

# When Canadian Literature Moved to New York (Studies in Book and Print Culture)

Nick Mount

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Canadian literature was born in New York City. It began not in the backwoods of Ontario or the salt flats of New Brunswick, but in the cafés, publishing offices, and boarding houses of late nineteenth-century New York, where writing developed as a profession and where the groundwork for the Canadian canon was laid. So argues Nick Mount in When Canadian Literature Moved to New York.

The last decades of the nineteenth century saw an extraordinary exodus from English Canada, draining the country of half its writers and all but a few of its contemporary and future literary celebrities. Motivated by powerful obstacles to a domestic literature, most of these migrants landed in New York - by the 1890s the centre of the continental literary market - and found for the first time a large, receptive literary market and recognition from non-Canadian publishers and reviewers.

While the expatriates of the 1880s and 1890s - including Bliss Carman, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Palmer Cox - were recognized for their achievements in Canada, the domestic literature they themselves spurred into existence rekindled a nationalist imperative to distinguish Canadian writing from other literatures, especially American, and this slowly eliminated most of their work from the emerging English Canadian canon. When Canadian Literature Moved to New York is the story of these expatriate writers: who they were, why they left, what they achieved, and how they changed Canadian literary history.



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