the continent that was not already claimed by that country.

The publication in 1859 of a book about the North-West and its denizens was thus bound to have read into it a political dimension, even if the travels had occurred in the 1840s, and even if it sold at too steep a price—twenty-one shillings in Britain (“Now ready”) and \$5.50 in Canada (“Shortly”; “Vancouver’s”)—to become widely acquired.<sup>6</sup> How could one let vanishing Indians stand in the way of progress when, at least from a political vantage point, so much seemed to be at stake? A book by an artist painting Indians could be assigned a place amidst the news of the day about the North-West. Protracted debates between the HBC and the Colonial Office involved the likes of William Gladstone and other rising political luminaries. The gold rush proffered an allure of its own. Reports filed by Canadian and British survey expeditions in 1857, 1858, and 1859 under Simon Dawson (*Report*), Henry Youle Hind (*Report, Reports*), and John Palliser (*Exploration*) amply sustained Blodget’s splendid contention because the surveys happened to occur during moist summers on the northern Prairies. Such developments simply overtook *Wanderings*, making possible the reading of it in a way unintended by Kane if not unanticipated by Longman, his English publisher. The times had ripened for a book about the North-West by a disinterested observer. However innocently, Kane had been in the right place in advance of the right time, but he and whoever helped him into print could still profit from the larger interests of what W.L. Morton has called the “critical years.”

A late December 1858 issue of London’s *Saturday Review* promised the appearance of *Wanderings* “early in January” 1859 (“Paul”). In the event, Longman released it on Friday 25 February (“On Friday”; “Now Ready”) in a print-run of 1,020 unassuming octavo copies, six of which went to the author and fifty to the Toronto bookseller James Bain (Divide . . . Miscellaneous . . . Impression). A good indication of how the publisher

envisioned the ideal reader for it occurs in an article titled “Literary News,” published in a London weekly at the end of the previous November.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Paul Kane’s “Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of British North America” will be published early in the approaching season, in 1 vol. 8vo. The author spent four years in traversing these regions to which the recent discovery of gold has imparted a new and daily-increasing interest. His wanderings extended from Canada to Vancouver’s Island, Oregon, through the Hudson’s Bay Company’s territory, and back again. His main object was to sketch pictures of the principal chiefs, in their original costumes, to illustrate their manners and customs, and to depict the scenery of the country; but he is not without hope that his work will be found to throw fresh light upon an almost unexplored region, remarkable at once for the beauty of its scenery, the salubrity of its climate, and the abundance of its commercial resources. The illustrations, executed from the author’s sketches or finished paintings, consist of eight plates printed in colours, and thirteen wood engravings, selected as specimens of the different classes of subjects which engaged the artist’s attention during his sojourn among the Indians of the north-west. (“Literary News” 836)

Likely the work of a puff-writer at Longman, this paragraph assigns the book many roles. One comes in the provisional title of the book. The *published* Kane travelled among the Indians of North America, but all advertisements appearing in both England and Canada prior to the book’s release confined the pre-published Kane’s travels to the “regions” and “Indians” exclusively of *British* North America,<sup>8</sup> and only a very few of the ads quoted enough of the title to expose the name of “Oregon.”<sup>9</sup>

The noun “wanderings” does not describe a relatively constrained itinerary well. Kane travelled on his own recognizance on several occasions, but he spent much of his time in the company of HBC brigades; their schedules often determined his itinerary and pace. Twice, for example he waited for five weeks at Norway House (12 July-14 August 1846; 18 June-24 July 1848), just north of Lake Winnipeg, before passing brigades collected him. A traveller who wanders might give the air of independence and spontaneity, even distractedness, but, as he once pouted while en route, Kane was “nothing but a pasenger [*sic*]” of the company,<sup>10</sup> notwithstanding the claim of the book’s persona: “it was with a determined spirit and a light heart that I made the few preparations which were in my power” (viii). “Wanderings” was a popular nineteenth-century title before and after the publication of Kane’s book,<sup>11</sup> so the choice of it is unremarkable and not likely intended implicitly to align the artist with the nomadic lifeways of his subjects. However, the leisure with which a romantic (because solitary [“an Artist”]) traveller wandered suggests an effort to distance Kane from, not

engage him in, political controversies. And not a few reviewers emphasized the romantic individualism of the persona of Kane in the book. In Britain, the reviewer for *The Athenæum*, a literary magazine, thought it

well that . . . some lover of the Red Man who, like Mr. Kane, can strap his portfolio and paint-box on his back, should fill a bullock's horn with powder, and, taking his rifle in his firm hand, stride on board the snorting steam-packet at Sturgeon Bay on Lake Huron.

. . . With light heart and lighter purse the brave young artist started off on snow shoes, or on horseback, in canoe or in mocassins [*sic*], to sketch chiefs and medicine-men, scalp dances and ball play, hunting scenes and fishing scenes. (Rev. of *Wanderings* 14)

From travels comprising “à chaque pas, des difficultés, des fatigues et des périls” (964), wrote Charles Hubert Lavollée, the reviewer for *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, Kane had fashioned “un journal de voyage, sans prétention littéraire ni scientifique . . . sobre de détails et même de descriptions pittoresques,” yet a text that reminds its reader of “les tableaux poétiques que Chateaubriand a consacrés aux Natchez et les romans de Cooper” (965). Like many reviews of the epoch, Lavollée’s paraphrases the purple patches that occur in nearly every one of the book’s twenty-five chapters. Invariably, these entail Native violence, romance, sloth, or filth, which both revolt and allure the persona of Kane. One review, in *The Critic*, comprises little more than a recitation of them: the Assiniboine Potika-poo-tis’ confession that he killed his mother (*Wanderings* 139); the Multnomah Chinook Casanov’s desire to kill his wife so that she could accompany their son to the after-life (178); the Chinook practice of flattening the head of infants (180-81) (to signify their free, non-slave status, a motive unremarked in *Wanderings*); the custom of producing Chinook Olives from urine-soaked, fermented acorns (187); the attestation that the inauguration of a Clallam named Chea-clach (in fact named Cloll-uck/Claluch) and the requirement that he eat a dog alive (211-12); the practice of slavery among Coast Salish peoples, and the sacrifice by an unnamed man of five slaves as a demonstration of his wealth (216); the sacrifice by Carrier peoples of widows on their deceased husbands’ funeral pyres (243-45);<sup>12</sup> and the subterranean lodges of Walla-Walla people, their reliance on a year-round diet of sand-blown dried salmon, and the repercussions for their teeth and gums (272-73) (“Among”).

In the “Literary News” paragraph from November 1858, quoted above, the titular *Wanderings* throws an emphasis on the solitary, apolitical romantic peregrination among supposedly dangerous sub-humans. Yet the roamings occur in a geopolitical realm, “British North America,” and the paragraph

goes on to subdivide that into two colonies (Canada and Vancouver Island), one foreign territory (Oregon, soon to become a state), and one monopoly's holdings, "the Hudson's Bay Company's territory." At a time when, although the monopoly's rule persisted on the ground, its right to govern was unclear, this was a decidedly political wording. Brown's December 1856 editorial had called the North-West "British territory." As "Travels in the Hudson's Bay Territory" exemplifies, British notices sided with the HBC ("Travels").

The paragraph's worth of puff pays only passing attention to Native peoples while pointing the reader towards the gold fields. This is a piece of deception: by not mentioning the years of his travels, the puff and the book's title conceal the fact that Kane travelled a decade *before* the gold rushes; moreover, he did not venture near either the Fraser or Thompson rivers. Meanwhile, the puff reserves "hope" for the narrative's success in throwing fresh light on "an almost unexplored" region's tricolonial virtues: "the beauty of its scenery, the salubrity of its climate, and the abundance of its commercial resources." Mention of the last of these perhaps aimed to entice readers who knew in November 1858 that the Colonial Office was threatening to end the HBC's monopoly, so that the vastness of northern North America might open for the first time since the seventeenth century to other British investors and entrepreneurs. The coordinate conjunction "but" introducing the clause "he is not without hope" appears to set these three regional virtues against the book's three already announced aims, which sound passé—to record principal chiefs in their "original costumes," their manners and customs, and the scenery of their country. That Indians had all more or less vanished was the prevailing, romantic/tragic view that complemented the myth of progress—David C. Hunt opines that "the majority of the artists of the western frontier envisioned and perpetuated what we think of today as a romance" (8)—so the prospect of striking a last, "almost" undiscovered vein of original peoples would have enticed readers. Yet, how interest in Indians related to these other matters baffles the puff writer.

That bafflement is apparent in the puff's exaggerated claims: the regions through which Kane passed (in the mid-1840s) "almost unexplored," apparently even in 1859, are paradoxically identified in the book's subtitle as *geopolitical* districts: Canada, Vancouver Island, the HBC's territory, and Oregon (which happened to become a state eleven days before *Wanderings* appeared). That is, the titular artist wanders around no West, crosses no Prairies, negotiates no passes through the Rocky Mountains, boats down no Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean; indeed, he encounters no *geographical*

regions. But a geopolitical emphasis contradicts the cultivation of a wilderness in the book's preface. Its claim that Kane traversed "a new and unexplored country" "through the pathless forest to find" his subjects (ix, vii) appears to be an effort to exoticize his travels and to fetishize the people he met. At cross-purposes with the geopolitical emphasis of the book's title, it serves to show that the puff itself could not decide between a political and a romantic hue.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, both those who wanted the North-West brought under British North American governance through Canada and those who wanted nothing to do with it or wanted the HBC to retain entire control of it could find ammunition in Kane's book. By turns they read it with an emphasis on the Canada in the subtitle or on the wildness of the land and people, together with the tribulations that Kane underwent. The reviewer in the *Edinburgh Review* thought that "chaos," "transition and uncertainty" best characterized the North-West in early 1859 ("Hudson's" 123). He or she considered it "the height of imprudence to commit [Britain] to so decisive and irretrievable a step as the formation of a British colony which we are bound to defend at all hazard": "we are happy to find that Mr. Kane fully confirms, from his own personal observation, the opinion we have formed. . . . He . . . has given us a most graphic and entertaining account of the frightful country he succeeded in crossing. We should be ready to rest the whole case on Mr. Kane's evidence, which is really conclusive. . . ." All land west of the Canadas should, thought this reviewer, remain in the custody of the Hudson's Bay Company, against which "all parties, agreeing in nothing else, seem to have combined for the purpose of destroying the corporation which at this moment renders us such invaluable service [including] . . . the Colonial Minister, to whom it saves infinite trouble and anxiety, the Canadian Government, whose frontiers it preserves in tranquility, nay, the very Aborigines Protection Society, whose duties it most efficiently discharges" ("Hudson's" 156). Thus, despite whatever motivations induced Longman to publish *Wanderings*, the text itself, by not coming down decisively on one or the other side of the debate then occurring about the North-West's geopolitical destiny, could be read by turns for its promise as a colony and for its essential wildness.

The fact that the political triangle underlying *Wanderings* is not Britain, Canada, and the United States but rather Britain, Canada, and the HBC indicates how the book neglects the republic. When it does not, it is negative about it. USAmerican treatment of Indians exemplifies this strain. The events of the several months of 1845 that Kane spent in Wisconsin (made a state on 29 May 1848) are summarized tellingly at the head of the book's second chapter:



Mackinaw, the "Turtle Island."—Famished Dogs.—The Chief He-Devil.—Green Bay, a Commercial Port.—Consolation in Sorrow.—An Indian Council.—Gambling Habits.—Illicit Traffic in Spirits.—Anecdote of Revenge.—A young Assassin.—Day of Reckoning.—Scenes of Drunkenness. (26)

Pottawatomi, Menominee, and Winnebago are seen as wild, to be sure, but ignoble and irretrievable after contact with Caucasians, all already with a USAmerican identity. But, because *Wanderings* resolutely insists upon the preservation of the aura of wilderness peopled only by wild Indians, whites seldom show up in the "pathless forest" south of the border.<sup>14</sup> No mention occurs of the sizeable number of German immigrants who began settling in Wisconsin soon after Gottfried Duden published *Bericht* in 1829 (although the great influx would begin only after the failed revolution in Germany in 1848). Similarly, the many immigrants to the Pacific Northwest in the years when Kane visited are invisible. Upwards of 4,500 emigrants traversed the Oregon Trail in 1847 ("Columbia"), and Kane's route up the lower Columbia River would have crossed theirs (see Parkman). The book's alternate negative treatment or disregard of the United States happily foregrounded the still-wild savages of British North America while serving to allege or imply that Natives received better treatment at the hands of the HBC.<sup>15</sup>

If the paucity even of sketches of voyageurs and fur-trade factors during his 1846-48 trip suggests that Kane himself remained faithful to his intention to sketch only Aboriginal people, one may conclude that in 1845 Wisconsin disappointed him, not because he was in the United States but because he could not find subjects unchanged by newcomers' manners and customs, including clothing. His art provides an instructive example: an oil-on-paper sketch (Harper, ed. 277, no. III-111), acquired in 2011 by the Royal Ontario Museum, depicts a Menominee spearing fish at night.

The fisher wears a shirt and trousers belted or otherwise fastened at the waist. The three people observing him appear in similar garb, although Kane spent little effort delineating their clothing. However, in both the subsequent oil-on-canvas studio painting (Fig. 2) and the engraving published in *Wanderings* (31; Fig. 3), the three observers wear traditional garments—long hide shirts—while the fisher wears no shirt (although the article draped over the gunwale of the canoe could be one), only leggings and leather lashes. A tipi, untypical of Menominee but expected as typical for "Indians" generally, is added to the oil-on-canvas painting and to the engraving, and the deletion of the moon renders the subject sublime because only the lurid firelight illumines the scene in a fashion reminiscent of chiaroscuro. These alterations

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Figure 1  
Paul Kane. Fishing by Torch Light. Oil on paper,  
24.5 cm x 31.1 cm. 1845. Royal Ontario Museum:  
2011.58.1; Harper, ed. 276 (III-111). Courtesy  
Royal Ontario Museum.

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Figure 2  
Paul Kane. Fishing by Torch Light. Oil on  
canvas, 43.7 x 73.7 cm. c.1855. Royal Ontario  
Museum: 912.1.10; Harper, ed. 277 (III-112).  
Courtesy Royal Ontario Museum.

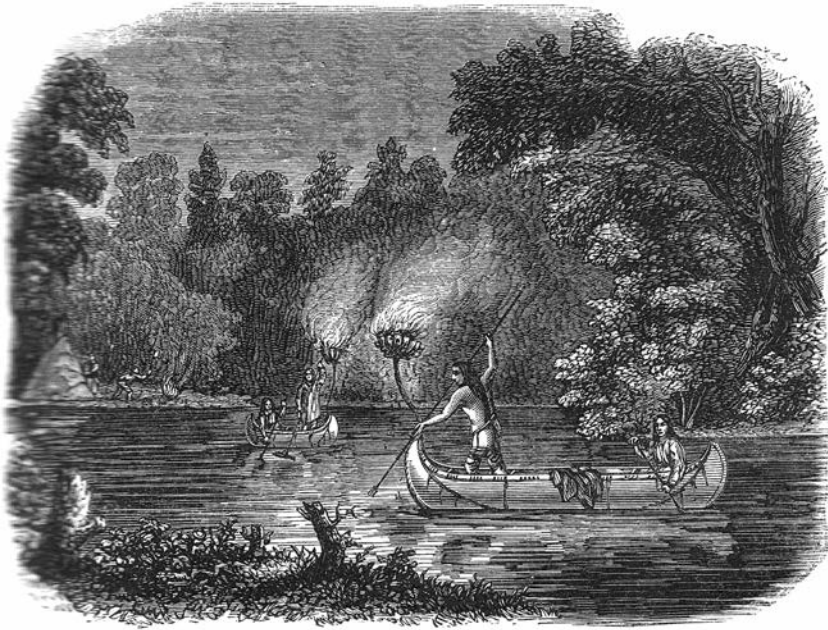


Figure 3

Vincent Brooks. Engraving of Paul Kane. Spearing by torch-light on Fox River. Woodcut, 7.3 x 9.1 cm. 1859. *Wanderings of an Artist* 31.

exemplify the tendency in the finished works to conform to the stereotype of the Noble Savage/Child of Nature, which Victorian society on both sides of the Atlantic required of finished works of art. Complemented by the myth of the vanishing race, such depiction affirmed the era's belief that an inability to adopt newcomers' culture doomed Natives. Few doubted that rails would supplant trails; coins and bills, beads, dentalia, and cockleshells.

Meanwhile, the image that nationalism assigns Kane routinely ignores the fact that, despite the generally negative portrait of the United States in *Wanderings*, the painter did not mind whether he encountered Native peoples and lifeways north or south of the young border. For at least a half-decade before sailing to Europe on 18 June 1841, Kane indulged in an affair of mediocrity by painting portraits and scenery and selling them in towns up and down the Mississippi.<sup>16</sup> It must have put him at home there. Although it remains unverified, the well-worn claim about his being indebted to George Catlin (1796-1872) for the idea of painting noble savages in the West (see Thacker) suggests a further USAmerican influence on him. Of the thirty-six

months away from Toronto in 1845-48, Kane spent more than one-third of them in the United States. Forty per cent of his art from the two trips and little less than forty per cent of the pages of *Wanderings* represent people and places encountered south of the line.

**T**he nationalization of and nationalism engendered around Paul Kane are problematical. How does one foist a nationalist agenda on a politically indifferent, solitary and, later in life, reclusive person born in Ireland? How does one think of Kane particularly as a loyal Canadian when his commission in August 1851 of twelve oils-on-canvas for the Legislature of the Province of Canada was still not fulfilled five years later (Burpee xxxv-xxxviii)? Indeed, three of the dozen (or one-quarter of the pre-paid commission's £500 [Burpee xxxvii-xxxviii]) depicted subject matter from USAmerican stretches of the Columbia River—Mount Hood, and a scalp dance by “Spokane” people and a game called “Alcohol” in *Wanderings*, both at Fort Colville, now Colville, Washington (“List,” nos. 3, 5, and 12; Harper, ed. 322, App. 6)?<sup>17</sup> Would not the legislators have preferred—even expected—all twelve canvases to depict British North America? What of the fact that thirty-two of the one hundred canvases delivered to his patron depicted either places or people encountered in the United States (“Catalogue,” nos. 9, 10-15, and 62-86)?<sup>18</sup>

Little evidence survives to suggest that Kane was politically astute or inclined. Others, not he, assigned his creativity a political stripe, but, although in time it became a Canadian nationalist stripe, *Wanderings* is on the whole indifferent to Canada's interests and defensive of the HBC's.<sup>19</sup> Such details received scant attention in the subsequent fashioning of Kane as “a founding father of Canadian art,” perhaps because, by extending to the Pacific Ocean, his continental traverse rivalled Alexander Mackenzie's. Moreover, like Mackenzie but unlike most others, he was one of the first travellers to end *not* on the Columbia River at Fort Vancouver (now Vancouver, Washington, the HBC's former entrepot on the Pacific) but in British territory at Fort Victoria (established in 1843 at Camosun on Vancouver Island). His sojourn and book could be seen as uniting all British colonies in central and western North America.

The long process of rendering Kane a person of national stature entailed linking him to developments in his own lifetime as well as subsequently. In 1852, his “illustrations of Indian life and manners” had been excluded from consideration at the Provincial Exhibition because the judges found them ineligible as “historical painting . . . the highest branch of the art.” Hope was

expressed, however, “upon a future occasion, that the spirit stirring incidents of the last war [i.e., War of 1812-14], or the great events which have marked the social progress and constitutional history of the country, [would find] their fitting expositor” in him (Hind, “Provincial” 60-61). Instead, Kane’s eight paintings depicting Native lifeways won the prizes in the professional category for *Canadian* landscapes and for depictions of animals (Lister, “Paul Kane’s” 208-09). But by mid-decade, his work had attained prominence as expansionism took hold: it was prominently featured in the Canada exhibit at the *Exposition universelle*, held in Paris from 15 May to 15 November 1855. There, it proved able to shoulder a fledgling national pride.

Beginning in 1858, the intimate relationship between the two discourses—the vanishing Red Man and the westward expansion of Canada—becomes discernible in the reception of the apolitical artist. In July, *The Canadian Journal* announced that Kane had “effected very satisfactory arrangements with the eminent London publishers, Messrs. Longman & Co., for the issue of a work prepared from his notes, to be entitled: ‘Rambles of an Artist among the Indian Tribes of British America.’” Thereafter, the announcement characterizes the forthcoming publication as “interesting and truly Canadian,” promises that the book will comprehend the British parts of the North-West including “the Gold regions of Frazer’s River,” and concludes that “it is not easy to conceive of a more timely publication, or one likely to do more credit to Canada” (“Miscellaneous” 365).

On 8 January 1859, about six weeks before the book’s publication, Kane’s patron George William Allan (1822-1901) remarked in his presidential address to the Canadian Institute that during a trip to Europe and England he had “lately had the pleasure of seeing some of the chromo-lithographic drawings taken from these [Kane’s] sketches, and intended to illustrate the letter-press of his work.” Allan anticipated a “book [that] will be hailed by both the Canadian and English public, as a most timely addition to the scanty knowledge we as yet possess of a quarter of North America which is now beginning to awaken so much interest in the minds of all” (93).

A posthumous statement kept alive the emphasis not on the romantic wanderer but on the national symbol. Appearing in the *Canadian Illustrated News* in October 1871, the anonymous obituary calls Kane a “native Canadian” artist “born at Toronto” of unimpeachable pedigree—the son of “a retired English officer, and . . . a Dublin lady of good family.” A claim is even registered that Kane was honoured abroad before ever going west: “[w]hile in Rome a medal was conferred on him by Pope Gregory the sixteenth, bearing the

coat of arms of His Holiness" ("Late"). It goes on from this stretcher to quote "from a New York paper," Frederick Swartwout Cozzens (1818-69), whom it identifies as one "who knew Mr. Kane and appreciated his talents." Cozzens upbraids the Canadian government for letting a "private gentleman" outbid it for "the whole series" of Kane's oil paintings, "which should have been secured by them as the germ of a characteristic national collection." In Cozzens' view, Kane's works constituted a "national" treasure because they were "remarkable records of the races whose extinction is . . . inevitable" ("Late"). The receding Natives make way for the advance of a new native, a native Canadian, whose "native village" is Little York, bearing the ambitions of a new nation; racial succession and geopolitical expansion work hand in glove; the "native" Canadian becomes the vehicle to advance both.

The link between westward expansionism, the vanishing Indian, and, on behalf of his fellow Canadians, a national personage's amassing of verbal and pictorial "monuments" can be found in other post-Confederation sources. In May 1871, three months after Kane's death and ten months after the effective date (15 July 1870) when the transfer of the North-West to Canada from the Hudson's Bay Company established Manitoba, *The Canadian Journal* published another obituary.<sup>20</sup> In it, Sir Daniel Wilson (1816-92)<sup>21</sup> suggestively reconstituted Kane in the interests of English-Canada's expansionism. First, like the schedule of the census of 1871 listing his death, which gives his country or province of birth as "O," presumably for Ontario (Canada), Wilson's title identifies him pre-eminently as "the Canadian Artist."<sup>22</sup> Wilson resituates Kane's father from military service in Ireland to early Upper Canada, where he is numbered among the "small force which accompanied Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe, when he removed to the selected site of the future capital of Western Canada in 1794" ("Paul" 66).<sup>23</sup> Thereafter, Wilson praises Kane for depicting new subject matter, "the artless rudeness of savage life" (66).

An archeologist and anthropologist, Wilson used Kane's work in order to show how North America was witnessing the improvement of the "*Genus Homo*," generally. In his view, native peoples' dispossession or *displacement*—a comparatively anodyne term—was natural and logical ("Displacement" 4). Such a view *appeared* to align with but ended by challenging the mid-century belief—known today as scientific racism—that humans could be categorized by race and that the categories formed a hierarchy, with the peoples of northern Europe at the top. Wilson challenged the more widely accepted belief because he viewed displacement as a mechanism of monogenesis (originally and ultimately, a blending of peoples) rather than a retention of

distinctions among “races.”<sup>24</sup> Canada as a young nation in the New World was poised to develop a variation of the British nation, which itself had evolved through displacement. Despite being a life-long monogenist, he used his “anthropological studies to justify colonization as a biological struggle that inevitably entailed the disappearance of native or ‘inferior’ races because European colonists could turn the wilderness to better account” (Zeller 260). This view was also articulated in the then-current myth of progress, which reasoned that rapid change was positive and desirable (Fallis 173). Only a change being rung on an old leitmotif, it permitted Wilson to see and ennoble his friend Kane as an innocent agent and valued recorder of an ineluctable process.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Toronto *Globe* hailed the performances of the part-Mohawk poet E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake; 1861-1913) by putting paid to Natives: “The race that has gone speaks with touching pathos through Miss Johnson” (“Canadian”; qtd. in Francis 119). In the same year, his last, Wilson cited an anecdote related to him by Kane—the willingness of Indians to deliver Hudson’s Bay Company mail—as a sure sign of the gradual disappearance of inter-tribal enmity and the advent of civilization (*Lost Atlantis* 312), the postman being the singular agent of the state/monopoly—assigned thoroughfare in both domestic and public spheres.

In light of this understanding, *Wanderings of an Artist* and Kane’s finished paintings themselves became monuments to a past age, which ended expansionism with a priceless historical dimension. This was the sort of discursive manoeuvre that settler cultures invariably crave in order to assuage perturbations that displacing others can prompt. Near century’s end, Kane was firmly fixed as a native Canadian, “born” in Toronto, authoritative because of unimpeachable national lineage. An early history of the city after Confederation claimed as much and lionized him as an intrepid adventurer (Mulvaney et al., 2: second and sixth unnumbered pages after 175). In an early twentieth-century national publishing project, Kane numbered “[a]mong those who have in no small degree given a national cast to their work” (Johnston 596). In 1920, the Geographic Board of Canada adopted a suggestion by Alpine Club of Canada co-founder Arthur O. Wheeler to name a 3090-meter (10,138-foot) mountain, a glacier, a creek, and an alpine meadow for Kane on the transmontane fur trade route by then preserved in Jasper (after 1930, Jasper National) Park, where he had “wandered” in 1846 and 1847.

Kane had grown into a Canadian *par excellence*. Even when, in 1925, introducing the first Canadian edition of *Wanderings* in the short-lived

*Master-Works of Canadian Authors* series (Garvin, ed.), Lawrence Burpee disabused his reader of the fiction that the artist's birthplace had been Canada, he discounted his finding: "[a]part from the mere fact of birth . . . Paul Kane was a Canadian" (xi-xii).<sup>25</sup> In 1937, he was named a National Historic Person (one of fewer than 650) (Parks). In the midst of his nationalist phase, Al Purdy referred to his work in 1951 as "a native art," the answer to the question "If one should ask, 'What is Canadian art?'" A high school in St Albert, Alberta, and a park in Edmonton were named for him in the 1970s. At the beginning of that decade, on 11 August 1971, a seven-cent stamp was issued to commemorate the centennial of his death. It reproduced one of two versions of his painting entitled *Indian Encampment on Lake Huron*. (That the choice of painting depicts not the North-West but central Canada unsurprisingly fixes Kane in Ontario, the baseland of Canadian nationalism because the birthplace of Canadian expansionism.) In a note issued with the stamp, the Philatelic Service of Canada Post identified Ireland as Kane's natal country, but described his paintings' "subject matter and scenes" as "completely Canadian" (Canada Post). The next year saw the National Film Board issue a short documentary about his work (Budner). When interviewed at century's end for another film, one narrated by Tantoo Cardinal, several Native people spoke of the contribution that Kane's work had made to knowledge of their history (Bessai). The bicentenary of his birth was commemorated in the fall of 2010 when the Royal Ontario Museum issued a book featuring its extensive collection of his art (Lister, *Paul*). What could possibly unseat him from his well ensconced place in the pantheon of famous early Canadians? Unless First Nations come to form the centre of a Canadian identity, the process of making Kane into a symbol of nationalism, like the rendering of him in *Wanderings* as a mid-Victorian gentleman with no USAmerican connections, will abide.

#### NOTES

- 1 Because it was impossible for a party to win an election by taking seats only in Canada East or Canada West, Macdonald understood that championing a cause that was anathema in the former would stunt his political career in both.

In her extensive research into newspapers and the appendices of the *Journal of the Province of Canada (Programme [3])*, Anna Margaret Wright noted many years ago that 1857 and 1858 marked the acme of interest in western expansion, that the interest was eclipsed by concerns over the Civil War, and that it did not recur and match its previous height at any point in the 1860s (Wright 260-61).



- 2 See Owrām 24-26 for a distillation of the views of non-Roman Catholic missionaries. Owrām notes in particular that the “very dialectic which the missionaries perceived between the Indians’ way of life and their spiritual and material condition . . . contained an inherent criticism of the Hudson’s Bay Company” (26).
- 3 At least from the early seventeenth century onward, *interlope* referred to unauthorized trading within the sphere of action of a chartered company, or trading without a licence. See online *OED*, “interlope, v.” def. 1.
- 4 Bulwer-Lytton served as colonial secretary from 5 June 1858 to 11 June 1859, during the second of three different Conservative governments led by the 14th Earl of Derby, Edward George Geoffrey Smith Stanley. Extending from 21 February 1858 to 11 June 1859, this administration was governing when *Wanderings* appeared, and the Indian Rebellion had prompted its India Act of 1858. Pursuant to its terms, the East India Company was made defunct, the company’s trade monopolies were brought to an end, and Britain assumed from the company the direct government of India. This development surely had a bearing on, by contrast to Labouchère’s, Bulwer-Lytton’s hard line toward the HBC.  
Bulwer-Lytton’s change of policy served to propel any settlement of the impasses between the HBC and Britain and the HBC and Canada from the jury of public opinion—cultivable land was needed and was available, and others could better civilize Indians than the HBC’s track record proved the company could—to the court of the Privy Council. Of paramount importance for Bulwer-Lytton was a ruling on the legitimacy of the company’s charter and on the determination of the boundary between Canada and the HBC’s territory. By opposing the company, however, he achieved only another impasse after Sir Edmund Walker Head, governor general of Canada from 1847 to 1861, held to the decision that, although Canada wanted the legitimacy of the HBC’s charter and the boundary claim tested by the Privy Council, the case should be argued by the parent country, not by the province (Galbraith 330-34).
- 5 In consideration of the outdatedness of *Wanderings* by 1859 in terms of USAmerican events, one must also note the Indian Wars of the 1850s in the Pacific Northwest, including those involving peoples in Puget Sound (Nisqually, Muckleshoot, Puyallup, and Klickitat), as well as Kaiuse, Yakima, Snake, Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, and Paluse, all peoples whom Kane met and sketched in 1846 and 1847. See Vandervort.
- 6 Twenty-one shillings for an illustrated cloth-bound octavo edition was a high but not excessive price. In the same month (February 1859), William Blackwood and Sons was selling the three-octavo-volume first edition of George Eliot’s novel, *Adam Bede*, for 1l. 11s. 6d. (“3 vols.”). For much more—sixty-three shillings—Longman was advertising the imperial folio edition of *Scenes from the Snow-Fields*, by Edmund Thomas Coleman, founder the year before of the Alpine Club (“Just . . . Snow-Fields”). The same firm was selling for much less—7s. 6d.—the first edition of Edward Copping’s octavo, *Aspects of Paris* (“Just . . . Paris”). Nine months later, on 26 November, John Murray advertised the publication of the octavo edition of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* for fourteen shillings (“This Day”). With its five-thousandth copy printed by March 1860 (“Mr. Darwin’s”), it was being eclipsed by another octavo, explorer Francis Leopold M’Clintock’s *Discovery of the Fate of Sir John Franklin and his Companions*. Issued by Murray at sixteen shillings two weeks after *Origin* (“Just ready”), it had sold twelve-thousand copies (“Capt.”).
- 7 Its appearance in *The Critic* anticipated by a few days the entry in *Notes on Books*, Longman’s in-house quarterly (“Literary Intelligence” 251).
- 8 See, for example, “Notes,” the earliest advertised mention of the book, and “Shortly.”
- 9 The fact that, in an age dominated by piracy, no edition appeared in the United

- States suggests a reception of *Wanderings* as a peculiarly British North American text (*Bibliography*).
- 10 Paul Kane, *Field Notes*, 11 Oct. 1846; qtd. in MacLaren, “I came”: 32. A discussion of the relationship of Kane’s field writings to *Wanderings* is offered in MacLaren, “Notes” 190-203.
  - 11 For precursors, see, for example, Steedman, who also published with Longman. Notable is Kohl’s *Kitschi-Gami*: appearing first in German in 1859, it was issued as *Kitchi-Gami: Wanderings round Lake Superior* the next year. In the title of the 1861 French edition of *Wanderings (Indiens), promenades* tends to signify more pleasure than challenge. It also precludes the randomness both that the word *wanderings* can imply and that the book’s prefatory attestation—“I strayed almost alone” (ix)—promotes.
  - 12 A discussion of this rite is provided in MacLaren, “Caledonian.”
  - 13 Like the puff writer at Longman, Ooram exaggerates the idea of a wilderness West that *Wanderings* cultivates. Generally, he holds that *Wanderings* and Simpson’s *Narrative* “described violent clashes with or between Indians” (15). Apparently, he reads an 1859 publication in terms of the years—the mid-1840s—that its narrative covers, so he identifies the book’s mention of the pathless wilderness as dominant. However, like an article published under Kane’s name in 1856, *Wanderings* notes that the Scottish and Orcadians at Red River “live as farmers, in great plenty so far as mere food and clothing are concerned” (75; Kane, “Notes” 128).
  - 14 This phrasing, like Kane’s “light heart,” is likely indebted to the introduction to George Catlin’s book, *Letters and Notes* (1841): “I started out in the year 1832, and penetrated the vast and pathless wilds which are familiarly denominated the great ‘Far West’ of the North American Continent, with a light heart, inspired with an enthusiastic hope and reliance that I could [record] an interesting race of people, who are rapidly passing away from the face of the earth . . .” (3).
  - 15 A prominent example is the chapter-ending purple patch that concludes Kane’s account of Red River. It impugns US American policies on alcohol while extolling the HBC’s (98).
  - 16 In September 1839, a St Louis newspaper announced that “Mr. Kane, an artist of considerable attainment and a young man of much worth, has two fancy sketches, one of a family of emigrants encamped by a stream, the other a dog fight, both really beautiful paintings . . . [W]e advise all who wish for a handsome parlour ornament to call and look at the pictures” (*Missouri*).
  - 17 Since 1955, the National Gallery of Canada has owned these paintings (accession nos. 6918, 103, and 60; Harper, ed. IV-431, IV-329, and IV-321 [299, 294]). They are versions of the originals owned by George William Allan, held by the Royal Ontario Museum since 1912 (accession nos. 912.1.99, 912.1.66, and 912.1.65; Harper, ed. IV-430, IV-328, and IV-320 [299, 294]).
  - 18 Apparently, Kane made no effort to publish a book anywhere else, any sooner, or with any other publisher. Publication of the book in Britain should not be inferred as being symbolically significant: copyright laws confined British North American ‘publishers’ almost entirely to the role of distributors of foreign publications. See Eli MacLaren, and note 9, above.
  - 19 In his political perspective, was Kane, as Harper argues (*Paul Kane’s* 39), merely following in the footsteps of a resolutely British fur trade magnate, Sir George Simpson, and his ghost-written *Narrative*, published in 1847? Arthur S. Morton notes the roles played in the preparation and edition of Simpson’s book by Archibald Barclay, Simpson’s secretary, and Adam Thom, former editor of the *Montreal Herald* 1836-38, largest contributor to Lord Durham’s *Report*, and, later, first judicial recorder in the Red River settlement (233-34). For a discussion of Simpson’s book, see MacLaren, “Touring.”

- 20 The volume containing all the issues printed in that year bears the date 1873.
- 21 “Canada’s First Anthropologist” (Trigger 3), Wilson was a professor of archaeology who emigrated from Edinburgh in 1853 to take up the chair of history and English literature at University College, Toronto. He grew particularly interested in Kane’s works and used Kane’s collection and anecdotes in his own works, including *Prehistoric Man*, his *magnum opus*, which went through three editions. Wilson “grew especially fond of Kane and of his patron” (Berger 1110). Because the professor ordered his wife to burn all his papers at the time of his death, a firm working relationship between him and Kane cannot be established.
- 22 This fiction, one that his wife apparently never corrected either, appeared in print more than once in the years following Kane’s travels. Not only, as we have seen, was he dubbed “the first native artist in Canada” in 1852, but also Henry Morley, presumably following the reference to York as Kane’s “native village” in the book’s preface, declared in his March 1859 review of *Wanderings* that Kane “was born in the City of Toronto” (385).
- 23 Of course, when he mentions the future capital, Wilson means York.
- 24 Likely, Wilson was again referring to absorption when he spoke about an “ethnological problem” in August 1857 at the conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Montreal. According to one report, Wilson “dwelt on Mr. Kane’s descriptions of the Half Breeds, a race combining the Saxon and Red Indian elements and whose probable extinction is now an ethnological problem” (“Sub Section”). Kane accompanied Wilson to Montreal.
- 25 Although at least one British periodical identified Kane as “an American artist who . . . has devoted his life to an American purpose” (Review 14), it is clear from the context that the designation “American” was meant to be geographical, not geopolitical.

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