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Concordia University | Université Concordia
1455, boul. de Maisonneuve West, EV-3.725
Montréal, Québec, Canada H3G 1M8
(514) 848-2424, ext. 4699
jcah@concordia.ca
<http://jcah-ahac.concordia.ca>

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Canadian Women Artists History Initiative

SPECIAL ISSUE: *Women and the Artistic Field*

Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes

NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL: *Les femmes et le champ artistique*

In 2012, the first collection of scholarly essays on women and art in Canadian history came forth from the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, in the form of a book edited by two CWAHI founders, Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson. By any yardstick (as fields used to be measured), *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970* was a monument to Canadian women’s agency and achievement, and, I must insist, a celebration of women’s contributions to the fields of art and art history. The project had drawn on the palpable excitement created by CWAHI’s inaugural conference, held in 2008 at Concordia University. *Rethinking Professionalism* was launched at the second CWAHI conference, “Imagining History,” and as I write, a call for papers for the third CWAHI conference, “THE ARTIST HERSELF: Broadening Ideas of Self-Portraiture in Canada” (Queen’s University, 2015), is stirring excitement and confirming, as though it were needed, the communal desire to better understand women’s art practices in Canada and Canadian women’s art practices abroad.

There is yet more to say about CWAHI as an institution, and this under the heading of ‘generosity’, for its initial impetus was the expansion and consolidation of a documentation centre and open access resource, projects organized by Janice Anderson and Melinda Reinhart, and still thriving in a way that engages emergent scholars in the importance of primary documents – archival research – and opens the possibility to anyone with access to a computer. This ongoing project is both a gift and a challenge to contribute to the database, to *own it*, as the expression goes. The fruits of CWAHI’s labour are found not only in this issue of *JCAH/AHAC*, but in books, articles, and artists’ files.

In this issue, which its guest editors will introduce, we find not only the dissemination of research, but as we have now grown to expect, its organization along a methodological axis that enriches every individual contribution. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson guide us to think through a particular framework that emerged in the papers and discussions of the 2012 conference, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the “artistic field.” The work of these editors and contributors thereby illuminates the intersection between social and relational questions in art, and women’s histories, thereby implicitly showing their entanglement, their mutual dependencies.

Once again, women are afield, as transformative agents in the field of art history, some afield in another sense of the word, which is operating effectively, but at a distance.

Martha Langford

En 2012, le Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes publiait la première collection d'essais sur les femmes et l'art dans l'histoire du Canada, sous la direction de deux fondatrices du Réseau, Kristina Huneault et Janice Anderson. Quelle que soit l'aune à laquelle on le mesure, ce livre, *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970*, est un monument à la gloire des réalisations des Canadiennes et, j'insiste, une célébration des contributions des femmes aux domaines de l'art et de l'histoire de l'art. Le projet est né de l'enthousiasme palpable suscité par le colloque inaugural du Réseau, en 2008, à l'université Concordia. *Rethinking Professionalism* a été lancé lors du deuxième colloque du Réseau, « Imaginer l'Histoire ». Au moment où j'écris ces lignes, les invitations à soumettre des articles pour le troisième colloque, « L'ARTISTE ELLE-MÊME : Une vision élargie de l'autoportrait au Canada » (Université Queen's, 2015), suscitent l'enthousiasme et confirment, comme si c'était nécessaire, le désir commun de mieux comprendre les pratiques artistiques des femmes au Canada et les pratiques artistiques des Canadiennes à l'étranger.

Il y aurait encore beaucoup à dire sur le Réseau en tant qu'institution sous la rubrique « générosité », car le but initial était l'expansion et la consolidation d'un centre de documentation et d'une ressource en accès libre. Ce projet, mis en œuvre par Janice Anderson et Melinda Reinhart, continue de prospérer et de promouvoir auprès des chercheurs émergents l'importance des documents primaires – la recherche archivistique – et de les mettre à la disposition de quiconque a accès à un ordinateur. Ce projet est à la fois un don et un défi de contribuer à la base de données, de *se l'approprier* comme on dit couramment. Vous pouvez voir les fruits de ce travail du Réseau non seulement dans ce numéro des *Annales*, mais aussi dans des livres, des articles et des dossiers d'artistes.

Dans ce numéro, qui vous sera présenté par les rédacteurs invités, vous trouverez, non seulement la diffusion des recherches, mais aussi, comme nous pouvons nous y attendre, son organisation suivant un axe méthodologique qui enrichit chaque contribution individuelle. Kristina Huneault et Janice Anderson nous amènent à penser selon un cadre particulier qui a émergé des articles et discussions du colloque de 2012, le concept de « champ artistique » de Pierre Bourdieu. Le travail de ces rédacteurs et contributeurs éclaire ainsi la jonction entre les questions sociétales et relationnelles dans l'art et les histoires de femmes, montrant ainsi, implicitement, leur enchevêtrement, leur interdépendance.

Encore une fois, les femmes vont de l'avant comme agents de transformation dans le champ de l'histoire de l'art, certaines agissant efficacement, mais à distance.

Martha Langford

Women and the Artistic Field: Cultural Production in the Canadian Context

This special issue of the *Journal of Canadian Art History* brings together a selection of papers stemming from the 2012 Montreal conference of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI). In Canada, as elsewhere, the study of women's contributions to visual and material culture has increased dramatically over recent decades; moreover, consideration of women's art has broadened the range of issues, objects and practitioners open to art-historical inquiry. The 2012 CWAHI conference asked participants to consider this expanded terrain and the state of research on it. What aspects of previous scholarship on women and art in Canada are still vital today? What new approaches are emerging? And what remains to be achieved?

With 54 papers and 195 participants, the responses to these questions encompassed a far greater wealth of ideas than a journal special issue can accommodate. The most complete record of the conference as an historical event is to be found in videos available on the CWAHI website (cwahi.concordia.ca). A number of presentations have also been expanded for publication elsewhere,¹ and these give a sense of the breadth of topics discussed and the approaches employed, which ranged from methodological inquiry to statistical investigation. Thus, for example, Kristy Holmes asked us to think critically about whether the project of developing a specifically *Canadian* approach to feminist art history is one still worth pursuing, while Joyce Zemans updated her classic accounting of the institutional status of women and the arts in Canada.² Given these resources, this *JCAH/AHAC* special issue aims not to document the 2012 conference but, rather, to bring together a group of papers that enables consideration of its guiding questions through one particular perspective: that of the "artistic field."

The term references the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, the artistic field is a profoundly social and relational arena of forces and possibilities: a terrain of positions and position-takings marked by struggles over the boundaries of the field itself and control of the material and symbolic resources that circulate within it.³ The current special issue is divided into two groups of papers, each of which addresses the concept

Les femmes et le champ artistique : la production culturelle dans le contexte canadien

Le présent numéro spécial des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* réunit un certain nombre de communications issues du colloque du Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes, tenu à Montréal en 2012. Au Canada, comme ailleurs, l'étude de l'apport des femmes à la culture visuelle et matérielle s'est accrue de façon remarquable au cours des dernières décennies. En outre, l'intérêt porté à l'art des femmes a permis d'enrichir l'éventail de sujets, d'objets et de praticiens offerts au regard scrutateur des historiens de l'art. Le colloque de 2012 du Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes proposait aux participants de se pencher sur ce cadre élargi et sur l'état de la recherche qui le caractérise. Quels aspects des précédents travaux d'érudition sur les femmes et l'art au Canada demeurent essentiels aujourd'hui? Quelles sont les approches émergentes? Et que reste-t-il à accomplir?

Avec 54 communications et 195 participants tentant de répondre à ces questions, le colloque a suscité un foisonnement d'idées beaucoup plus considérable que ce qu'un numéro spécial d'une revue peut couvrir. L'attestation la plus complète du colloque en tant qu'événement historique se trouve dans les vidéos figurant sur le site du Réseau (cwahi.concordia.ca). Un certain nombre de présentations ont également été enrichies en vue d'être publiées sous d'autres formats¹ ; elles donnent une idée de l'ampleur des sujets discutés et des approches privilégiées, allant de la recherche méthodologique aux enquêtes statistiques. Ainsi, Kristy Holmes nous a demandé de considérer sous un angle critique la pertinence de poursuivre le projet visant à développer une approche spécifiquement *canadienne* à l'histoire de l'art féministe, tandis que Joyce Zemans a actualisé son compte rendu classique du statut institutionnel des femmes et de l'art au Canada². Compte tenu de la grande quantité de ressources disponibles, il ne saurait être question dans ce numéro spécial des *JCAH/AHAC* de documenter le colloque de 2012 dans sa totalité, mais plutôt de rassembler un certain nombre de communications qui invitent à l'examen de ses questions mobilisatrices sous une perspective particulière : celle du « champ artistique ».

of an artistic field. The first group – including articles by Andrew Nurse, Kirk Niergarth, Erin Morton and Anithe de Carvalho – analyses different aspects of the artistic field in Canada: its historical emergence, its rules and norms, the position of individual women artists within it, and its strategic deployment by governments and public history makers. The second grouping – with papers by Samantha Burton, Carolyn MacHardy, Patricia Sheppard, Elaine C. Paterson, and Catherine MacKenzie – works to turn readers’ attention to the dialogically complementary issue of Canada in the artistic field. Whether explicitly or implicitly, these articles ask us to situate a concern for Canadian experience within larger fields of cultural production – notably those produced within the context of empire or related to its evangelical urge. Taken together, the papers’ engagement with these larger familial, political, socio-economic and devotional contexts push at the geographic and conceptual boundaries that have characterized histories of “Canadian” art.

The Artistic Field in Canada

The issue’s most extended consideration of the notion of an artistic field and its implications for Canadian women’s art history, comes in its opening article. Here, historian Andrew Nurse introduces Bourdieu’s formulation, marrying it to a more explicit consideration of gender than is present in the sociologist’s own writing. Through the lens of an artistic field, Nurse recasts well-known facts about Emily Carr to enable a more socially grounded analysis of her gendered position as a woman artist than has hitherto been available. For Nurse, Carr’s understanding and navigation of her gendered identity are not reducible to her personality, nor even to the fact of her being “a woman in a man’s world”; rather, they are the complex result of the encounter between Carr’s individual dispositions and an emerging artistic field in which an ideology of aesthetic autonomy sat in precarious and confusing relation to larger social practices of discrimination.

To be able to recognize the rules of the artistic field is, for an art historian, to possess a significant tool for cultural analysis. If Nurse’s essay enriches our understanding of Carr’s gendered identity, his discussion of the field itself also implicitly enables us to think anew about the construction of value within the arts. This project is further taken up in the section’s second essay. Here, Kirk Niergarth self-reflexively investigates the pathways open to the art historian wishing to write about one of the Canadian artworld’s many “minor female figures” – in this case, the New Brunswick painter Julia Crawford. Navigating between two of feminist art history’s better-known techniques, Niergarth neither celebrates Crawford’s artistic agency nor critiques the

Ce terme renvoie aux travaux du sociologue français Pierre Bourdieu. Pour celui-ci, le champ artistique est une arène foncièrement sociale et relationnelle de forces et de possibilités : un échiquier de positions et de prises de position marqué par des luttes au regard des limites du champ même et de la mainmise sur les ressources matérielles et symboliques qui y circulent³. Deux groupes de communications figurent dans ce numéro spécial, chacun abordant le concept d'un champ artistique. Le premier groupe – comprenant des articles d'Andrew Nurse, de Kirk Niergarth, d'Erin Morton et d'Anithe de Carvalho – analyse différents aspects du champ artistique au Canada : son émergence historique, ses règles et ses normes, la situation des femmes artistes qui l'occupent, ainsi que son utilisation stratégique par les gouvernements et les façonneurs de l'histoire publique. Le deuxième groupe – composé d'articles de Samantha Burton, de Carolyn MacHardy, de Patricia Sheppard, d'Elaine C. Paterson et de Catherine MacKenzie – s'emploie à diriger l'attention des lecteurs vers la question dialogiquement complémentaire du Canada dans le champ artistique. De manière explicite ou implicite, ces articles nous enjoignent de situer un sujet relatif à l'expérience canadienne dans des cadres élargis de la production culturelle – notamment ceux créés dans le contexte de l'empire ou liés à sa ferveur évangélique. Une fois les communications regroupées, leur incursion dans ces contextes familiaux, politiques, socioéconomiques et dévotionnels plus vastes parvient à repousser les frontières géographiques et conceptuelles qui ont caractérisé l'histoire de l'art « canadien ».

Le champ artistique au Canada

Dans le présent numéro, l'analyse la plus élaborée du concept de champ artistique et de ses répercussions sur l'histoire de l'art des femmes canadiennes apparaît dans l'article d'ouverture. L'historien Andrew Nurse y présente en effet la formulation de Bourdieu, l'assortissant à une considération plus explicite du genre que ce qui figure dans les propres écrits du sociologue. À travers l'objectif d'un champ artistique, Nurse remanie des faits bien établis au sujet d'Emily Carr, procédant à une analyse plus sociale de sa position sexuée en tant qu'artiste féminine. Pour Nurse, la compréhension et la trajectoire que privilégie Carr par rapport à son identité sexuée ne peuvent se réduire à sa personnalité, ou même au fait qu'elle est femme dans un monde d'hommes. Elles sont plutôt le résultat complexe de la rencontre entre ses dispositions individuelles et un champ artistique émergent dans lequel une idéologie d'autonomie esthétique se dresse de façon précaire et confuse par rapport à des pratiques de discrimination sociale plus courantes.

Un historien de l'art qui est capable de reconnaître les règles du champ artistique possède un outil essentiel à l'analyse culturelle. Si la dissertation

patriarchal structures that limited her opportunity. Rather, he sets out to examine Crawford's marginal art-historical status in light of her relation to what Bourdieu might call the *doxa* of the artistic field – in other words, the rules of the game. How, Niergarth asks, was value attributed in the New Brunswick artworld of the day, and how did Crawford's own choices situate her in relation to those determinations?

One of Pierre Bourdieu's primary observations about the artistic field is that "it is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it."⁴ The last two articles in this section take up the relation of the artistic field to that larger field of power by examining how federal and provincial governments have mobilized artistic production, either directly or at arm's length. In her essay on the self-taught Nova Scotia painter Maud Lewis, Erin Morton examines the historical intersection between accounts of Lewis's art and the economic fortunes of Nova Scotians under the conditions of late capitalism. Morton concludes that public history makers – from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia – instrumentalized Lewis's colourful paintings in their attempts to deflect public attention away from poverty in Nova Scotia, and its complex connections to the modernizing strategies of the post-war period.

In a related vein, Anithe de Carvalho explores the motivations that underpinned federal and provincial funding of one of Quebec's most significant instances of feminist public art: Francine Larivée's *La chambre nuptiale*. While conventional understandings of Larivée's installation have positioned it within an avant-garde lineage and emphasized its critique of established social norms, de Carvalho draws a convincing profile of the utility of Larivée's project to the political mainstream. Policy-makers eager to quell soaring levels of social disaffection amongst youth funded the work on the basis of the summer employment opportunities it would provide, while the political architects of a new Quebec saw the work's potential to contribute to a reconstructed collective identity and an expanded sense of stake-holding amongst all Quebecers.

Canada in the Artistic Field

For Bourdieu, fields are necessarily sites of dispute, and among the things under contestation are the very boundaries and definitions of the fields themselves. From feminist theory's reluctant embrace of the term "women," to feminist art-history's struggles over who is to count as an "artist," the challenges to discourse posed by the inclusion of women are matters of inherent interest for the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, and they fit well with Bourdieu's own injunction to scholarly self-reflexivity.⁵ In the

de Nurse alimente notre compréhension de l'identité sexuée de Carr, sa discussion du champ artistique en question nous permet aussi par le fait même de reconsidérer la création de la valeur dans les arts. Ce sujet est repris plus en détail dans le deuxième essai de la section. Kirk Niergarth y examine, en mode autoréflexif, les voies qui s'offrent à l'historien de l'art désireux d'écrire sur l'une des nombreuses « figures féminines secondaires » du milieu artistique canadien – en l'occurrence, la peintre du Nouveau-Brunswick, Julia Crawford. Naviguant entre deux approches parmi les plus courantes de l'histoire de l'art féministe, Niergarth n'encense pas la démarche artistique de Crawford, et ne critique pas non plus par ailleurs les structures patriarcales qui ont pu restreindre ses ambitions. Il entreprend plutôt d'examiner le statut marginal de Crawford dans l'histoire de l'art, à la lumière de son rapport avec ce que Bourdieu appellerait la *doxa* du champ artistique – en d'autres mots, les règles du jeu. Niergarth se demande comment la valeur était attribuée dans le milieu artistique de l'époque au Nouveau-Brunswick, et comment les propres choix de Crawford ont contribué à la situer par rapport à ces déterminants.

L'une des principales observations de Pierre Bourdieu au sujet du champ artistique est qu'il est contenu dans le champ du pouvoir, tout en étant relativement autonome au regard de celui-ci⁴. Les deux derniers articles de cette section abordent le sujet de la relation du champ artistique par rapport au champ plus large du pouvoir, en examinant notamment la manière dont les gouvernements provinciaux et fédéral ont mobilisé la production artistique, soit de façon directe, soit en maintenant une certaine distance. Dans son essai sur Maud Lewis, artiste autodidacte de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Erin Morton se penche sur l'intersection historique entre les récits de l'œuvre de Lewis et la situation économique des Néo-Écossais dans le contexte du capitalisme tardif. Morton conclut que les façonneurs de l'histoire publique – de la Société Radio-Canada jusqu'à la Galerie d'art de la Nouvelle-Écosse – instrumentalisaient les toiles colorées de Lewis dans le but de détourner l'attention du public de la pauvreté en Nouvelle-Écosse et de ses liens complexes avec les stratégies modernisantes de l'après-guerre.

Dans un ordre d'idées voisin, Anithe de Carvalho explore les motivations qui sous-tendaient le financement fédéral et provincial de l'un des cas les plus notables d'art public féministe au Québec : *La chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée. Bien que les perceptions traditionnelles de l'installation de Larivée l'aient positionnée dans une lignée avant-gardiste en soulignant sa critique des normes sociales établies, de Carvalho trace un portrait convaincant de l'utilité du projet de Larivée au regard du courant politique dominant. Les décideurs politiques, impatients d'apaiser une forte désaffection sociale parmi les jeunes, ont en effet financé l'œuvre sur la base des emplois d'été qu'elle allait générer. Les architectes politiques d'un nouveau Québec, eux, y voyaient un potentiel

second section of this special issue, the papers assembled draw attention to the first of the Initiative's defining terms: its Canadianness.

How should the field of "Canadian Art History" be delimited? As readers of the *Journal of Canadian Art History* are amply aware, the disciplinary approach to Canadian art has been shaped by the profound nationalism of two key periods in its history: the 1920s, when the outlines of its master narrative were established, and the 1960s and 70s, when this narrative was institutionally cemented through the publication of major survey texts and the inauguration of graduate programs of study. Both the appeal of these moments and their negative consequences have been addressed by Canadian historian Katie Pickles, who observes that, "in countries moving on from a British imperial past to construct national identities, emphasizing uniqueness was politically astute and the machinery of the state encouraged national-focused research . . . Such a climate made it possible for the postcolonial promise of abandoning restrictive histories to be hijacked by nation-building projects that are easily critiqued."⁶ With charges of nationalist parochialism now being supplemented by pressures to adapt to a globalizing world, Canadian art historians, like their historian counterparts, are being challenged to rethink the boundaries of their field.

If the prospect of change is in the air, however, its advent is not assured; nor are its outlines clear. As Bourdieu observes, any cultural field is one in which forces of social reproduction contend with those of change. For innovation and new research to occur, they must already "exist in a potential state at the heart of the system of already realized possibles, like *structural lacunae* which appear to wait for and call for fulfilment."⁷ In the case of Canadian art history, even a cursory examination reveals how inadequate the international border is as a frame for our field of study. Is "Canadian" to be taken as signifying art produced on what is now (but certainly was not always) Canadian soil? If so, what is to be made of the production of women who left Canada to pursue their careers in America, Europe or even further afield? Yet if "Canadian" is taken to signify art produced by those of Canadian birth or citizenship, what becomes of the production of the many women who travelled here only briefly, but whose observations are some of our most important visual documents of the nation's early history? Indeed, even within that apparently most securely located contingent of women – those born *and* working within the geographic confines of Canada – there is dissent, notably amongst the many indigenous and Quebecois women for whom "Canadian" is not a primary field of identification.

Collectively, the essays in the second half of this issue deepen our appreciation of the ramifications of such cursory observations. The section opens with an article by Samantha Burton exploring the transnational

de contribution à une identité collective reconstituée et à un sens accru de l'appartenance civique chez tous les Québécois.

Le Canada dans le champ artistique

Pour Bourdieu, les champs sont nécessairement des aires de dispute, où sont notamment contestées leurs frontières mêmes ainsi que leurs définitions. De la réticence avec laquelle la théorie féministe a adopté le terme « femme » jusqu'aux luttes de l'histoire de l'art féministe visant à modifier les conventions déterminant qui pouvait être considérée comme « artiste », les défis au discours posés par l'inclusion des femmes sont des sujets d'intérêt inhérent pour le Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes. Ils siéent d'ailleurs bien à la propre recommandation de Bourdieu nous enjoignant à l'autoréflexion savante⁵. Dans la deuxième section de ce numéro spécial, les communications présentées dirigent l'attention du lecteur vers le premier des termes clés du Réseau : sa « canadienneté ».

Comment le champ de l'histoire de l'art canadien devrait-il être circonscrit? Comme le savent très bien les lecteurs des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, l'approche disciplinaire à l'endroit de l'art canadien a été façonnée par le nationalisme ambiant de deux périodes clés de l'histoire du pays : les années 1920, lorsque les contours de sa trame principale ont été tracés, et les années 1960 et 1970, lorsque cette trame a été institutionnalisée par la publication d'ouvrages d'envergure et l'inauguration de programmes d'études aux cycles supérieurs. L'historienne canadienne Katie Pickles s'est penchée sur l'attrait de ces moments ainsi que sur leurs conséquences négatives. Elle a ainsi remarqué que « dans les pays qui laissaient derrière eux un passé impérial britannique pour se forger une identité nationale, il était politiquement astucieux de miser sur un caractère unique, et l'appareil de l'État encourageait les activités de recherche à caractère national [...] Un tel climat favorisait le détournement de la promesse postcoloniale d'abandon des histoires restrictives au profit de projets d'édification de la nation facilement critiquables⁶ ». À présent, avec les accusations de chauvinisme auxquelles s'ajoutent les pressions à s'adapter à la mondialisation, les historiens de l'art canadien, à l'instar de leurs homologues historiens, doivent repenser les frontières de leur champ.

Si des possibilités de changement se profilent à l'horizon, l'avènement de cette nouvelle définition n'est toutefois pas assuré, et son cadre demeure flou. Comme l'a observé Bourdieu, tout champ culturel voit les forces de la reproduction sociale affronter celles du changement. L'innovation et les nouvelles initiatives de recherche ne se produisent que si elles « existent à l'état potentiel au sein du système des possibles déjà réalisés, comme des *lacunes structurales* qui paraissent attendre et appeler le remplissement [...] ⁷ ». En ce qui concerne

identity of the painter Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes. As one of the most talented and successful of the Canadian-born women artists who went to Europe for training at the end of the nineteenth century, Forbes has been curiously absent from the many exhibitions and publications dedicated to individual Canadian women artists since the 1980s. As someone who never returned to live in her homeland and who, indeed, strategically adopted the tropes of British identity in the latter part of her career, it is likely that she has not seemed “Canadian” enough. And yet, as Burton so effectively demonstrates, Forbes’s career and visual production open up new methodological possibilities for those attuned to the transnational potentials of contemporary scholarship on the “British World.”

It remains for historians of “Canadian Art” to assess the potential benefits and risks of resituating our field so firmly back within the orbit of the imperial centre. In the meantime, however, it is clear that Burton’s terminology corresponds to an historical dynamic of central concern to women in Canada, whose relation to the wider “British World” also underwrites the next three essays in this collection. Articles by Patricia Sheppard and Carolyn MacHardy examine two albums compiled by British aristocrats: Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, who accompanied her husband on military and diplomatic postings in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick in the 1830s and 1840s, and Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen, who, together with her husband, purchased property in the Okanagan in the 1890s. Both articles explore the ways in which the Empire’s North American terrain – whether conceived as battlefield or as playground – afforded British women the occasion to record highly personal narratives of family events and concerns. Lady Aberdeen also figures in the contribution by Elaine C. Paterson, who details the transnational social networks that bound Irish and Canadian women in the context of the international Home Arts and Industries movement. As vicereine of both nations, Lady Aberdeen was only the most prominent figure in a more widespread network of professional, creative and activist relationships that connected the two countries. Skillfully tracing the threads of this network through exquisite objects of home manufacture, Paterson investigates materials such as lace and woven textiles to ask what they can tell us about the transnational intersections of identity and the migration of women’s ideas along what she calls the “intimate frontiers of Empire.”

In the final essay of the issue Catherine MacKenzie broadens the field of geographic inquiry still further, marshalling extensive archival research to outline the existence of a hitherto unknown group of Canadian women artists who worked as missionaries in China. Marrying their artistic pursuits

l'histoire de l'art canadien, un bref examen suffit à révéler l'inadéquation de la frontière internationale comme cadre pour notre champ d'études. Doit-on considérer comme « canadienne » toute œuvre artistique réalisée sur ce qui correspond aujourd'hui (mais certainement pas dans le passé) au sol canadien? Si tel est le cas, qu'advient-il de l'œuvre des femmes qui ont quitté le Canada pour poursuivre leur carrière aux États-Unis, en Europe ou même dans des contrées plus lointaines? Et si l'on utilise le terme « canadien » pour désigner l'art créé par les personnes de naissance ou de citoyenneté canadienne, qu'advient-il de la production des nombreuses femmes qui n'ont séjourné que brièvement au Canada, mais dont les observations comptent parmi les documents visuels les plus importants des débuts de l'histoire de notre nation? Par ailleurs, même au sein du contingent de femmes qui semble le plus solidement établi – soit celles qui sont nées *et* ont travaillé dans les limites géographiques du Canada – il y a dissentiment, notamment chez nombre d'Autochtones et de Québécoises pour qui le vocable « canadienne » ne correspond pas au champ principal de leur identité.

Pris collectivement, les essais de la seconde moitié de ce numéro nous permettent d'approfondir notre compréhension des ramifications de ces observations sommaires. Un article de Samantha Burton ouvre cette section ; l'auteure y explore l'identité transnationale de la peintre Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes. Il est curieux de constater que cette artiste canadienne, parmi les plus talentueuses et reconnues à s'être rendues en Europe pour parfaire leur formation à la fin du XIX^e siècle, est absente des nombreuses expositions et publications consacrées aux artistes femmes du Canada depuis les années 1980. Comme elle n'est jamais retournée vivre dans son pays d'origine et qu'elle a de fait stratégiquement adopté l'identité britannique en fin de carrière, il se peut qu'elle n'affiche pas un profil suffisamment « canadien ». Et pourtant, comme Burton l'a si bien démontré, la carrière et l'œuvre visuelle de Forbes offrent de nouvelles possibilités méthodologiques à ceux qui s'intéressent au rayonnement transnational potentiel des recherches contemporaines portant sur le « monde britannique ».

Il reste aux historiens de l'« art canadien » à évaluer les avantages et les risques potentiels de resituer aussi formellement notre champ dans l'orbite de la puissance impériale. Entre-temps, il est toutefois clair que la terminologie de Burton correspond à une dynamique historique au centre des préoccupations des femmes au Canada, dont la relation au « monde britannique » plus vaste fait également l'objet des trois prochains essais de cette collection. Les articles signés Patricia Sheppard et Carolyn MacHardy examinent deux albums compilés par des aristocrates britanniques. Il s'agit de Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, qui accompagnait son mari lors d'affectations militaires et diplomatiques en

with the evangelical community's need for visually appealing material, their artworks reached tens of thousands. MacKenzie's work requires us to consider women's participation in ideological currents that surpassed national boundaries in pursuit of a larger aim. In tracing these points of intersection between the artistic and the religious fields, MacKenzie further opens a door towards a richer geographic understanding of the artistic field itself.

Women's Art History in the Canadian Context

Some familiar feminist issues and paradigms continue to enrich the research into Canadian women's art histories in this issue, including the dialogical encounter of private and public space, the importance of biographical research and the foregrounding of craft and other forms of once-marginalized cultural production. Yet in its address to the artistic field the issue also sets out alternatives to some of the traditions of feminist art history in Canada and seeks to expand its purview into the wider world. As organizers of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, we wish to thank the contributors – and indeed all of the conference participants – for making this kind of critical exploration possible.

Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson

NOTES

- 1 See: Laurier LACROIX, "L'art des Huronnes vu par le frère Gabriel Sagard en 1623–1624," *Les cahiers des dix* 66 (2012): 323–38; Alena BUIS and Sarah E.K. SMITH, "Sanaugait in Nunavut," *Journal of Modern Craft* 6:2 (2013): 187–204; Mora Dianne O'NEILL, *On a Path to Learning: Early Nova Scotian Women Artists* (Halifax: AGNS, 2012); Andrea TERRY, "Gender, Canadian Nationhood and 'Keeping House': The Cultural Bureaucratization of Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario, 1900–1960s," *Gender & History* 25:1 (April 2013): 47–64; Maggie ATKINSON, "Outsider Art: Tracing the Avante-garde in Alma Rumball's Visionary Images," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 105:4 (Spring 2013): 22–25; and Jennifer SALAHUB, "Marion Nicoll's Crafty Path: The Road Not Taken," in *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy*, ed. Ann Davis, Elizabeth Herbert, Jennifer Salahub and Christine Sowiak (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013).
- 2 See: Kristy HOLMES, "Feminist Art History in Canada: A 'Limited Pursuit'?" in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup, Erin Morton and Kirsty Robertson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming 2014) and Joyce ZEMANS and Amy WALLACE, "Where are the Women? Updating the Account!" *RACAR* 38:1 (Spring 2013): 1–29.

Ontario, au Québec et au Nouveau-Brunswick dans les années 1830 et 1840, et de Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, qui a fait l'acquisition de terres avec son mari dans la vallée de l'Okanagan dans les années 1890. Les deux articles explorent les façons dont le territoire nord-américain de l'empire – qu'il soit perçu comme un champ de bataille ou comme un terrain de jeu – a donné aux femmes britanniques l'occasion de monter des récits très personnels d'événements et de préoccupations en lien avec la famille. Lady Aberdeen apparaît également dans l'article d'Elaine C. Paterson, qui détaille les réseaux sociaux transnationaux qui unissaient les femmes irlandaises et canadiennes dans le contexte du mouvement international « Home Arts and Industries ». À titre de vice-reine des deux nations, Lady Aberdeen n'était que la figure la plus en vue d'un réseau plus vaste de relations professionnelles, créatives et militantes qui reliaient les deux pays. Paterson remonte adroitement le fil de ce réseau au moyen d'objets raffinés de confection maison. Elle examine des matériaux tels que la dentelle et les textiles tissés afin de découvrir ce qu'ils peuvent nous révéler sur les croisements transnationaux de l'identité, la migration des idées des femmes ainsi que ce qu'elle nomme les « frontières intimes de l'empire ».

Dans le dernier essai du numéro, Catherine MacKenzie élargit encore davantage le champ de l'enquête géographique. Pour ce faire, elle a effectué des recherches approfondies dans des documents d'archives qui permettent de démontrer l'existence d'un groupe d'artistes canadiennes jusqu'ici inconnues qui travaillaient comme missionnaires en Chine. Conjuguant leurs activités artistiques au besoin de leur communauté évangélique d'exercer un attrait visuel, leurs œuvres d'art ont été vues par des dizaines de milliers de personnes. La démarche de MacKenzie met en évidence la participation des femmes à des courants idéologiques qui dépassaient les frontières nationales, à la poursuite d'un objectif plus vaste. En soulignant les points de convergence entre les champs artistiques et religieux, MacKenzie favorise une meilleure compréhension géographique du champ artistique même.

L'histoire de l'art des femmes dans le contexte canadien

Quelques questions et paradigmes féministes bien connus continuent d'enrichir la recherche sur l'histoire de l'art des femmes canadiennes abordée dans le présent numéro, y compris la rencontre dialogique entre l'espace privé et public, l'importance de la recherche biographique ainsi que la mise au premier plan de l'art artisanal et d'autres formes de production culturelle jadis marginalisées. Par ailleurs, dans son traitement du champ artistique, ce numéro propose d'autres possibilités au-delà de certaines traditions présentes dans l'histoire de l'art féministe au Canada, et cherche à élargir sa vision du monde. À titre d'organisatrices du Réseau d'étude sur l'histoire des artistes canadiennes, nous

- 3 See Pierre BOURDIEU, “The Author’s Point of View: Some General Properties of Fields of Cultural Production,” in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 214–78, and *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- 4 BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 37.
- 5 See David L. SWARTZ, “Metaprinciples for Sociological Research in a Bourdieusian Perspective,” in *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, ed. Philip S. Gorski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 23–24.
- 6 Katie PICKLES, “Transnational Intentions and Cultural Cringe: History Beyond National Boundaries,” in *Contesting Clio’s Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, ed. Christopher Dummit and Michael Dawson (University of London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2009), 142.
- 7 BOURDIEU, *The Rules of Art*, 235.

désirons remercier les collaborateurs, ainsi que tous les participants au colloque, qui ont rendu possible cette exploration critique.

Kristina Huneault et Janice Anderson

NOTES

- 1 Voir: Laurier LACROIX, « L'art des Huronnes vu par le frère Gabriel Sagard en 1623–1624 », *Les cahiers des dix*, vol. 66 (2012), p. 323–38 ; Alena BUIS et Sarah E.K. SMITH, « Sanaugait in Nunavut », *Journal of Modern Craft*, vol. 6, n° 2 (2013), p. 187–204 ; Mora Dianne O'NEILL, *On a Path to Learning: Early Nova Scotian Women Artists*, Halifax, AGNS, 2012 ; Andrea TERRY, « Gender, Canadian Nationhood and 'Keeping House': The Cultural Bureaucratisation of Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario, 1900–1960s », *Gender & History*, vol. 25, n° 1 (avril 2013), p. 47–64 ; Maggie ATKINSON, « Outsider Art: Tracing the Avante-garde in Alma Rumball's Visionary Images », *Newfoundland Quarterly*, vol. 105, n° 4 (printemps 2013), p. 22–25 ; et Jennifer SALAHUB, « Marion Nicoll's Crafty Path: The Road Not Taken », dans *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy*, ed. Ann Davis, Elizabeth Herbert, Jennifer Salahub et Christine Sowiak, Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2013.
- 2 Voir: Kristy HOLMES, « Feminist Art History in Canada: A 'Limited Pursuit'? », dans *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup, Erin Morton et Kirsty Robertson, Montréal et Kingston, Presses universitaires McGill-Queen's (à venir 2014) et Joyce ZEMANS et Amy WALLACE, « Where are the Women? Updating the Account! », *RACAR*, vol. 38, n° 1 (printemps 2013), p. 1–29.
- 3 Voir Pierre BOURDIEU, « Le point de vue de l'auteur. Quelques propriétés générales des champs de production culturelle », dans *Les Règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littérature*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 298–391, et *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993.
- 4 BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 37.
- 5 Voir David L. SWARTZ, « Metaprinciples for Sociological Research in a Bourdieusian Perspective », dans *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis*, ed. Philip S. Gorski, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2013, p. 23–24.
- 6 Katie PICKLES, « Transnational Intentions and Cultural Cringe: History Beyond National Boundaries », dans *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, ed. Christopher Dummit et Michael Dawson, University of London, Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2009, p. 142.
- 7 BOURDIEU, *Les Règles de l'art*, p. 237.

Gendering the Artistic Field

ANDREW NURSE

In 1927, in one of the better-documented events in Canadian art history, Emily Carr (1871–1945) made the long trip from Victoria to Toronto for the *Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* exhibition, in which her work was prominently featured. Studies of Carr note that her inclusion in this exhibition marked a turning point in her career.¹ For Carr, meeting the members of the Group of Seven was particularly important because it highlighted the differences between her situation in Victoria and the central Canadian art world. In her journal, she reflected on this difference as she worried about the quality of her own paintings. “Their works,” she confided to her journal,

call to my very soul. Will they know what’s in me by those old Indian pictures, or will they feel disappointment and find me small and weak and fretful? Have the carps and frets and worries that have eaten into my soul, since I returned from Paris full of ambition and then had to struggle out there alone, made me small and mean, poor and petty – bitter? They too have had to struggle and buffer, but they’ve stood together.²

In addition to her sense of isolation, Carr also worried about her gender. Here, her response was more ambiguous. Two days earlier, she had asked herself if being a woman made a difference to what she hoped could be common artistic cause. At first, she decided that it did, but just as quickly dismissed the idea and turned her attention to artistic skills that, to her, transcended gender:

I wonder if these men feel, as I do, that there is common chord between us. No, I don’t believe they feel so toward a woman. I’m way behind them in drawing and in composition and rhythm and planes but I know inside me what they’re after and I feel that perhaps, given a chance, I could get it too.³

Carr's enthusiasm and ambiguity, her questions about art and gender, encapsulated not simply her own situation and development as an artist but, I will argue, the gendered dynamics of an evolving artistic "field" in Canada. Emily Carr's well-documented life and career provide an effective case study into the development of what I will argue was a semi-autonomous artistic field in modern Canada. More specifically, Carr's artistic career and personal life highlight how the development of a modern artistic field reorganized gender relations in the arts. I argue that this development displaced an earlier gendered social organization of the arts but did not – and could not – completely isolate the arts from broader social patterns. This reorganization created a new space for professionalized women artists by virtue of its commitment to an autonomous aesthetic. As with other socio-cultural fields, however, the Canadian artistic field was limited in two ways. First, it remained connected to society; hence broader patterns of gender relations always intruded upon it. Second, its semi-autonomous nature limited the degree to which changes in the artistic field effected broader social change. For women, this meant that the possibility of increased equality in professionalized artistic practice in Canada did not signify equality in Canadian society.

This essay addresses this issue in five parts. First, I will examine the concept of an artistic field and what its development tells us about the historical sociology of Canadian art. Here I will rely on Pierre Bourdieu's classic formulation, but look to deepen his framework by integrating a gendered perspective into it. Second, I will explore the development of an artistic field in Canada, paying particular attention to how it changed the social and economic organization of the arts from a gendered perspective. Here I will suggest that the emerging artistic field was caught in a twofold tension between itself and a pre-existing social organization of the arts, on the one hand, and the ideal of an autonomous aesthetic and the gendered character of the evolving institutions that helped to realize this ideal, on the other. Third, I will describe Carr's views on art to situate them within developing conceptions of aesthetic and artistic autonomy that were consistent with an emerging artistic field. Fourth, I will turn to how Carr negotiated the complex tensions that challenged but could not completely elide prevailing gendered social norms in the arts. I will conclude by looking at what Carr's career demonstrates about evolving gender relations in the arts and how they affected women artists, such as Carr, who were committed to the ideal of art as a professional career and an autonomous aesthetic. For Carr, I conclude, these commitments created a complicated

series of gender relations that became, at times, intensely isolating for her as a woman artist.

The Social Organization of Modern Art

Over the last generation, Canadian art and cultural historians have produced an impressive body of scholarship that has fundamentally restructured the Canadian cultural narrative. This reorganization has proceeded in a variety of ways that integrate interdisciplinary heuristics to look at how power, ideology, gender, and institutions function to sustain or marginalize specific forms of artistic practice. Bourdieu's conception of cultural fields can contribute to this analysis. As a form of historical sociology, its aim is to recast historical analysis by applying analytic frameworks drawn from sociology so as to more accurately capture the structural dynamics of historical change. Bourdieu's studies of French cultural history were designed with precisely this goal in mind.⁴ They are particularly relevant to the study of Canadian art history because they can expose the institutional structure of Canadian artistic modernity. More exactly, what they can show is the development of a semi-autonomous artistic field.

An artistic field is both an ideological and institutional construct. Ideologically, a field functions through a discursive system that establishes values, power, hierarchy, and currency. The institutional apparatus of a field organizes and sustains specific value structures and the social relations that follow from them. In the case of an artistic field, as Anne Whitelaw's work suggests, it is the institutional organization of society that creates the space for forms of art to come into being and that structures their meaning.⁵ According to Bourdieu, society is divided into a series of fields that are linked to each other but also strive to operate according to their own logic. In capitalist societies, all fields maintain some form of currency; that is: goods (symbolic or material) that circulate both within (and, to a lesser degree, outside) the field and that carry value.⁶ Under conditions of capitalism, economic relations are determined by market values, but these values are modified within discrete fields. As Bourdieu explained in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (trans. 1984), cultural fields are organized through a set of rules that privilege two different currencies: economic currency (money) and cultural capital, which can be defined as taste. That is, an individual's knowledge of cultural goods, ability to make distinctions between them, and participation in specific cultural processes become currencies in themselves that divide their bearers into hierarchical relations with each other.⁷

Fields are never completely separated from society. This creates a dynamic tension that both pushes fields toward autonomous systems of social rules

and simultaneously works to integrate them into the logic of the society in which they are set. Bourdieu's early work on museums and their publics, cultural consumption, and nineteenth-century French literature constitutes studies into the operation of cultural fields.⁸ His empirical research suggests that fields are far from homogeneous. Distinct fields mirror the class structure of the wider society but make space as well for different forms of capital that both circulate and are accumulated. Social agents are not powerless, but the structural frameworks of socio-cultural fields create imperatives that bind individual subjects.

One of the key bounding dynamics is "habitus," or social position. Social positions, as Bourdieu notes, "are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups, or institutions."⁹ In this sense, a habitus is an ascribed identity, but it can also be mobilized through individual, collective, or institutional action in ways that affect the overall organization of socio-cultural fields.¹⁰ A key to this way of thinking about social organization is that semi-autonomy brings to a field both possibilities and limitations that are directly connected to the degree of autonomy it enjoys. For example, a semi-autonomous artistic field can self-organize. Its power relations do not inherently reflect, say, the gendered or market dynamics of society. On the other hand, autonomy can also become delimiting in the sense that changes to a field do not necessarily create change in other fields or in the wider society. At the same time, the broader social institutions and structures – say, the market structure of capitalism or the gendered discourses of patriarchy – also pull fields back toward wider patterns.

Gender is an important component of socio-economic fields. While Bourdieu did not explicitly address gender in his classic formulations of field and habitus, he did recognize that gender issues were important to both social processes and discursive and institutional dynamics.¹¹ He also viewed the domestic sphere as a site of cultural politics within which socially constructed hierarchies became embedded as social practice. For Bourdieu, gender did not exist – even as social practice – unto itself. It was always embedded in and interacted with other social practices.¹² Said differently, a gender-defined habitus worked dialogically: it both framed the organization of socio-cultural fields, and was framed by them.

Bourdieu's conception of an artistic field works with a set of methodological problems that are similar to current feminist studies of artistic professionalism. Artistic professionalism, as historians of Canadian women's art recognize, has had complex and ambiguous effects on women involved in cultural production. On the one hand, it could work with established gendered conceptions of cultural production that made the

arts a legitimate pursuit for women. On the other, professionalizing artistic institutions in Canada tended to exclude women and treat their cultural work as the purview of “amateurs.”¹³ Professionalism, as studies of professional women artists note, is both an important and a complex concept. It is best viewed, like an artistic field, as an historical process and construct that both carries meaning and serves to institutionally organize artistic practice. In other words, exactly what it means to be a professional changes over time. In Canada, professionalism was important to the development of an artistic field for two reasons. First, professionalism carried with it a conception of authority that allowed artists – and allied intellectuals – to define legitimate aesthetics independent of other social imperatives. In other words, it facilitated the construction of an autonomous aesthetic. Second, it made the arts into an occupation with its own systems of training, modes of certification, and organizations. For women such as Emily Carr who aspired to professional careers in the arts, this meant that they needed to both transcend previous forms of artistic social organization and claim a particular habitus that was not exclusively or simply defined as male, but which nevertheless maintained restrictions on women’s entrance to the field. In Carr’s case, this required her to negotiate a complicated series of gendered cultural dynamics in a way that affected her on a personal level.

Gender and the Institutional Organization of Canadian Art

Colonial and early Confederation-era discourse presented the arts as an element of “civilization.”¹⁴ The arts were discursively constructed as markers of refinement, grace, and elevated moral and aesthetic purpose. They were, as well, markers of distinctiveness, separating the supposedly more plebian pastimes of artisans, workers, and the rural poor from the elevated leisure of the colonial elite. As Marylin McKay has explained with regard to colonial landscape painting, artistry was not a profession in itself. Instead, it was a leisure activity practiced by those with the necessary time and educational background. It was also often embedded in other discourses that linked it to military, natural historical, or botanical illustration.¹⁵ With regard to style, colonial and early-Confederation era artistry looked to imperial centres for guidance.¹⁶ At least some colonial discourse adopted an apologetic tone, suggesting that Canada’s stage of development was not yet sufficient to allow for the full flowering of art seen in Europe.¹⁷

Gender played an important role in both this discourse and the social organization of the arts that followed from it. For the colonial and early Confederation-era elite, women’s proficiency in the arts was an important marker of class position and one’s standing in polite society. Art was a means to an end. Etiquette books encouraged women’s artistic expression in home

decoration but discouraged the individual self-expression that became, for Carr and others, such an important marker of the autonomous artistic field of the twentieth century. Sedate watercolours, for example, could be used to complement furnishings.¹⁸ Likewise, the *Ladies Book of Useful Information* (1896) emphasized the importance of women's craftwork for home decoration.¹⁹

Private schools for girls reiterated the same discourse. The Church School for Girls in Windsor, Nova Scotia, for example, displayed its art studios on the front of its calendar and boasted of new additions that created more space for art and music education. Its provincial act of incorporation specified that it was designed to educate "girls and young women in the various branches of literature, science, and art."²⁰ The courses it provided were not unusual for their time. The school's tuition, and extra charges for painting and drawing instruction, likely priced this education outside the ability of families below the upper middle class. Art options proved popular with students and, one presumes, their families. In 1896, the school reported that 27 girls were enrolled in drawing, 17 in painting, 10 in china painting, and 17 in needlework. More senior classes in art history focused on old masters and the modern canon.²¹ What these young women were taught was a classical Eurocentric canon and its appreciation. The goal was not to produce professional artists, but to produce refined women who could converse on the arts and practice artistry as a leisure or decorative pursuit. Ottawa's Congregation of Notre Dame Educational Establishment for Young Ladies' calendar explained its goals: "The object of the school is to 'aim at giving such instruction to the students that they can go into the kitchen and cook a dinner, and from thence to the drawing room and entertain their guests.'"²² These same types of institutions were evident in Victoria during Carr's youth and constitute, in fact, the basis of the first educational exposure she and her sisters had to the arts.²³

Within this discursive and institutional framework, art circulated according to a specific logic. Canadian artistic goods occupied a secondary market position vis-à-vis European old masters in terms of both consumption and cultural capital.²⁴ In English-speaking Canada, some artists maintained connections with the social elite,²⁵ who also served as patrons of the arts, but patronage did not translate into a vibrant art market for either male or female artists. Exhibitions organized by fledgling galleries or artists' organizations, as Emily Carr discovered early in her career, did not usually produce appreciable sales, and artists were forced to find a series of innovative ways both to sell their work and to supplement their income, including lessons, reproductions, subscription sales, and other forms of occupational pluralism.²⁶ Institutional patronage provided only modest support. As Ellen McLeod reports, the Art Association of Montreal – one of the leading artistic organizations in

the country – “did not purchase Canadian art. In its acquisitions, the AAM almost totally neglected Canadian artists because of its pre-occupation with European painting.”²⁷

Women artists occupied a tertiary position in this market and even intentionally disguised their involvement in the arts labour force, as Susanna Moodie explained in *Roughing it in the Bush*:

I practiced a method of painting birds and butterflies upon the white, velvety surface of the large fungi that grow plentifully upon the bark of the sugar maple. These had an attractive appearance; and my brother, who was a captain in the provincial regiments, sold a great many of them among the officers without saying by whom they were painted.²⁸

Women also worked in the artistic labour market as teachers at women’s academies, as illustrators, and by exhibiting their work anonymously. A more limited number of women worked professionally in creative production. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, as the artistic field gained greater institutional support, this included portraiture, silhouettes, miniatures, and landscape.²⁹

The movement to a new form of artistic social organization began before Confederation and proceeded unevenly both across the country and in relation to men and women. This development was structured by a variety of social actors that included the state, the social elite, critics, and artists themselves. Formal institutions, such as galleries and artists’ societies, could advance Canadian artistic production and autonomy by mobilizing aesthetic standards, circulating art in society through exhibitions, and enhancing arts education.³⁰ This development was most evident in central Canada³¹ where the creation of the National Gallery and the emergence of arts societies in Ontario and Quebec both enhanced the cultural power of art institutions and increasingly supplemented weak art markets. In Canada, the growth of an artistic field was also dialogically related to cultural nationalism and the post-First World War growth of modernist aesthetics. One cannot directly map the growth of modernist aesthetics onto the development of the Canadian artistic field. Carr, for example, was personally committed to an ideal of art and a professional artistic career before her embrace of more modern artistic styles. But the growing popularity of the Group of Seven served as criticism of established academic art that was linked to conceptions of grace and refinement and detached the art market from its focus on these styles. It also provided a means for artists to work with a conception of art that was not ideologically bound to constructions of social class and gender.

As Carr also discovered, the development of an artistic field did not inherently advance women's place in the arts. It had important implications for women as artists in that an autonomous aesthetic was, theoretically, gender-neutral. This was how Carr defined art and how it was presented by leading artistic figures of the day. For example, the mandate of the Beaver Hall group focused on creative expression that did not discursively adhere to men or women even while it continued to deploy a gendered language. It aimed "to give the artist the assurance that he can paint what he feels, with utter disregard for what has hitherto been considered requisite to the acceptance of work at the recognized art exhibitions in Canadian centres. Schools and 'isms' do not trouble us; individual expression is our chief concern."³² A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), whose attitudes toward women later troubled Carr, made this same point and captured the ambiguity of the artistic field with regard to gender in comments he made about the art of Prudence Heward (1896–1947). When asked if Heward was one of the "best women painters" of her time, Jackson "became slightly irritable and replied '... forget the woman part ... In my opinion, she was the very best painter we ever had in Canada and she never got the recognition she richly deserved in her lifetime. I wanted her to join the Group of Seven, but like the Twelve Apostles, no women were included.'"³³ The Royal Canadian Academy (RCA) and other art organizations maintained similar prohibitions. Moreover, the exclusion of women was also applied to forms of creative expression dominated by women. With regard to the RCA, Mary Ella Dignam (1857–1938) noted, "[i]t was thought necessary to supply a clause in the constitution 'prohibiting the admission of – needlework, artificial flowers, cut paper, shellwork, models in coloured wax or any such performances'" from the definition of what constituted legitimate art work for diploma purposes. This clause, in Dignam's view "explains the status of women in art."³⁴ Said differently, from their beginning key institutions of a semi-autonomous artistic field in Canada reinforced established conceptions of gender in both the arts and the wider society by excluding key elements of women's cultural production from the definition of art.

In other ways, however, the rules of the developing artistic field could subvert gendered distinctions. Two considerations were important. First, through the state (federal and provincial) and the support of key patrons, the developing artistic field in Canada brought with it a reorganization of Canadian art markets. In effect, the state and key patrons created a market for Canadian art that partially separated artists from the logic of a free market. In the 1920s, with the rising influence of the Group of Seven, this market privileged specific forms of painting underwritten by the cultural capital of its producers and the institutional power of its patrons. In other

words, a new market for art in the general population did not suddenly develop.³⁵ What was developing was a market for artistic goods based in state institutions in which aesthetics – as opposed to the market – became a key to value.³⁶ Second, the evolving artistic field redefined exactly what constituted the practice of art. The older social organization of the arts that linked art to “elevated” elite pursuits remained an important element of public commentary in twentieth-century Canada.³⁷ But, the evolving artistic field increasingly linked art to a self-referential aesthetic. This self-referentiality, like the artistic field itself, was never complete and artists alone did not define it. They were both aided by and at times competed with patrons, intellectuals, critics, and gallery officials. The key, however, as the critic Graham McInnes noted, was that good artistic practice was defined by aesthetics.³⁸ What was important to these rules was that they were not inherently gendered. As Carr discovered, gendered social expectations clearly affected the evolving artistic field but, for her, one of the things that created confusion was that the criteria of art itself was discursively constructed so as to proceed on other grounds. The test of art was supposed to be its aesthetic; not the gender of the artist.

Emily Carr and the Practice of Art

Carr’s efforts to build an artistic career for herself followed a similar path to that of other women artists. Women responded to sexism in the artistic field in a variety of ways, as Susan Butlin’s work on professional women artists describes in detail. Some women artists banded together; others collaborated with male friends and colleagues, and still others created their own woman-centric art societies.³⁹ As Emily Carr discovered, some women artists elected to remain overseas, after studying outside Canada, to build a career for themselves. Carr’s biographical information is well known. She was born in 1871 in Victoria, British Columbia, into a devoutly Protestant middle-class family. She was first educated at home by an older sister and then in local academies and public school. She took art lessons, something that was not unusual for a young middle-class woman of her time. By all accounts, Carr chafed under the restrictions of the gendered social conventions of her time, both within her family and in the broader community. After her father’s death in 1888, she left high school and used some of her inheritance to pursue an education in the arts and seems, at this point, to have set her mind on an artistic career. She was formally trained, like many other women of her time, outside Canada, first in San Francisco and then England and finally in France. Her education was punctuated by returns home where she was active in local arts organizations, exhibited her work (both through local organizations and in her own studio), and taught art classes, primarily to children.⁴⁰

The difficulties of the early twentieth-century Canadian art market plagued Carr and, for a variety of reasons, the professional recognition for which she was looking eluded her until the late 1920s. To make a living, she engaged in an arts version of occupational plurality: teaching, selling the odd painting, making tourist souvenirs, and running a boarding house. This occupational pluralism continued over time in modified form. As the popularity of her art increased in the late 1920s, she devoted more time to painting and exhibiting but continued some craft production and began to write. At the time of her death, Carr had become a nationally recognized painter and author, a winner of the Governor General's award for her prose, whose paintings were preserved by a special trust to ensure posterity access to her work.

Carr's conception of art linked its practice to the autonomous aesthetic developing in the artistic field. Like the Beaver Hall group, she disavowed labels and did not like to talk about "isms" in the arts.⁴¹ Instead, Carr thought of art as either creative or formulaic.⁴² For her, true art was creative and the basis of creativity lay in personal emotional expression. Emotional expression need not be pleasing; it could "irritate" and "stir," but it was this very quality that made art stimulating and vital. "It may stir and irritate, but isn't it more entertaining and stimulating even to feel something unpleasant than to feel nothing at all – just a void? There is such a lot of drab stodginess in the world that it's delicious to get a thrill out of something."⁴³ This same quality separated art from "mechanical" reproduction. Expression lent individuality to representation, opening up any scene to a different – what Carr called "fresh" – way of seeing. Without emotional expression, artistry devolved into faithful reproduction akin to photography or more realistic academic modes of painting. Emotional expression, however, also had to be directed to a deeper understanding of the world. The true artist strove to get beneath "surface appearances" so as to understand and represent the spiritual dynamics of life. In Carr's view, this was the quality that connected all great art across time.⁴⁴

Carr's argument and the examples she used capture both her own thinking on art and a moment in the development of the Canadian artistic field. The types of art that Carr rejected represented an older way of thinking about artistic representation and its valuation of painterly skill over emotional expression. This was a mode of representation, Carr understood, appreciated by the Victoria elite. Her own interventions into the artistic controversies of her day and the developing quality of her painting constituted an effort to make a space for herself as a professional artist by promoting an aesthetic that was not linked to gendered social and class conventions. She pointed to the Group of Seven as an example of "real art" in the Canadian context and the

National Gallery as a progressive institution that promoted its development.⁴⁵ In effect, Carr publically defended the linked ideas of a professional self-determined artistic practice that was built around individuality in expression. Said differently, Carr's argument detached art from social and gendered conventions to work instead with a definition of art that referred back either to itself or to metaphysical qualities like emotion and spirituality.

After 1927, Carr's work was increasingly drawn into the Canadian artistic field in two interrelated ways. First, the connections she made in 1927 as part of the *Canadian West Coast Art* exhibition included not simply members of the Group of Seven but other prominent individuals involved in building a Canadian artistic field. She renewed and deepened her acquaintance with Marius Barbeau and came to know Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery.⁴⁶ In other words, she began to interact with individuals and institutions that shared her perspective on the arts, encouraged her, and could mobilize state and patron support for her work. She began to exhibit her work both nationally and internationally in a concerted way for the first time in her career. Assessed against this network, Carr found that the British Columbia arts scene paled in comparison. The response to works she exhibited in Victoria at the 1930 Island Arts and Crafts Exhibition, she reported to her friend Nan Cheney, was disappointing and symptomatic of broader local problems: "somehow I feel they just degrade Art and make it mean & little."⁴⁷

Second, Carr's work became integrated into a national and, in some cases, international, art market. In 1931, for instance, she sent works to shows in Seattle and Baltimore and fielded requests to send work to a pan-Canadian exhibition organized by the National Gallery.⁴⁸ The effect was to increase Carr's interest in artistic matters in central Canada and to look for news "from East" from her correspondents that kept her up-to-date on developments relating to artists and galleries in Ontario and Quebec.⁴⁹ Carr's interest in key Canadian art institutions demonstrates both their expanding scope and their importance to the westward expansion of the Canadian artistic field. In effect, its development drew Carr's work into a different set of social and market relations that both artistically sustained her and increased the circulation of her artwork beyond its local Victoria market. It was this expansion of her market that increasingly allowed Carr to move away from the occupational pluralism that had defined her working life in the arts from 1911 to 1927 and allowed her to devote more attention to creative pursuits.⁵⁰

"Essentially Their Field": Emily Carr, Gender Relations, and the Arts

In the 1920s, Carr presented her aesthetic as genderless. She used masculine examples to illustrate her points (for example, the Group of Seven) and in

this she participated in one of the structural dynamics of the artistic field as it developed amongst women in Canada. Working with a supposedly genderless aesthetic built on metaphysical properties could make it difficult to ascribe gendered identities to artists; but it also proved difficult to escape the gendered norms of the wider society in which the artistic field was set. The connection between social and market values as they pertained to gender influenced the development of the artistic field, connecting, for example, the market value of women's art to conceptions of "pin money." The privileging of male cultural producers has also been noted by feminist art historians.⁵¹ Equally importantly, for Carr, her working life occurred at a time when the artistic field was far from complete. This created a complex – and to Carr it later seemed unusual – series of gender relations within the arts.

Carr was committed to the idea of autonomous art from an early stage of her life. She did not simply try to take advantage of existing institutions but also helped to build them both in British Columbia and in her post-1927 connection to national networks. In 1908, she became a founding member of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, an organization that looked to "stimulate interest in art and hold exhibitions of a somewhat higher type than had been attempted before."⁵² Years later, after she had moved back to Victoria, she led a similar venture that was designed to build a "people's gallery" for the community. Carr was its key advocate, hosting meetings and speaking on behalf of the project. In one talk on the subject, she referred to the proposed gallery as a "place for the spirit of art to grow." She believed that such a project held out positive benefits for the entire community because what she viewed as true art "touches all classes, all nationalities, all colours."⁵³ Said differently, true art was not bounded by human difference. It was precisely these ideas upon which the full development of an artistic field depended.

The art world in which Carr worked for most of her life was, however, different. Like other aspiring professional women artists of her time, Carr encountered overt, implicit, and institutional sexism that developed out of gendered social expectations. Her initial studies in San Francisco, for example, ended when her father's executor, who told her that she had "played at art" long enough, called her home.⁵⁴ While studying in England, Carr found that some male instructors had little time for women students, whom they viewed as hobbyists. Julius Olsson "favoured male students" and Frederick Reddens, according to one of Carr's biographers, "had not taken Emily's art seriously."⁵⁵ Carr later found similar attitudes among some members of the Group of Seven. Despite initially warm relations with A.Y. Jackson and his avowed commitment to a genderless aesthetic, Carr came to suspect that sexism stood behind his often-negative perception of her work.

“A.Y.J. wrote me the other day,” she told her friend Nan Cheney in 1940, “I have always felt he resented me as a woman artist getting recognition.”⁵⁶ From Carr’s perspective what this meant was that some male artists could accept her as an acolyte but had trouble accepting her as an accomplished and honoured artist in her own right.

Carr responded to the sexism she encountered in different ways. One strategy was to be selective in her choice of art schools and instructors. Where possible, she seems to have looked for schools that afforded female students the same instructional opportunities as male students.⁵⁷ In another instance, she selected an instructor whom she did not find condescending toward women and who was willing to both critique her art from a professional perspective and encourage her individuality of expression.⁵⁸ The same objective led Carr to seek out the criticism and support of the leading arts figures and instructors she could find, as well as the fellowship of the most “progressive” students.⁵⁹ She explained her decision to study in France in exactly these terms. “Everyone said Paris was the top of art and I wanted to get the best teaching I knew.”⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, this also led to her initial embrace of Lawren Harris (1885–1970) and her worries when she did not hear from him or others she held in high regard.⁶¹

Other strategies Carr deployed were to assert women’s rights, to play a leadership role in the arts herself, and to seek out the company of women. When she helped establish the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts in 1908, Carr insisted that at least one woman be elected to the hanging committee.⁶² For Carr, in fact, the need to demonstrate women’s artistic abilities weighed on the way in which she conceptualized her own public image. She needed, she later concluded, to accept a greater level of publicity as a way to illustrate women’s artistic abilities. This was difficult because Carr did not innately like public attention. She confided to her journal:

I have dodged publicity, hated write-ups and all that splutter. Well, that’s all selfish conceit that embarrassed me. I have been forgetting Canada and forgetting women painters. It’s them I ought to be upholding . . . I am also glad that I am showing these men that women can hold up their end. The men resent a woman getting any honour in what they consider is essentially their field . . . So I have decided to stop squirming, to throw any honour in with Canada and women.⁶³

According to Carr, gender played an important role in her deep friendship with Sophie Frank, a Stó:lō woman who lived on a reserve in North Vancouver. Carr met Frank when she called at Carr’s studio selling baskets door to door. “Her love for me is *real*,” Carr later wrote, “and mine for her.

There is a bond between us where color, creed, environment don't count. The woman in us meets on common ground and we love each other."⁶⁴ Carr also paid close attention to other women artists and, where possible, entertained women artists in her studio.⁶⁵ Carr's commitment to the company of women was also likely part of her long friendship and correspondence with Nan Cheney and she took special pride in invitations to professional women's societies and their recognition of her accomplishments.⁶⁶

Carr's strategies were not always successful, however, and at times they produced ironic results. One effect of her commitment to the arts was that it could, in fact, distance her from women. Female companionship, Susan Butlin has suggested, was particularly important to the first generation of women artists striving for professional careers in a male-dominated field.⁶⁷ For Carr this was also true but there were limits to the degree to which she thrived on female artistic companionship, particularly if it conflicted with her conception of art. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the developing artistic field overlapped with the already existing social organization of the arts in a way that promoted periodically antagonistic relations with other women. While studying in England, for example, her biographers note, Carr's relations with other female students were often far from friendly.⁶⁸ From Carr's perspective, other female students were often not serious about art and were, instead, more interested in social graces and meeting men. She mocked one girl who came to class escorted by her chaperone and belittled female students who easily accepted the authority of male teachers simply because they were men.⁶⁹ As a teacher, she ran into the same conflict in Vancouver when asked to instruct what she referred to as a "Ladies Art Club." Carr viewed her students as dabblers more interested in what she saw as frivolity than in a serious commitment to their art. Carr condemned these "society women," as she called them, for tea drinking and chatter, precisely because they treated the arts as a form of refined leisure instead of a career. Ultimately, these competing conceptions of the arts – played out in Carr's class – were incompatible and the "Ladies Art Club" and Carr "parted company."⁷⁰

There were also ambiguities in Carr's relations with men. While she had concerns about how male artists related to women, Carr found she could have remarkable respect for men, a point she noted in a letter she wrote to Ira Dilworth. "I find all my hoarded letters are from *men* – I was supposed to be a man-hater!! He, he! I learned more from men, touched them closer, [have] been touched deeper by them than by women – queer me."⁷¹ Carr's ambiguity about gendered friendships pointed, for her, to other questions about gender relations. For example, she wondered about men who chose wives for their physical appearance as opposed to their talent. "What do *I* think of Mrs. D.C. Scott[?]," she wrote Dilworth. "Not much – very sweet to me – and mails

me *her poems*. I found neither her nor them thrilling. Why do men choose dolls?”⁷² Carr was also confused by the way men characterized her work. When Ira Dilworth referred to her paintings as masculine, he may have meant it as a compliment. For Carr, it was a matter of confusion that she asked him to explain⁷³ because, from her artistic perspective, such characterizations had no place in the art world.

Conclusions

One of the dominant themes of Carr’s life was loneliness. In her biography of the artist, Maria Tippettt argues that Carr was unable to establish deep and long-lasting connections with other people because of a childhood trauma.⁷⁴ Elsewhere, Tippettt also suggests that Carr may have exaggerated her isolation – and in the process transformed it into one of the key myths of her artistic life – because she wanted to identify with the ideal of a struggling artist.⁷⁵ Paula Blanchard has suggested that Carr’s gender played a key role in her loneliness: she was a woman in a man’s world.⁷⁶ Here, broader social dynamics may also have affected Carr. Like other professional female artists, Carr chose to remain single but, as Maria Tippettt notes, the social life of Victoria was not organized for single women. Singles activities tended to cater to men, while women’s clubs tended to be organized for and by married middle-class women.⁷⁷

Other factors, too, tended to isolate Carr from her peers, and these not infrequently stemmed from the artist’s own choices and her strategies for negotiating the artistic field. At times, for example, Carr found the company of children more rewarding than that of adults, a point she made in her public comments on art. As is well known she periodically adopted a child’s persona – “Small” – in correspondence. Carr does not seem to have relished a career as a teacher, even though she appears to have been very successful in this regard.⁷⁸ What made children important to Carr, she later explained, was their lack of preconception about art, their willingness to experiment, and the degree to which they treated art as a form of personal expression. “Children grasp things more quickly than we do. They are more creative than grown-ups . . . When a child draws he does because he wants to express something. If he draws a house he never fails to make smoke pour out of the chimney. That moves, it is alive. He feels it.”⁷⁹

Carr found a similar experience in her interaction with First Nations. She found in Native culture something proud and majestic, animated by a deep appreciation of culture and history. In the totems of the northern North West coast, she believed she found fitting monuments to a people who had fully integrated art into their daily lives in a way that created a vital

aesthetic and spirituality.⁸⁰ As Gerta Moray has noted, Carr also found in Native cultures what she saw as a different, more woman-centric conception of female spiritual and cultural power.⁸¹ On a personal level, Carr seemed to thrive when living and sketching in aboriginal communities. In some ways, Carr adhered to dominant white perspectives on First Nations as peoples whose cultural vitality had already been corrupted by commercialism and was, therefore, already a matter of history. But, this perspective was marked by contradictory tendencies where she felt at home and happy living and working outside white Canadian society.⁸² It seemed to take her from the worries of her daily life that distracted her from artistic production.

A final factor to be considered in assessing Carr's loneliness is her use of geographic mobility as a strategy. In some ways Carr's life was not mobile. Unlike other women artists, she chose to stay in Canada instead of searching out a potentially more favourable overseas setting. Carr lived all her life in Victoria or Vancouver. Yet, within this geographic framework, she combined mobility with other strategies to advance her art. In 1905, after returning from England, she moved to Vancouver because of Victoria's limited arts scene. Vancouver offered a job teaching art, an arts association, and an exhibition society.⁸³ As a student, she frequently changed lodgings, instructors, and schools. And, she looked forward to sketching trips to northern British Columbia, where she could find inspiration among First Nations and their cultures. Even late in life, Carr's most creative and productive moments were lived away from home, isolated in the caravan that she caused to be moved around to various locales beyond the edges of Victoria's expanding urban footprint.

If such choices energized Carr and provided inspiration, they also contributed to her isolation. Above all, however, Carr explained her loneliness with reference to the arts. What upset her, she explained to Nan Cheney while living in Victoria, was the absence of true artists. "So I plod along by lonesome & often wish there were other interested spirits about."⁸⁴ She made the same point to Ruth Humphrey: "But of course Victoria is about the most sleepily behind spot on earth for Art."⁸⁵ There were people who sought out her company, but whom she found trying. Like other artists, for instance, she loathed critics and regularly referred to art criticism as rubbish.⁸⁶ Likewise, she had little time for socialites who, in her view, had mastered an art of "jargon" but knew little of creativity.⁸⁷ Her animosity toward critics and lay people may have been over-determined but it was a reaction that took place within the artistic field. Those whom she castigated were other voices that claimed to speak with authority about art and its quality. There can also be little doubt, as Paula Blanchard and Susan Butlin have argued, that professionalism in the arts demanded more of women than men.⁸⁸ For Carr

this was, in fact, one explanation she found for the connections she made to men. Women's domestic responsibilities prevented them from devoting full attention to the arts: "Women got so split up following the careers of their children and chasing 'round following their husbands: but men that have absorbed books & thoughts with other men & talked about deep things & planned life together have something firmer than a jelly-platform on which to sit down."⁸⁹

But Carr also seems to have found it difficult to associate with women whose conception of art continued to be built around an earlier social organization of culture. She had, she once told Nan Cheney, a feeling of "dread" after deciding to attend a meeting of university women.⁹⁰ She never explained why, but the reasons were likely similar to those that led her to "part company" with the "society women" of the "Ladies Art Club." Perhaps because their conception of art so upset her, Carr simply found it easier to stay at home. There were other characteristics that Carr disliked about the art world. She disliked what she saw as its commercialism (something that detracted from the idea of pure art by according it a monetary value) and the degree to which art remained connected to elitist social pretensions. "Art," she wrote Ruth Humphrey, could be "terrible rot . . . The *now* Art is. Instead of being an outlet of expression it's an intake of flattery and dollars, grabbed for on the dead run."⁹¹ In other words, Carr had problems with the continued interaction of the artistic field with the capitalist market.

Isolation stemmed from Carr's choices, but in itself it was not a strategy that Carr adopted to deal with the complicated gender relations of Canada's evolving artistic field. Her loneliness notwithstanding, she had visitors, an extensive correspondence, and a social life. What she felt she lacked was a community of like-minded artists with whom she could have a meeting of minds. This is, conversely, what she believed had given the Group of Seven its perseverance. For Carr, the development of a modern artistic field in Canada carried with it a variety of implications. It created complex public reactions to her art and to her as a woman. It also created an equally complicated system of gender relations. In interesting and important ways, Carr continues to attract a range of critical and creative attention.⁹² Undoubtedly, her continued appeal relates to a variety of factors. One reason that Carr might attract attention, however, is the historical and social situation of her life and what it tells us about the complicated evolving relationship between the arts and gender in modern Canada, the emotional investment this entailed, the potential triumphs of an artistic career, and the complex interactions it mandated for women.

The questions and ambiguities that Carr found in her own life were not easily resolved, in large measure because they were woven into the

development of an artistic field in Canada. These tensions, in fact, persisted after Carr's death. The character of the Canadian artistic field ensured that other women artists continued to address similar challenges over time. The way in which the Canadian artistic field interacted with the wider society and its gender-specific social expectations did not easily allow the field to generate the gender-neutral artistic habitus it promised. One of the advantages of this concept is that it allows art historians to explore the evolving nature of gender relations in the arts from a different vantage point. In the case of Carr, a focus on the gendered dynamics of the artistic field allows us to capture both its importance to women like Carr and the gendered dilemmas it carried with it. It helps to show how art institutions functioned to promote distinct and specific forms of artistic practice that were related to, but at the same time sought independence from, society and the values it maintained. A consideration of women artists like Carr shows how gender was embedded in and fundamental to this process. Put differently, gendering the artistic field deepens an understanding of the historical sociology of art in Canada. It provides a framework within which to explore the tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions its development created.

NOTES

- 1 Maria TIPPETT, *Emily Carr: A Biography* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), 145; Janice STEWART, "Cultural Appropriation and Identificatory Practice in Emily Carr's 'Indian Stories,'" *Frontiers* 26:2 (2005): 66; Doris SHADBOLT, *The Art of Emily Carr* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979). Chapter 4 refers to 1927 as "the turning point."
- 2 Emily CARR, *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), 658–59.
- 3 Ibid., 657.
- 4 Randal JOHNSON, "Editor's Introduction," in Pierre BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- 5 Anne WHITELAW, "Art Institutions in the Twentieth Century: Framing Canadian Visual Culture," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Anne Whitelaw, Brian Foss, and Sandra Paikowsky (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.
- 6 Pierre BOURDIEU, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), ch. 4.
- 7 Ibid., chs. 1 and 5; BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ch. 3.
- 8 Pierre BOURDIEU, "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception," *International Social Science Journal* 20 (Winter 1968): 589–612.
- 9 BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 29.
- 10 Ian MCKAY, "Historians, Anthropology, and the Concept of Culture," *Labour/Le Travail* 8:9 (Autumn 1981–Spring 1982): 185–241.

- 11 BOURDIEU, *Distinction*, 437.
- 12 Ibid., ch. 7.
- 13 Kristina HUNEALT, "Professionalism as Critical Concept and Historical Process for Women and Art in Canada," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970*, ed. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 3–52; Susan BUTLIN, "A New Matrix of the Arts: A History of the Professionalization of Canadian Women Artists, 1880–1914" (PhD thesis., Carleton University, 2008).
- 14 Charles R. TUTTLE, *The Comprehensive History of the Dominion of Canada* (Montreal: H.B. Bigney, 1879), 467.
- 15 Marylin MCKAY, *Picturing the Land: Narrating Territories in Canadian Landscape Art, 1500–1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).
- 16 THE MARQUIS OF LORNE, *Memories of Canada and Scotland: Speeches and Verses* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1884), 217–18.
- 17 Henry J. MORGAN, *The Dominion Annual Register and Review for the Thirteenth Year of the Canadian Union 1879* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co., 1880), 289; Harriet FORD, "The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts," *Canadian Magazine* 3:1 (May 1894): 47; National Council of Women, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work* (Toronto: National Council of Women of Canada, 1900), 210, stated bluntly "Canada is still largely in a state of tutelage" with regard to the arts.
- 18 Maud C. COOKE, *Social Etiquette, or Manners and Customs of Polite Society* (London, ON: McDermid & Logan, 1896), 489–91.
- 19 *The Ladies Book of Useful Information Compiled from Many Sources* (London, ON, 1896), 10.
- 20 *Calendar of the Church School for Girls, Windsor Nova Scotia, 1897–98 Seventh Year* (sl, sn, [1897]), 3.
- 21 Ibid., 15–16, 27 and 37.
- 22 *Educational Establishment for Young Ladies, Congregation de Notre Dame* (Ottawa: Citizen Printing and Publishing Company, 1883), 6.
- 23 K.A. FINLAY, "A Woman's Place": *Art and the Role of Women in the Cultural Formation of Victoria, B.C., 1850s–1920s* (Victoria, BC: Maltwood Press Museum and Gallery and the University of Victoria, 2004), 20 and 43; Margaret MILNE MARTENS and Graeme CHALMERS, "Educating the Eye, Hand, and Heart at St. Ann's Academy: A Case Study of Art Education for Girls in Nineteenth-Century Victoria," *BC Studies* 144 (Winter 2004/2005): 31–59.
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- 43 Emily CARR, *Fresh Seeing: Two Addresses by Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1972), 10.
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- 48 Carr to Cheney, 11 Jan. 1931 and Carr to Cheney, 14 Dec. 1931 in *ibid.*, 7 and 9–10.
- 49 Nan Cheney to Eric Brown, 16 Apr. 1937; Eric Brown to Nancy Cheney, 27 Apr. 1937; Carr to Cheney, 13 June 1937, in *ibid.*, 39, 41 and 44.
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- 57 TIPPETT, *Emily Carr*, 18.
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- 60 Cited in TIPPETT, *Emily Carr*, 81.
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La différence sexuelle dans le champ artistique

ANDREW NURSE

La trajectoire de la carrière artistique d'Emily Carr (1871–1945) fournit une étude de cas intéressante sur l'évolution du domaine artistique moderne canadien marqué par la présence des femmes. Selon Pierre Bourdieu, un champ artistique est un système semi-autonome de relations économiques et culturelles qui privilégie à la fois le capital financier et l'esthétique comme monnaie et autorité. Il se développe dans une relation de dialogue avec les processus socio-économiques pris dans leur ensemble, auxquels il est à la fois détaché et rattaché, créant ainsi une tension dynamique particulière. Ceux qui fonctionnent à l'intérieur de ce champ cherchent à affirmer leur autorité, mais sont attirés vers des modèles sociaux plus larges. Notre dissertation soutient que l'évolution du champ artistique dans le Canada moderne a engendré de nouveaux systèmes de relations entre les femmes et les hommes et des tensions dues à ses particularités structurelles, aux anciennes conceptions relatives aux femmes dans les arts, et aux normes sociales « genrées » dans leur ensemble. La carrière bien documentée d'Emily Carr illustre comment les artistes féminines ont vécu ce développement et les difficultés artistiques et sociales qui s'ensuivirent.

Divers mouvements ont contribué à l'essor du champ artistique moderne au Canada, notamment le patronage d'État, le nationalisme dans les arts, les nouveaux courants esthétiques et la dynamique des marchés de l'art en pleine mutation, pour ne citer que ceux-là. La croissance du champ artistique moderne a offert aux femmes des débouchés professionnels qui, selon des artistes comme Carr, leur manquaient auparavant. La carrière de Carr dans les arts s'est déroulée à une époque de transition incomplète dans l'organisation sociale des arts. En effet, le monde artistique dans lequel elle avait d'abord grandi fonctionnait selon une logique différente. Celle-ci établissait des relations avec les arts spécifiquement fondées sur la classe et le sexe, et définies par deux caractéristiques. La première, pour les filles et femmes de la classe moyenne et de la haute société, les arts étaient d'importants mécanismes de raffinement marquant la position sociale des femmes. La seconde, les femmes artistes occupaient une place tertiaire sur les marchés de l'art, à la traîne de l'art européen et des artistes canadiens masculins. En

d'autres mots, pour les femmes, l'art était censé être un loisir symbolisant le raffinement et la grâce sociale d'une élite.

Carr n'était pas la seule à lutter, d'une part, avec ses aspirations artistiques et professionnelles, et d'autre part, avec le bouleversement de l'organisation sociale des arts au Canada. À sa manière, elle a contribué au développement du champ artistique moderne au Canada à la fois par ses actions – ses efforts pour consolider sa carrière d'artiste – et par son idéologie. Dans ses déclarations publiques sur les arts, Carr évitait les considérations dogmatiques en « isme » et la représentation réaliste. Elle se concentrait plutôt sur ce qu'elle conceptualisait comme la créativité d'une expression personnelle et spirituelle qui rejetait la représentation stéréotypée en faveur de sensations émotionnelles et visuelles. Ainsi, la perspective de Carr détachait l'art de toute conception d'une esthétique intégrée dans la société pour se concentrer sur ses propriétés visuelles innovatrices, ou sur ce qu'elle appelait un « nouveau regard ».

Sur le plan social, sa quête d'autonomie dans les arts l'a engagée dans la cause des relations hommes-femmes en pleine mutation, point qu'elle avait d'ailleurs non seulement reconnu et discuté dans sa correspondance, mais aussi noté dans ses journaux. L'évolution du champ artistique a entraîné deux niveaux de tensions différents. Tout d'abord, son engagement à mener une carrière professionnalisée au sein d'un champ artistique a suscité des tensions auprès des femmes. Celles-ci fonctionnaient en effet selon une ancienne conception qui confinait les arts au loisir d'une élite raffinée. D'ailleurs, son ancienne carrière d'enseignante à Vancouver et les problèmes vécus dans le cours d'arts qu'elle donnait aux femmes illustrent bien ce point. Emily Carr était frustrée par ce cours qu'elle surnommait le « Ladies Art Club », précisément parce qu'elle ne croyait pas que ses étudiantes prenaient le processus de création au sérieux, mais considéraient plutôt l'art comme un passe-temps. Au fil de sa carrière, Carr a aussi été blessée par le sexisme de la société canadienne et le refus de certains artistes masculins d'accepter les femmes comme leurs égales.

Carr a abordé la complexité de la question de la différence homme-femme de diverses manières. En commun avec d'autres femmes artistes de son temps, elle a utilisé la mobilité, en quête d'instructeurs bienveillants pour l'aider à développer son art. Étudiante, elle recherchait la compagnie d'autres élèves « progressistes », entretenait une correspondance nourrie avec des hommes qui partageaient ses idées, et pensait à contribuer à l'essor institutionnel de l'art. En tant qu'artiste, Carr se sent par ailleurs attirée par les paysages et les cultures des régions rurales de la Colombie-Britannique et des Premières Nations, ce qui sortait du courant dominant de la société canadienne. Comme l'a fait remarquer Gerta Moray, Carr a découvert dans la

culture des Premières Nations une fierté et une majesté qui apportaient une conception différente de la spiritualité féminine, plus centrée sur la femme. Elle a trouvé aussi des amitiés intimes avec les femmes, comme celle qu'elle partageait avec Sophie Frank – émotionnellement forte et durable.

Il n'est pas facile de caractériser la dynamique homme-femme des relations personnelles et artistiques de Carr qui, d'ailleurs, les trouvait aussi parfois confuses. En fait, elle en était venue à croire que cette différence sexuelle courante à cette époque au Canada était la cause de la difficulté des femmes à devenir artistes. Leurs rôles de femmes et d'épouses, affirmait-elle, divisaient leur temps et nuisaient à la concentration nécessaire à la poursuite de démarches professionnelles, intellectuelles et culturelles. Elle s'interrogeait aussi sur sa réputation soi-disant de « femme qui détestait les hommes », alors qu'elle avait été profondément touchée par des hommes qu'elle avait connus et avec qui elle partageait une communauté d'intérêts artistiques.

De nombreux commentateurs se sont penchés sur la perception qu'avait Carr de son propre isolement et de la solitude ainsi engendrée, question importante pour une artiste d'envergure et élément caractéristique de sa carrière artistique. À notre avis, son sentiment d'isolement pourrait être compris, d'un côté, comme un produit de sa situation géographique à la périphérie d'un champ artistique en pleine évolution au Canada et, de l'autre, comme un aspect de la dynamique homme-femme de ce champ dans les premières décennies du xx^e siècle. Comme Emily Carr l'a elle-même souligné, il lui manquait une communauté d'artistes partageant ses vues et poursuivant les mêmes objectifs, disons, à la manière du Groupe des Sept. À l'époque et à l'endroit où elle travaillait, il lui était difficile de trouver cette communauté, et le fait d'être femme exigeait qu'elle transige constamment avec la dynamique en pleine mutation des relations hommes-femmes dans l'art et la société.



Gravford

Julia Crawford and the Rules of the Game

KIRK NIERGARTH

The feminist's first reaction, Linda Nochlin suggested, to her famous question about why there had been no great women artists, was to "dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history; to rehabilitate rather modest if interesting and productive careers; to 'rediscover' forgotten flower painters . . . to engage in the normal activity of the specialist scholar who makes a case for the importance of his [or her] very own neglected or minor master."¹ Certainly, the "forgotten flower painter" Nochlin had in mind was not New Brunswick artist Julia Crawford (1896–1968), but Crawford does fit the description of the subject pursued by the hypothetical, and ultimately misguided, feminist "specialist scholar." While Crawford had at least one admirer who considered her "the East Coast Emily Carr," this view of her talent and status was not, and has not been, shared by those most influential in establishing the canonical hierarchy of Canadian art.² To make a case for Crawford's "importance" – in the sense Nochlin uses the term – might succeed in expanding this canon, but would not challenge its basic assumptions, assumptions that did not serve Crawford well in her lifetime. "To claim creativity for women is to do more than find a few female names to add to canonised lists in surveys of Western art," Griselda Pollock writes. "[C]hallenging the cultural negation of women's creativity is *more* than a matter of historical recovery." But, she continues, "few of us have really thought through how impossible the task of doing that *more* actually is."³

More than forty years after Nochlin's provocation, and in light of the many debates of the intervening years, Mary Sheriff's keynote address at the 2012 Canadian Women Artists History Initiative Conference encouraged attendees to reconsider the merits of the kinds of recovery efforts that Nochlin implied were not capable of altering the standards of value, the underlying structure, of the discipline. Rediscovering the lives of women artists within the context of their social worlds, taking seriously forms of history through which these lives have been recorded ("ego documents":

Detail, Julia Crawford, *Snow and Mill from Gregory Place*, ca. 1950, oil on Masonite, 40.5 × 30.5 cm, New Brunswick Museum, 2001.25.10. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

memoirs, diaries, biography), Sheriff suggested, is a valuable and necessary precursor to the “*more*” for which Pollock calls.⁴ Like Sheriff, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, the editors of *Reclaiming Female Agency* (2005), are concerned that art historians “deferential to postmodern skepticism about the modernist heroizing of individual artists, have focused less and less on the work and agency of individual women artists, shying away especially from the idea of a feminist expression grounded in women’s real life experiences.” Research focused on “the issue of female agency, both its presence and its repression” is, for Broude and Garrard, “the most advanced and fruitful thinking of the present moment.”⁵

One persistent challenge in any study focused on agency remains determining its limits and its relationship to structure. Consider, for example, Broude’s assessment of Mary Cassatt’s relationship to “patriarchal norms of proper femininity”: “What we see [in Cassatt] is an important and widespread pattern of resistance on the one hand and simultaneous complicity on the other, a pattern typical of many Euro-American women artists and intellectuals who achieved fairly notable positions during the nineteenth century. Like Cassatt, these women desired autonomy, success, and fame, but they had also absorbed the patriarchal values of their bourgeois, Victorian era.”⁶ The pattern, as Broude suggests, is familiar enough, but where in it does agency lie? Does agency apply only to resistance and not to complicity? Were ideas about femininity “absorbed” from Victorian society, but not ideas about “autonomy, success, and fame”? This questioning should not be pursued to reductive ends. I would echo Pollock’s view that it is not useful to “aim to be so anti-humanistic that structuralist analysis excises all traces of the subject and subjectivity.”⁷ At the same time, a dichotomy of agency/repression risks ahistorically imagining a subject whose appealing ideas and actions (appealing, that is, from the perspective of the twenty-first century) are chosen of her own will and volition, while unappealing ones are the result of an imposed (false) consciousness. As Pollock notes elsewhere in the same volume, “biographical materials certainly provide significant and necessary resources for the belated production of women’s *authority*,” but “[b]iography . . . can never be a substitute for history.” What Pollock means by “history” echoes Marx: “Women make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.”⁸ Structure and agency are conjoined, simultaneously and insuperably, in “women’s real life experiences.”⁹ As Marx (again) put it, “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”¹⁰

One strategy for keeping both structure and agency in constant view is to make use of Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptions of *field* and *habitus*. Spheres of

human activity are both made possible and circumscribed within interrelated and hierarchical fields (the economic field, the political field, the field of cultural production, and so on). An individual's participation in a field is not determined – it depends on subjective acts, agency – but players share some common dispositions regarding the field's rules, rewards, and authorities. These common dispositions make up part of the larger system of dispositions that constitute an individual's habitus: dispositions inculcated throughout a lifetime which influence and limit an individual's actions and reactions in multiple and diverse fields.¹¹ A Bourdieu-inspired “rediscovery” of Julia Crawford's “real life experiences” requires trying to understand her habitus and then exploring the way it enabled and limited her participation in the field of art. This approach resists the biographical tendency in “canonical art history” to “make its artists into heroes.”¹² Or, in this case, a heroine (with a focus on agency) or a tragic heroine (with a focus on the repression of agency).

A challenge for biographers is to resist the form's teleological tendency. That is, the most recognizable patterns of a subject's life are pre-supposed by the fact that the subject is considered worthy of biography. To put this another way, the choice of a subject of a biography (let us say, a woman artist) already leads to the kinds of evidence (say, reviews of exhibitions, public collections, prices at auction) that created the subject's already acknowledged position in the field. To see the field as an always-contingent, always-constructed web of social forces and then to appropriately locate a subject's “agency” within these forces is, of course, an enormous challenge, particularly for those subjects, such as Crawford, who were marginal or losing players. It is possible that Crawford's current marginality is not due to biographical factors at all, but to aesthetic ones. The artistic field is, as Bourdieu notes, a field that possesses “relative autonomy” and Crawford's paintings may have not sufficiently demonstrated mastery of the visual codes used by contemporaries to assess quality: in simpler terms, perhaps her work was just not very “good” and art historians' judgments have endorsed the negative evaluation or inattention of contemporary critics.¹³ The difficulty of this argument, as I will explain later, is that there is very limited (and limiting) evidence for contemporary art historians to work from; as for contemporary critics, when Crawford's work did receive notice, it was positive notice – particularly when those critics were far from the artistic circles in which Crawford was, as she put it, “personally known.”¹⁴

In recent years, the number of biographical works on Canadian women artists has grown significantly. A list of important works would certainly include Susan Butlin on Florence Carlyle, Elspeth Cameron on Frances Loring and Florence Wyle, and Laura Brandon on Pegi Nicol.¹⁵ A similar biography of Julia Crawford could be written. It would require digging and stitching, since there is no extensive archival collection of her papers, nor

have the vast majority of her works found their way into public institutions. One might piece together the fragments from the artist files – press clippings, catalogues, and other ephemera – held at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), the Beaverbrook Gallery, and, most significantly, the New Brunswick Museum. At the latter institution is the largest, albeit not large, collection of archival materials and, certainly, the largest public collection of Crawford's paintings. A few of these, even, were purchased during her lifetime.

The biographer's patches could be assembled into a quilt, albeit one that was somewhat threadbare from the outset for want of material. What can be salvaged affords the choices of a few recognizable, or established, patterns. One choice would be to write a story of Crawford's success: her rise from humble origins as a New Brunswick country school teacher to have her works exhibited nationally and internationally and singled out for praise by critics; her ability to sustain her creative practice, continuing to develop and experiment as a modern painter over the course of forty years without much in the way of patronage or institutional support. This narrative would bolster Crawford's negligible reputation and correct the existing historiography that has afforded her virtually no place in the canon of Canadian art.

An alternative narrative would focus on Crawford's failure, explaining the reasons why she was unable to attract more critical and institutional support in her lifetime and more attention from scholars since. What explains this failure? Clearly, Crawford was the wrong gender. A woman modern artist with a constantly evolving style was not likely to be selected for star treatment in the Canadian pantheon of Crawford's generation (the "discovery" of Emily Carr in the last decade of her life is the exception, the rule is Kathleen Munn, Edna Taçon, Marian Scott, Pegi Nicol . . .).¹⁶ For another thing, she lived in New Brunswick and, for many years, as far as central Canadian art institutions were concerned, culture flowed like the Saint Lawrence *to* the Maritimes, and decidedly not in the opposite direction. And, to a certain extent, medium and subject matter may have been obstacles. She was best known for her watercolours (though use of this medium did not pose much problem for the careers or posthumous reputations of David Milne, Carl Schaefer, or Crawford's good friend Jack Humphrey). And, like Van Gogh, she occasionally painted flowers. Perhaps this choice of subject matter led one critic to discern in her work "a feminine sensibility of a high order."¹⁷ This kind of praise was praise only to a point; it imposed limits like an intransigent bouncer at "Club Great Artist," barring the door. Also, it is possible that Crawford was just a little too old. She was a bit older than the generation of Pegi Nicol (1904–1949), Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986), and Marian Dale Scott (1906–1893), who were female peers nationally, and she was older than Jack Humphrey (1901–1967), Miller Brittain (1914–1968) and Ted Campbell (1804–?)

who were male peers locally. All of these factors could be combined in a biography that explains the injustices that have prevented Julia Crawford from achieving “autonomy, success, and fame.”

Both of these hypothetical biographies would be factually correct, with accent in the first case on agency and the second on structure. This article is no substitute for a full biography of either kind, but I will use this opportunity to suggest to a future biographer some of the elements of Crawford’s *habitus* that complicate these narratives. For one, there seems to have been a disconnect between Crawford’s understanding of “success” and the way rewards were apportioned and distributed by the field. Crawford can appear in retrospect to have been naive, but it is not always easy to discern the difference between naiveté and alternate ideals, persistently held (and, indeed, the two categories are not mutually exclusive). Crawford, for example, did not believe in competition between works of art. Her feelings about selling her work were ambiguous at best, and in regards to art dealers disdainful. Crawford’s was not a *habitus* well suited to garner such autonomy, success, or fame as was available in the field of art locally, nationally, or internationally, yet the element of agency in these choices should not be underestimated. To be sure, this rural New Brunswick schoolteacher was not entirely apprised of strategies useful to “play the game” as well as more privileged artists, but her course was in some important ways a *chosen* one. Her defeats and failures, measured by the values venerated in the field, can also be read as refusals – refusals that speak to different standards of value.

Crawford was not entirely naive about the rules of the game. In fact, there were rules that she *thought* she understood perfectly. She was committed, for example, to the basic aesthetic tenets of modern art, i.e., to use Norman Bryson’s terms, a privileging of the painterly or the figural over the discursive – to use a reductive shorthand, “formalism.”¹⁸ For example, she could not understand why, in 1941, there was local enthusiasm among her peers, artists with training, *artists who should know better*, about works by her friend and colleague Violet Gillett (1898–1996) in an exhibition mounted in a Saint John antique store. She wrote to Walter Abell, an important critic and scholar in the region, asking if there was something she was missing: “Vi Gillet has some flower sprays which I don’t doubt will prove popular, although not so difficult to do (Watercolor or poster paint without any backg [sic] and color). Most of her work seems to be lacking in unity or has too much detail and is not done in a painterly, big way. Do I see it right?”¹⁹ Surely, she imagined, the trained eye could discern the difficult and the significant from the easy and the popular.

To the antique store show, Crawford herself had only submitted one work. She explained this choice in the same letter to Abell: “no time for thinking about it, no time for painting, and not much money for frames – HA HA, I



1 | Julia Crawford, *Befogged*, 1949, watercolour over charcoal on board, 60.2 × 89.7 cm, New Brunswick Museum, A49.8. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

really can't see mine going so well with antiques either. Then again I was of the impression that it was chiefly for the artists who were not teaching." There is so much in these few lines (and a good thing, too, for there are few lines of Crawford's to be had): not "going so well with antiques" tells us something about how she understood her own sensibility, and "not much money" and "no time" were not really the jokes "HA HA" would have us believe. And, her idea that this opportunity for sales should be more-or-less reserved for those artists who did not have a teaching income says a great deal about Crawford's sense of economic justice and her complex attitude towards the marketing of paintings, which she would maintain for the rest of her life.

We will return to Crawford and the rules of the marketplace, but let us continue for the moment to consider Crawford's paintings and the rules of modern art. Some of the examples of Crawford watercolours in the collection of the New Brunswick Museum are highly stylized (the reason for the word "some" and the apparent inconsistency of Crawford's work will be revisited



2 | Julia Crawford, *The Quarry*, 1942, oil on fibreboard, 50.5 × 60.3 cm, New Brunswick Museum, 2004.25.1. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

shortly). These paintings record Crawford's performance as a modernist *auteur*. When describing *Befogged* (Fig. 1), a work purchased by the Museum from Crawford in 1949, curator Peter Larocque emphasizes the confidence of the technique and the required speed of execution. The size of the surface allowed for large gestures: this was painting from the shoulder, not from the wrist. In the best of Crawford's work, Larocque discerns a "tactile appreciation of materials" and what he calls "vitality."²⁰

In that this latter word refers to the mode of representation and not the subject represented, Larocque sees Crawford in much the same light as did contemporary critics who singled her works out from group shows for particular praise. When reviewing the 1942 annual exhibit of the Maritime Art Association, Crawford's local peer Jack Humphrey called *The Quarry* (Fig. 2) "undoubtedly among the most satisfying paintings in the collection."



3 | Julia Crawford, *Barnesville*, 1942, oil on board, 52 × 40.3 cm, New Brunswick Museum, A45.730. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

He thought it reflected “the approach of Cezanne.”²¹ Humphrey does not explain in what way he thought Crawford’s *Quarry* shared the approach of, say, Cezanne’s *Bibemus Quarry* (1895) – was it the light? The perspective? The handling? – but he was placing Crawford in what was for him, and for most modern painters of the era, exalted company. Crawford, too, was fond of *The Quarry*. When, in 1943, the patron of the New Brunswick Museum’s art collection, Alice Webster, decided it was time to add a Crawford to the collection – Crawford was forty-seven years old; it was her first sale to a public institution – Crawford urged her towards *The Quarry* rather than Webster’s choice, *Barnesville*: “[I] would rather be represented by [*The Quarry*] because I really think it has something. As most pictures do, it looks better in certain lights.” Crawford had been asking \$100 for *The Quarry*, but for Webster she would drop the price to \$75. Webster instead bought *Barnesville* for \$70 (Fig. 3).²²



4 | Julia Crawford, *Still Life*, 1937, watercolour on paper, 46.4 × 37.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Friends of Canadian Art Fund, 1937. (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario)

Critics who singled out Crawford's work from group shows for praise were by no means all local. Of *Still Life* (Fig. 4), showing in Toronto in the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (CSPWC) 1937 annual exhibition, Graham McInnes wrote, "the strength and spirited bravura of this group of flowers is a convincing testimony to the awareness of a group of New Brunswick painters . . . which include Jack Humphrey, Miller Brittain."²³ Just what kind of "awareness" McInnes had in mind is unspecified, but I suspect he means "of contemporary painting." The same year, Crawford



5 | Julia Crawford, *The Lily*, 1937, as reproduced on a 1956 Christmas card sent by Crawford to the National Gallery of Canada. (Photo: Kirk Niergarth, reproduced courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada)

exhibited in the *salon* of the French Society of Artists. Another *Still Life* was reproduced in *La Revue Moderne* along with the commentary: “L’amour de la couleur et de ses variations lumineuses, un métier solide et le sens du décor ont conduit Julia Tilley Crawford à la réalisation d’une œuvre où dominant les paysages et les natures mortes et dans laquelle se reflète sa personnalité.” [Love of colour and its variations, a solid technique, and decorative sense has

enabled Crawford to achieve an *œuvre* dominated by landscapes and still lifes that reflect her personality.²⁴ The following year Crawford exhibited *The Lily* (Fig. 5) in the same *salon* and saved this review from *Arts* (Paris): “Une aquarelle portant titre LILY, exposée au dernier Salon des Artistes Français, attire l’attention générale par sa légèreté aérienne et sa grâce exquise. Son auteur joues en ma[nière] consomme d’une gamme étendu de tons délicats, parfois très osés, mais toujours harmonieux.” [A watercolour entitled *Lily* attracted general attention because of its airy lightness and exquisite grace. Its author plays in consummate manner with an extended range of delicate tones, sometimes daring, but always harmonious].²⁵ *Lily* would continue to earn plaudits for Crawford. It was selected for the “Canadian Trends” exhibition accompanying the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists and chosen for reproduction in the published conference proceedings.²⁶ Then, in 1945, Crawford’s *Flowers* was selected to travel to Brazil as part of an exhibition of contemporary Canadian painting. “I should like to pay homage to Julia Crawford,” wrote the Brazilian critic Geraldo Ferraz in his review of the show, “whose ‘Flowers’ is a product of discreet observation of great delicacy in this exacting genre.”²⁷ When *Calla* was exhibited with the CSPWC 1946 show in the Grand Central Art Gallery in New York, it was selected for purchase for that gallery’s permanent collection.²⁸ It seemed that the further Crawford exhibited from home the more generous was the critical reception. Little wonder, then, that she told a reporter in 1959 that she “believes it is best to exhibit where an artist is not personally known. Then only the painting is judged and there is no chance for thought or consideration to the person who composed it.”²⁹ Yes, Crawford dreamed of the “death of the author,” the pure hierarchy of form. Surely she might have known, by this time, that this was wishful thinking.

Crawford was “personally known” to many of the players in the field of Canadian art in her era. She was one of the delegates to the Kingston Conference. She was thoroughly impressed and became involved in the organization that grew out of the conference, the Federation of Canadian Artists. Writing about the event as a correspondent for *Maritime Art*, Crawford affirmed: “The Saint John artists, who were given the opportunity of attending the conference of Canadian Artists received much inspiration from the meeting and believe that the results will be far reaching, even beyond the highest hopes of those who strove to make the conference possible.”³⁰ While there, she was photographed in the front row of a lecture given on “Old Master Techniques” (Fig. 6). Her attention has been distracted from the lecturer by a figure outside the frame sitting on the floor with Louis Muhlstock. A very young Alma Duncan (1917–2004) looking directly into the lens from the seat next to Crawford only emphasizes the impression that



6 | Julia Crawford at the Kingston Conference, seated at the far right of the first row. Photo from *Maritime Art*. (Photo: author)

Crawford appears somewhat older than most of the women in attendance. Were there signifiers of age, taste, and class about Crawford's manner and dress that would have signalled to those in attendance that she, unlike them, spent her early twenties, before the Twenties, as a teacher in rural New Brunswick? Such signifiers are not easily read in this photograph – is her dress fashionable? Is she too keen to take notes? – but if it is imagined that Crawford looks somewhat unlike the others, this is an imagining that, metaphorically, speaks to her position within the field of Canadian art. She was admitted to the field, but she lacked attributes and dispositions that would give her status within it. She was a marginal insider.

"The field of cultural production," Bourdieu tells us, "is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the [artist] and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the [artist]."³¹ Crawford's presence at the Kingston Conference indicates that the field recognized her as a legitimate artist. Already, by the late 1930s, the regular acceptance of her work at national juried exhibitions suggests that she was not really

an outsider, nor even – like Maud Lewis (1903–1970) or the Bouchards – a “primitive” whose lack of sophistication prompts adoption and consecration. By 1936, the NGC was sending Crawford an “Information Form for the Purpose of Making a Record of Artists and Their Work.” Not, as will be discussed below, that the institution ever purchased any of said work in Crawford’s case. Crawford’s responses to the Information Forms are as close as we have to her autobiography – they appear to be her only surviving “ego documents.” Perhaps they help explain the lukewarm embrace she was given by Canadian art institutions in spite of her critical triumphs abroad. They reveal that Crawford was worse than a primitive, she was a “club woman”! The most detailed of these forms is undated but appears to be from 1945. Quoting from it at length will, I hope, reveal its entire lack of guile:

Born at Kingston, N.B.

Won Lieut. Governor’s medal for highest average in Grade 8 for Kings Co. N.B. Aver. 90.5

When in High School taught (supply) ½ day per wk. in Primary Grades at Kingston, N.B.

1915–16 attended Prov. Normal School receiving Superior Class License

1917–18 taught Grades 5,6,7 at Chipman, N.B.

1917 attended Summer Agric School at Sussex, N.B.

1918–1925 taught in Saint John – first as assistant, then Grade 3 and Grade 7.

During this time attended Miss Hagerty’s class in art, Saint John (Saint John Art Club)

Took public speaking and expression lessons from Miss Amelia Green and Mrs. Clark.

Was in Miss Green’s Greek Statues at the Capitol Theatre and in a play directed by Mrs. Clark at Saint Peters

Attended gym classes at the YWCA and was in Scotch dance and display at Capitol.

Took dancing lessons from Miss Green.

Took some piano lessons from Prof. Ford.

Took course in teaching music from Prof. Jas. F. Browne. Passed local written and practical exams Aver. 90.5 [. .]

1925 Summer – had jaundice. Got up out of bed and went to Pratt.

1925–28 Attended Pratt Institute Brooklyn, NY [. .]

1927 Summer – Taught colour and design to Home Economics Classes at Vocational School, Saint John, NB. Had tonsil operation before returning to Pratt.

1928 Summer Nursed mother. Mother passed away Aug.

- 1928–1944 Taught art at Saint John Vocational School during the whole years [. . .]
- 1931 Summer sick [. . .]
- 1934 Had a delightful 7 weeks’ European Travel (Paid back debts and saved enough for it) [. . .]
- 1937 Autumn Elected President of Saint John Art Club. Exhibited with Can. Soc. Painters in Watercolour in Toronto and painting was purchased by Art Gallery for its permanent collection (\$75) Surprise.
- 1937 “Revue Moderne” Paris has article on work [. . .]
- 1938 Toronto Sat Night mentions work Dec 18
- 1938 Dec. “Arts” Paris has article on “Lily” exhibited in Paris. [. . .]
- 1939 Graham McGinnis [sic] in Book “Canadian Art” mentions name
- 1940 International Business Machines Corp book mentions watercolours. [. . .]
- 1943 Mrs. J. Clarence Webster bot [sic] painting for NB Museum
- 1944 Had Kodachrome slides made of some paintings.
- 1944 Sick January [sic] til June plus Nervous Exhaustion.
- Better.
- 1943 Summer made sketches from my room of people in square and rested, rested, rested.³²

The previous year, Crawford had submitted another version of her life story to the NGC. This one had less detail (she left out jaundice, nursing Mother, and nervous exhaustion, for example), but was more editorial. Her teachers at Pratt (she lists fourteen of these) were “the best possible – swell” and they awarded her a scholarship for her third year after a second year success: “Had both designs for House Beautiful Cover Design Competition . . . accepted for travelling exhibition . . . The 100 designs in this exhibition (from thousands, so the story goes) were selected by a Boston jury. (As I look back on this I consider it one of the greatest surprises – my designs probably were not so good but they were original (absolutely) and gay.” In this form we learn that on her 1934 European tour she met with Franz Cizek, the influential art educator, and visited his experimental school; we also learn that in 1937 she visited schools in Brooklyn and “one class wanted to hear about Canada so I said we were not all bears, Eskimos or Indians.” She noted that she had “exhibited regularly since 1935” and had a penchant to “Buy too many artmagazines and books for the good of my pocket book.”³³

Besides being refreshingly honest and breezy, these forms show Crawford to have had little ability to discern between those events of her life that could

provide her with distinction and advance her career (say, consulting with Cizek, *Revue Moderne*) from those that could not (say, correcting Canadian stereotypes held by a group of Brooklyn school children). If when she was providing her GPA in grade eight, she was attempting to construct a narrative about her early prodigious talent, she was making a very poor job of it. Not, of course, that it likely mattered much. Outside of Abell, whose career in Canada ended in 1944, Crawford seems to have had few connections to influential players in the field. While the papers of her local peers Jack Humphrey and Miller Brittain indicate an array of contacts in Canada and the United States – particularly, for Humphrey in Montreal and for Brittain in New York – this does not seem to have been the case for Crawford.³⁴ Critical notice abroad was not a recipe for domestic success for Crawford. Her minor national reputation during her lifetime is accurately reflected in the three passing mentions she receives in Maria Tippet's 1992 history *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*.³⁵

Locally, in Saint John, Crawford played a more significant role, but even here she was not an entirely accepted figure among the small clique of the city's modern artists. This ambivalence was not in spite of the fact that Crawford was prominently involved in the Saint John Art Club (SJAC), serving as its President between 1937 and 1942. This was the club that gave Crawford the opportunity to begin training in art and so her involvement is unsurprising. There is anecdotal evidence, however, that other, younger modern artists in Saint John viewed the club with a certain amount of disdain. According to Sara Johnson, an art student at the Vocational school during the early 1940s, artists including Brittain, Humphrey, and Ted Campbell (the teacher who replaced Crawford at the Vocational – a change that either precipitated or followed Crawford's period of "nervous exhaustion") held a low opinion of the SJAC:

[They] looked upon its members as Sunday painters, which for the most part they were, and [the modern artists] never seemed to take it seriously . . . I remember going up there with some of the art students to help clean the place. There was a lady, wearing a pair of flamboyant beach pyjamas, who had the most remarkable purple hair, and at one point in the clean up I turned to find her holding a carved gargoyle . . . She had him standing in a basin of water and the combined effect nearly reduced me to hysterics.³⁶

We ought to be careful about too easily and entirely accepting Johnson's memories of these artists' dismissive attitude. Of twenty-six Saint John artists whom Crawford and Jack Humphrey invited to join the Federation

of Canadian Artists in 1942, twenty were or had been members of the SJAC. Crawford was not the only non-“Sunday painter” to serve on the club’s executive. Jack Humphrey was first elected to the club’s executive council in 1936 and Miller Brittain joined him later the same year.

During Crawford’s presidency, the activities of the SJAC began to change in tone and content. Previously, the club’s program was geared almost wholly to art appreciation, and the art to be appreciated was canonical: works of British and European “old masters.” Beginning in 1937, however, the focus of the club became more local, more contemporary, and more oriented towards actively creating works of art than passively consuming them. That year, local artists and craftspersons delivered instructional lectures describing their techniques.³⁷ The “Pictures You Should Know” series, became both more North American and more contemporary in focus: in January of 1937, for example, a Mrs. Keefe and a Mrs. Russell were assigned to prepare papers on Tom Thomson (1877–1917) and Diego Rivera respectively. A “Picture Loan Service,” where one could rent-to-own art by local artists was established by 1940, and in 1942 the club began to expand its own collection of artworks for the first time since before the First World War. Jack Humphrey’s *Head of a Girl* (1941) was the club’s first purchase. The club sponsored child art classes and exhibitions and, beginning in 1940, junior memberships in the club were made available at reduced rates.³⁸

These changes aligned well with the interests of Crawford and other professional artists in Saint John. Drawing the membership’s attention to local, contemporary art may have encouraged sales and the emphasis on creativity might have provided art teachers with students. Johnson’s memories of modern artists’ disdain for the SJAC in general no doubt coexisted with a very real dependence on the patronage of its members. There is also no doubt, however, that Crawford was understood locally to be closer to the woman in the “flamboyant beach pyjamas” than were Humphrey, Brittain, or Campbell.

When Crawford was elected to membership in the CSPWC in 1940, at least one Toronto-based member of the Society was ambivalent. Caven Atkins passed on the news in a letter to Carl Schaefer who was out of the country on a Guggenheim fellowship: “Miss Crawford of New B. also elected. Good but questionable. Her latest work not quite so strong.”³⁹ Atkins would not be the last to question Crawford’s consistency. Forty years later, Christina Sabat concluded a review of a Crawford retrospective at Gallery 78 in Fredericton by writing “it was obvious that the artist had absorbed and mastered many different styles and ideas but it seemed . . . that she never really allowed herself the freedom of self-discovery.”⁴⁰ Consider the evidence on which these judgments are based. Atkins would have seen the one or two paintings



7 | Julia Crawford, *Snow and Mill from Gregory Place*, ca. 1950, oil on Masonite, 40.5 x 30.5 cm, New Brunswick Museum, 2001.25.10. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

a year that Crawford could afford to ship to the CSPWC annuals. Sabat had a larger body of work to contemplate, but it was a relatively small show in a private gallery with works drawn from a span of thirty years of the artist's work. If we look at the collection of Crawford's works in the New Brunswick Museum, it too is a very mixed assemblage. There are still lifes and landscapes and portraits, but they range markedly in style from the conventional to the expressive. Compare, for example, the approach to landscape in *Barnesville* (Fig. 3) with *Snow and Mill from Gregory Place* (Fig. 7).

At one-person shows organized during Crawford's lifetime, her inconstancy was noted but not in the same way. Of her "Know Your Own Artists" exhibition in 1949, Avery Shaw wrote:

It is the art of a painter who is always seeking for new impressions, and who retains the capacity for experimenting with her medium and in her approach to art. This is not the easiest way to paint; many artists tend to work out formulas based upon their previous successes whereas constant experimenting can sometimes produce its failures. The successes, however, contribute something new in added freshness and originality. The justification of such an approach is the current exhibition upon the walls of the Museum Hall, charming in colour, powerful in design, with each picture possessing qualities of its own.⁴¹

In 1954, Crawford had a solo show at the University of Maine, Orono. “Rarely has the University of Maine art gallery shown an exhibition of water colors of such variety of technique,” was the judgement of the head of the University’s art department, Vincent Hartgen. “Using a wide range in her palette, the artist achieves, in a very unique manner, a style and brushstroke closely related to the subject she is depicting . . . This accomplishment is . . . not often attained in the water color medium.”⁴² What at close range was “accomplishment” was at a distance of time or space “inconsistency.”

Over time, the coherence of Crawford’s “constant experimenting” has been lost. A recent article in the *Globe and Mail* previewing a Picasso show at the AGO illustrates, by contrast, what is lacking in Crawford’s case:

One of [the show’s] strengths, in fact, is its softening of our tendency to slot Picasso’s output into fixed categories or stages such as “the Rose Period,” or “analytic cubism.” For instance, smack-dab in the middle of a wall of cubistic creations circa 1911 [the curator], has placed a lovely neoclassical artist-and-muse painting that seems to have migrated from 1904 but, in fact, was completed at the same time as he was deep into his experiments with collage, cubism and mixed media. A 1918 portrait of his first wife, Olga Kokhlova, is more homage to Ingres’s *Comtesse d’Haussonville*, from 1845, than anticipation of *Bather Opening a Beach Hut*, painted in 1928.⁴³

What would happen, though, to Picasso’s “fixed categories,” if *only* the “neoclassical” and the portrait of Kokhlova were in public collections? Crawford was painting non-objective works by 1946 at the latest (i.e. two years before *Refus Global*) and she continued to produce works of this kind for the remainder of her life.⁴⁴ These are usually mentioned, though never described, in the local press coverage of the many exhibitions Crawford staged in her own studio (descriptions were reserved, it seems, for works of more interest to potential buyers or those that were easiest for the reporter

to write about, perhaps both).⁴⁵ The most extensive discussion comes in a 1959 article: “In her abstract compositions [Crawford] begins with an idea and enlarges on it. Explaining that form of art, she makes it sound exceedingly simple . . . Miss Crawford claims abstract painting, with its apartness from concrete relation or embodiment, is a protest against the materialism ‘which is so prevalent in our day.’”⁴⁶ Clearly, this was an important part of her creative practice for an extended period in her career. Were her abstractions expressive, moving in the direction suggested by *Snow and Mill from Gregory Place*? Or were they geometric, akin to those produced by her students in a summer course in 1959 whose work was photographed for a newspaper story describing their exhibition?⁴⁷ Until such a work is ferreted out – perhaps by Crawford’s as-yet hypothetical biographer – this portion of Crawford’s *œuvre* will remain a mystery.

Abstraction is not the only kind of work by Crawford that is no longer easy to find. An anonymous reviewer of a 1979 selection of works by Crawford suggests that “[s]he had a wonderful sense of humour as displayed in her 1940 *Impressions of the Festival*.”⁴⁸ What kind of comedy did this work convey? Was it a satire akin to Miller Brittain’s *Little Theatre Rehearsal*? Crawford did produce genre scenes. One, *Our Wartime Square*, was reproduced alongside Northrop Frye’s review of the 1944 CSPWC annual exhibition, but this has no apparent trace of satire (Fig. 8).⁴⁹ The only work of Crawford’s I have seen that seems to manifest a sense of humour is a small painting that hangs in an interior room of the Trinity Anglican Church in Saint John. It is a depiction of the church’s weathervane which is “a six foot long gilt fish” that sits on top of the 210-foot high steeple.⁵⁰ Crawford has rendered the perspective so that it appears that the viewer is at the same level as the weathervane and she has framed the image to exclude the steeple entirely. The effect on the viewer is to see, from a distance, a painting of a fish in water; then, as one approaches, a fish in a blue sky with wispy clouds; and, finally, to recognize Crawford’s subtle depiction of the support reaching up to the weathervane and to make the connection between the painting and its subject, the church’s steeple, two hundred feet above one’s head. This, I think, was a little joke. It has something, to borrow Jack Humphrey’s vague critical language, of the “approach” of Magritte. *Ceci n’est pas un poisson*.

Clearly, there is much of Crawford’s work that is not easy to find in original or even in reproduction. On the one hand, this can be attributed to neglect or discrimination – certainly there is a case to be made on this score – but on the other hand it is also the result of Crawford’s own choices and ideas. From surviving evidence, it seems that Crawford never made use of the services of an art dealer. “People should buy paintings and not have them sold to them,” she once wrote.⁵¹ She staged numerous exhibitions in her own



8 | Julia Crawford, *Work and Relaxation (Our War Time Square)* as reproduced accompanying Northrop Frye, “Water Colour Annual” *Canadian Art* 1:5 (June–July 1944): 188. (Photo: author)

studio on Canterbury Street in Saint John.⁵² For some of these she produced quite elaborate catalogues that list her major accomplishments and reproduce some of her best-known works. In one of these, she lists her solo shows – these included the New Brunswick Museum (1949 and 1957), the University of New Brunswick (1949), Acadia University (1949 and 1956), the University of Maine, Netherwood [Secondary] School, St. Stephen, New Brunswick (1950), St. Andrews, New Brunswick (1951).⁵³ Note that these are local and, with the possible exceptions of the latter two small towns, not staged in commercial/private galleries. This catalogue concludes by noting that her work was in “MANY private collections.” The local art market, which was both small and not particularly adventurous in taste, was Crawford’s principal market and it was one that she approached on her own terms.

Crawford made few sales to public galleries. In 1937, the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Ontario) was given *Still Life* (1937) by the Friends of Canadian Art (Fig. 6).⁵⁴ This painting and *Barnesville* were the extent of Crawford’s representation in public collections until her “Know Your Own Artists”

retrospective show at the New Brunswick Museum in 1949 when she was fifty-three years old. From this show, the institution purchased several works and has continued to add to its collection of Crawford's work episodically henceforward, largely through bequests and gifts.⁵⁵ The NGC encouraged Crawford's desire to document the Second World War – "I should very much like to see you doing some war records," the director, H.O. McCurry, wrote to Crawford in December of 1943.⁵⁶ Crawford was enthusiastic. Some of her paintings, she wrote, would "get the atmosphere and be quite authentic – others would be somewhat imaginary and used to portray post-war ideals, etc."⁵⁷ By the following summer, Crawford had been in two different factories producing sketches of war manufacturing and wanted a letter from McCurry to support her in gaining permission to depict the selective services: "I must work on these War Records, even should it be necessary to borrow money to do so," she wrote.⁵⁸ Several months later McCurry responded that though Crawford would be "thinking hard things" of him, he had no budget to purchase any of her depictions of war industry.⁵⁹

Neither during the war nor after did the NGC purchase one of Crawford's paintings. In the summer of 1956, after meeting the Gallery's director, Alan Jarvis, when he visited Saint John, Crawford sent Jarvis photographs of a few of her works for his consideration: "One hates to paint and also to be a salesman for one's work," Crawford explained, "but it seems if one is to survive one has to do this. Of course, some say women have no business to paint anyway – BUT IF ONE HAS TO PAINT, ONE HAS TO PAINT – be he or she a man or a woman."⁶⁰ Perhaps it was this letter that prompted a visit to Crawford's studio by NGC information officer Jean Ostiguy in November of that year. Ostiguy chose four paintings (*Birdsong* [1937], *The Wader* [1953], *When the Moon Shines* [1953], *The Star* [1954]) for Crawford to ship to Ottawa for consideration of purchase. Crawford wrote that her prices for these works ranged between \$50 and \$75, but "if the Gallery thinks they are too low or too high I would like to know."⁶¹ Within a month Ostiguy wrote to explain that though none of the works she had shipped were going to be purchased, "we hope to be able to secure some of your best works in the near future."⁶² According to Ostiguy, Crawford would soon receive instructions about when to ship the oil painting that had impressed him in her studio, but if these instructions were ever sent they were not filed.

Had Ostiguy been sincere about the NGC's hope to obtain some of Crawford's work in the near future, a golden opportunity presented itself little more than a year later. 1957 was a year of great personal misfortune for Crawford. As one who had "forced into [Crawford's] affairs," Eleanor Yuill wrote confidentially without Crawford's knowledge to NGC's chief curator, R.H. Hubbard, about Crawford's circumstances.⁶³ Her brother in the United

States had died after several operations to treat his cancer; Crawford had loaned him the entirety of her savings to pay for his treatment. She could no longer see with her right eye – her “good” eye, according to Yuill – as the result of a thrombosis and arthritis had severely limited her use of her right, painting hand. With Crawford facing destitution, the Saint John Art Club was organizing an exhibition of her work to raise funds. Yuill was concerned that the best works would be sold below their value. “You have seen some of her work, I know,” Yuill urged Hubbard. “Do you really not think her work is worthy to be represented in the National Gallery?”⁶⁴ Hubbard did not answer this question directly in his response, but he did suggest that Yuill have “Alex Colville or some such person” make a selection of Crawford’s best works and have them shipped to the NGC for consideration.⁶⁵

Whether or not Alex Colville (1920–2013) or some other figure the NGC recognized as an authority was involved in the selection, a crate with twenty-one of Crawford’s paintings arrived in Ottawa on 15 November 1957 with a letter of support and a brief biography of Crawford provided by George MacBeath, President of the Saint John Art Club.⁶⁶ A month later Hubbard wrote to Yuill with the bad news that when “everyone got together” to look at the paintings, they could not agree on one for a purchase.⁶⁷ Crawford’s local supporters were not easily discouraged. Mrs. F.J. Cheesman was “bewildered in that among twenty-one works of a mature and dedicated artist of Crawford’s experience not one suited the requirements.” Cheesman thought it was because Crawford’s paintings were not abstract that they were not purchased: “Are all our paintings . . . to be purely in universal language?” she wondered. But, she had not given up and her letter accompanied two more Crawford paintings: “if your men in the receiving room are a bit amazed over the crate they could not be blamed as it is a housewife’s effort at carpentry.” These paintings were Cheesman’s favourites of Crawford’s work, but she deferred to the expertise of the NGC. “[A] few years at the Grange School of Art, etc. could not make an art critic out of me so we commend these to the viewing of your committee there and live in hope that they might meet the requirements.”⁶⁸

Evidently, Cheesman’s selections did not meet the “requirements” and, to make matters worse, the NGC did not return the paintings she had borrowed from Crawford in a timely fashion. In an effort to get her paintings back, Crawford wrote to Hubbard. Her letter suggests why Yuill had urged Hubbard to secrecy and Cheesman had explained that she was only able to borrow the additional paintings after much persuasion: “It is not my idea to force paintings on anybody,” Crawford wrote. “In fact, I detest the idea. It matters not to me whether anybody likes my things or not and I’m not compromising.”⁶⁹ Crawford recovered from her physical ailments and continued painting for the last decade of her life. In those years and in the



9 | Julia Crawford with the painting *North West Harbour, Deer Island*, photograph illustrating Willard Richardson, “Contest Win Surprised Her,” *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 19 December 1959. (Photo: Joe Michaud, Silver print, 19 x 24 cm, Telegraph-Journal Archives, New Brunswick Museum, with permission of *The Telegraph-Journal*).

forty-five since, the NGC has yet to find one of her paintings that meets its requirements.⁷⁰

In 1959, Crawford won second prize in Fredericton’s Beaverbrook Gallery’s competition for artists of the Atlantic Provinces. In the photograph accompanying the story in the *Saint John Evening Times-Globe* describing this honour, Crawford is standing, paintbrush in hand in front of the prizewinning depiction of Deer Island, the kind of painting that was in many ways her bread and butter (Fig. 9). Crawford told the reporter, Willard Richardson, that she would not have sent the painting had she known in advance it was a competitive show. “I do not favor competitions among paintings,” she said. When she learned of the nature of the exhibition, she consoled herself with her self-assessment that “Mine is not a prize-winning picture.” This was not the verdict reached by the contest’s judge, Alan Jarvis, the now-former director of the NGC who had in recent memory not been able to find a work by Crawford that met the gallery’s requirements.⁷¹ As a matter of principle, however, Crawford was uncomfortable with the process of creating an artistic hierarchy even when she benefited from it.

Crawford’s views about competition and marketing works of art were of long standing. In a report prepared for the Maritime Art Association on the activities of the SJAC in 1942, Crawford had only praise for André Biéler’s (1896–1989) lecture on Mexican and Canadian art delivered in January. About Kathleen Shackleton’s talk, “Art, the Machine and Reconstruction,” though, Crawford had serious reservations. Shackleton was an unabashedly commercial fine artist who arrived in Saint John after completing a series

of commissions for the Canadian Pacific Railway. According to Crawford, Shackleton suggested that “artists in Canada should make use of sales specialists in seeking a market for what they created.” Would not, Crawford wondered, “mediocre work be best sellers under these conditions”? If the artist “might be his own salesman,” would “he become a better salesman than an artist”? At the end of Crawford’s report it is difficult to discern whether she is summarizing Shackleton without comment, or continuing to editorialize: “It all simmers down to this: we want to have trust in our fellow men . . . no politics in art, no cheap competition, no outwitting, but tolerance and real help to one’s fellow artist and real character with fine principles.”⁷²

When it came to helping her fellow artists, Crawford worked hardest to help Jack Humphrey, with whom she shared much in terms of sensibility; when it came to having trust in “fellow men,” Crawford had more trust in some than others, and probably with good reason. When paintings by Miller Brittain and Stanley Royle (1888–1961) (RCA) were selected for an IBM exhibition in the winter of 1941, Crawford and Humphrey co-signed a letter of protest in the *Telegraph Journal*: “In view of the excellent publicity given recently . . . to the selection of pictures from New Brunswick for the International Business Machines (IBM) Exhibition, it may be of interest to many art lovers in the city and province to know that the paintings were not chosen by a regional jury as reported nor one of broader scope, but apparently without benefit of competition, by a member of the Royal Canadian Academy which represents a tory faction in Canadian Art.”⁷³ Earlier, in a letter to Walter Abell, Crawford had voiced her suspicions that her part-time colleague at the Vocational school, Ted Campbell, was using his influence to steer the IBM selection: “This is merely Psychic, but Jack H. should have it and something should be done to prevent mistakes before they happen.”⁷⁴ In the same letter, Crawford bemoaned the fact that Humphrey had never been able to obtain a teaching job. She blamed Humphrey’s unemployment on Ted Campbell’s monopolization of these positions:

Ted Campbell now teaches at Vocational Night School, Netherwood, Rothesay Collegiate School, Normal School and at the UNB. Somehow I feel this is wrong – we should see to it that the work and PAY should be more evenly distributed. Why was Jack not given a chance or someone else? What should be done about that?⁷⁵

There is no little irony in the fact that Ted Campbell replaced Crawford as a full-time art teacher at the Vocational school in the year that she was “Sick January . . . til June plus. Nervous Exhaustion.”⁷⁶

It is important to recall that the next line in Crawford’s “Life History” is “Better.” As she would later do after her difficulties of 1957, Crawford

rebounded after the end of her career at the Vocational. She went on to get a new job at Netherwood School for Girls, and also taught privately for the rest of her life. After her death, students published tributes to her, remembering her fondly as a fun-loving teacher.⁷⁷ She seems to have been keen to promote their success: in 1946 she succeeded in getting twelve students' work accepted at an International "Festival of Art" exhibition in Philadelphia, where they were the only Canadian representatives.⁷⁸ Through channels that are now entirely obscure, Crawford was hired to teach a ten-day summer painting course for the Algoma Art Society in Sault Ste. Marie in 1959. The closing exhibition attracted the attention of the local press and says something of Crawford's pedagogical methods and priorities: "[T]he whole presented such a kaleidoscopic array of color that visitors gasped in surprise and a little bewilderment as they came in. Miss Crawford had stressed the point that artists must use their imagination when they paint and they did."⁷⁹

Crawford had a long and successful career as a teacher and she continued to paint, exhibit and sell until she died in 1968. She continued to have her work accepted in juried group exhibitions (*Flowers*, for example, was one of fifty-seven works chosen for the National Council of Women of Canada's "Canadian Women Artists" exhibition in New York and the subsequent travelling exhibition organized by the NGC) and to attract favourable critical notice.⁸⁰ Crawford made choices typical of many Canadian women artists: she never married, had no children, and needed to devote a great deal of her time to finding a way to make a living. This material need, though, did not alter her aesthetic ideals or her ambivalence about marketing her work. She was not particularly adept at building her career in a way that would be noticed in the centres of modern art, nor did she, like Hortense Gordon (1881–1961), have important allies in the field who could help her to do so. Yet, in the little archival material that remains, Crawford has left no traces of bitterness. I sense that she reported with pride on the NGC "Information Sheets" that Graham McInnes had mentioned her name in *A Short History of Canadian Art* (1939) and there is no evidence, save perhaps for the line about exhibiting where the artist is "not personally known," of Crawford resenting the absence of greater attention and support from Canadian critics and institutions.

It is easy to imagine that Crawford would be equally sanguine about her marginality in Canadian art historiography: after all, Tippet mentions her name not once but thrice in *By A Lady*. To make Crawford a member of an expanded Canadian canon would please those who collect Crawford's work, but it would have little to do with her "real life experiences." What strikes me as important in Crawford's case is the combination of her acceptance of some of the rules of being a modern artist – essentially, the aesthetic ones – and her resistance to other less explicitly stated rules: those involving competition, hierarchy, self-aggrandizement, and pursuit of larger than local markets.

Tracing the way that Crawford's *habitus* guided her trajectory in the field – both the forces and the *choices* that led to her present obscurity – illustrates some of the features of the field itself, specifically the characteristic elements of being an “artist” that have nothing to do with the creation of art. Thinking in this way might move us in the direction of committing what Bourdieu calls the “one unforgivable transgression” in the field of cultural production: to “call into question not a way of playing the game, but the game itself and the belief which supports it.”⁸¹

In a very different context, Antonio Gramsci wrote, “whatever one does one is always playing somebody's game, the important thing is to in every way play one's own game with success – in other words, to win decisively.”⁸² Julia Crawford did not win decisively. She did, though, play her own game insofar as she was able. Recalling this with admiration leaves us seeing Crawford's life and career in the way she saw her own prize-winning designs: “probably . . . not so good” by conventional measures, but “original (absolutely).”

NOTES

- 1 Linda NOCHLIN, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1971), reprinted in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 147.
- 2 Eleanor M. Yuill to R.H. Hubbard, 29 Oct. 1957. File 7.1-C, “Crawford, Julia,” Box 258, “Correspondence with/re: Artists,” (hereafter Crawford Correspondence), National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives (NGC).
- 3 Griselda POLLOCK, *Differencing the Canon* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 102. Pollock's italics.
- 4 Mary SHERIFF, “Individual Lives, Collective Histories: Representing Women Artists in the Twenty-First Century” (paper delivered at *Imagining History: A Canadian Women Artists History Initiative Conference*, Concordia University, Montreal, 3 May 2012). Accessed 31 Jan. 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3iLQaPeZ2c>
- 5 Norma BROUDE and Mary D. GARRARD, eds., introduction to *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 2, 3.
- 6 Norma BROUDE, “Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman or the Cult of True Woman,” in *Reclaiming Female Agency*, 260.
- 7 POLLOCK, *Differencing the Canon*, 61.
- 8 Ibid., 107.
- 9 Perhaps the last word in this quotation, “experience” – another term that feminist historians such as Joan Sangster have recently argued needs to be reclaimed in the wake of debates over the “linguistic turn” in the 1980s and 1990s – speaks more clearly to the simultaneity and insuperability of structural constraint and individual agency. Drawing on and making connections between the work of Sonia Kruks and E.P. Thompson, Sangster describes how in interpretation historians can use

- experience as a “junction concept” between social being and social consciousness. This, fundamentally, is compatible to the approach I suggest below using Bourdieu’s term “habitus,” which, too, is a “junction concept.” See Joan SANGSTER, *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women’s History* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 357.
- 10 Karl MARX and Friedrich ENGELS, *The German Ideology*, as reproduced in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. TUCKER (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1972), 155.
 - 11 Pierre BOURDIEU, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52–54.
 - 12 POLLOCK, *Differencing the Canon*, 61.
 - 13 Pierre BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37.
 - 14 Willard RICHARDSON, “Contest Win Surprised Her,” *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 19 Dec. 1959.
 - 15 Susan BUTLIN, *The Practice of her Profession: Florence Carlyle, Canadian Painter in the Age of Impressionism* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2009); Elspeth CAMERON, *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* (Toronto: Cormorant, 2007); and Laura BRANDON, *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Canadian Artist* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).
 - 16 On Carr’s “discovery” see Leslie DAWN, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 293–309; on Munn and Taçon see Joyce ZEMANS, Elizabeth BURRELL and Elizabeth HUNTER, *Kathleen Munn and Edna Taçon: New Perspectives on Modernism in Canada* (Toronto: The Art Gallery of York University, 1988); on Pegi Nicol see BRANDON, *Pegi by Herself*.
 - 17 Avery SHAW, “The Work of Julia Crawford,” *Education Review* (April 1949): 9.
 - 18 Norman BRYSON, *Word and Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 28.
 - 19 Julia Crawford to Walter Abell, 21 Nov. 1941. Julia Crawford Papers (JCP), SI17-10, New Brunswick Museum and Archives (NBM).
 - 20 Author’s interview with Peter Larocque, 13 Apr. 2012.
 - 21 Jack HUMPHREY, “Seventh Maritime Annual,” *Maritime Art* 2:2 (December 1942): 40.
 - 22 Julia Tilley Crawford to Alice de Kessler Lusk Webster, 12 July 1943. Artifact file for the painting *Barnesville*, A45.730, NBM. My thanks to Peter Larocque for this source.
 - 23 Graham MCINNIS, “World of Art,” *Saturday Night* (8 Dec. 1937): 8.
 - 24 Clement MORRO, *La Revue Moderne* (Paris), 7 Nov. 1937, as reproduced in “National Gallery of Canada Information Form,” 10 June 1944, Julia Crawford Documentation File (JCDF), NGC. Author’s translation.
 - 25 *Arts* (Paris), December 1938, as reproduced in “National Gallery of Canada Information Form,” 10 June 1944, JCDF, NGC. Author’s translation.
 - 26 “National Gallery of Canada Information Form,” 10 June 1944, JCDF, NGC.
 - 27 As quoted in DWB [Donald Buchanan], “Brazil Sees Canadian Art,” *Canadian Art* 2:3 (February/March 1945): 105.
 - 28 “Art Exhibition is Continuing,” *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 16 Dec. 1946. Jack Humphrey’s *Indiantown* was purchased in the same exhibition.
 - 29 RICHARDSON, “Contest Win Surprised Her.”

- 30 Julia CRAWFORD, "Saint John," *Maritime Art* 2:1 (October/November 1941): 22.
- 31 BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 42.
- 32 "Julia T. Crawford (Life History)," JCDF, NGC.
- 33 "National Gallery of Canada Information Form," 10 June 1944, JCDF, NGC.
- 34 Kirk NIERGARTH, "Art and Democracy: New Brunswick Artists and Canadian Culture between the Great Depression and the Cold War" (PhD thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2007), 158–84.
- 35 Maria TIPPETT, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992), 64, 102, and 109.
- 36 Sara JOHNSON, "The Artists of Saint John," unpublished, n.d. (ca. 1985), collection of the author, 11–12.
- 37 In 1937 these lecturers included Ted Campbell, Violet Gillett, and Kjeld and Erica Deichmann. See NIERGARTH, "Art and Democracy," 153–57.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Atkins to Schaefer, 7 Dec. 1940, Carl Schaefer Fonds, MG30 D171, volume 1, file "Atkins, Caven," Library and Archives Canada. Many of the other artists mentioned in this letter are called by their first name or their last name alone, i.e. the "Miss" of "Miss Crawford" is anomalous.
- 40 Christina SABAT, "Julia Crawford 'Rediscovered,'" *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*, 26 Feb. 1979.
- 41 SHAW, "The Work of Julia Crawford," 9.
- 42 "Saint John Artist's Work Wins Praise," *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 17 Dec. 1954.
- 43 James ADAMS, "Picasso Returns to Toronto," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 24 Apr. 2012.
- 44 "Art Exhibition Is Continuing," *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 16 Dec. 1946.
- 45 For example, in addition to "Art Exhibition is Continuing," see "Exhibition of Paintings Attracting Many Visitors," *Saint John Telegraph Journal*, 18 Nov. 1953; "Art Exhibition Receives Praise," *Saint John Telegraph Journal*, 12 June 1956; and RICHARDSON, "Contest Win Surprised Her."
- 46 RICHARDSON, "Contest Win Surprised Her."
- 47 "Painting Course Winds Up with Exhibition of Works," *Sault Ste. Marie Star*, 11 Aug. 1959.
- 48 "Crawford Paintings on Display," *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 18 Nov. 1979. Crawford's former students also recalled her sense of humour. See Helmer BIERMANN, "In Kind Memory of Julia Crawford," *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 6 May 1983.
- 49 Northrop FRYE, "Water Colour Annual," *Canadian Art* 1:5 (June–July 1944): 188. Crawford also produced scenes of industrial workers in a veneer factory in Saint John, some of which are in the collection of the New Brunswick Museum.
- 50 Website of Trinity Anglican Church, Saint John. Accessed 1 Feb. 2013, <http://www.trinitysj.com/history.html>
- 51 Julia CRAWFORD, "1942 Art Club Report to MAA," Saint John Art Club Papers, s85-1, file 37, NBM.
- 52 The exhibitions which received press coverage include ones held in 1946, 1947, 1953, and 1956, but there are also two undated catalogues for in-studio exhibitions in the NGC artist documentation file that both include mention of her show at the New Brunswick Museum in 1957, and hence must postdate that year. Press notices include "Art Exhibition is Continuing"; "Art Exhibition Wins Much Praise," *Saint*

- John Evening Times-Globe*, 28 June 1947; “Exhibition of Paintings Attracting Many Visitors”; “Art Exhibition Receives Praise.”
- 53 “Catalogue of Paintings by Julia Crawford,” n.d. [post 1957], JCDF, NGC.
- 54 Julia Crawford, *Still Life* (1937), watercolour on paper, 46.4 x 37.8 cm, acquired 1937 as Gift from Friends of Canadian Art Fund, Art Gallery of Ontario.
- 55 Author’s interview with Peter Larocque, 13 Apr. 2012.
- 56 McCurry to Crawford, 2 Dec. 1943, War Records Applications (WRA), 5.41-1, NGC.
- 57 Crawford to McCurry, 11 Dec. 1943, WRA, NGC.
- 58 Crawford to McCurry, 15 and 23 Aug. 1944, WRA, NGC. The quotation is from the letter of 23 Aug.
- 59 McCurry to Crawford, 7 Nov. 1944, WRA, NGC.
- 60 Crawford to Allan [sic] Jarvis, 3 July 1956, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 61 Crawford to Jean R. Ostiguy, 22 Nov. 1956, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 62 Ostiguy to Crawford, 3 Dec. 1956, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 63 Yuill to Hubbard, 29 Oct. 1957, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Hubbard to Yuill, 5 Nov. 1957, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 66 George MacBeath to Jarvis, 13 Nov. 1957, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 67 Hubbard to Yuill, 16 Dec. 1957, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 68 Mrs. F.J. [Keturah] Cheesman to Jarvis, 27 Dec. 1957, Crawford Correspondence, NGC.
- 69 Crawford to Hubbard, 3 May 1958, Crawford Correspondence, NGC. The painting Crawford was most concerned that the gallery might have lost was titled, ironically given the circumstances described in Yuill’s letter, *Compassion*. “I’m wondering where is *Compassion*?” Crawford wrote.
- 70 The NGC came close to a purchase, it seems, in 1960, when Claude Picher, the NGC’s Eastern Liaison Officer, was purchasing works for a proposed “East Coast Painters Exhibition.” After he visited her studio, Crawford wrote to Picher to explain that “The price of *Portrait of an Old Lady* should be \$300. I like her but I might say minimum price would be \$200. When do you wish to have the painting shipped?” No response from Picher is in the file. Crawford to Claude Picher, Eastern Liaison Officer, National Gallery of Canada, 7 July 1960, JCDF, NGC.
- 71 RICHARDSON, “Contest Win Surprised Her.”
- 72 CRAWFORD, “1942 Art Club Report to MAA.”
- 73 Undated clipping of letter to the editor, labelled *Telegraph Journal*, “Maritime Art Correspondence,” JCP, NBM. Miller Brittain’s portrait of P.K. Page, entitled *Pat*, and Stanley Royle’s *Tantramar Marsh* were the works selected.
- 74 Crawford to Abell, 29 Nov. 1941, JCP, NBM.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 “Julia T. Crawford (Life History).”
- 77 See, for example, BIERMANN, “In Kind Memory of Julia Crawford.”
- 78 “To Display Work in Philadelphia,” *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, 15 Apr. 1946.
- 79 “Painting Course Winds Up with Exhibition of Works,” *Sault Ste. Marie Star*.
- 80 “Canadian Women Artists Exhibit Work at Eaton’s,” *Toronto Telegram*, 6 Sept. 1947.
- 81 BOURDIEU, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 81.
- 82 Antonio GRAMSCI, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 154.

Julia Crawford et les règles du jeu

KIRK NIERGARTH

Résister à la tendance téléologique de la forme est tout un défi pour les biographes. C'est-à-dire que considérer un sujet comme digne d'une biographie a pour présupposé d'avoir les habitudes de vie les plus reconnaissables. En d'autres termes, le choix du sujet d'une biographie (disons d'une femme artiste) conduit déjà aux genres de preuves (par exemple, les critiques d'expositions, les collections publiques, les prix atteints aux ventes aux enchères) qui lui ont conféré une place reconnue dans le domaine. En étudiant une figure marginale – une qui a connu peu de notoriété dans le domaine de l'art canadien, en l'occurrence la peintre du Nouveau-Brunswick Julia Crawford (1896–1968) – *pour sa marginalité* (et non pour l'en sortir, rétrospectivement), mon but est de donner un aperçu de la logique qui sous-tend le domaine ainsi que des normes de valeurs : les règles du jeu.

Pourquoi Crawford n'est-elle pas devenue une artiste « importante » de son vivant ou n'a-t-elle pas été « canonisée » par la suite? Tout d'abord, elle était du mauvais sexe. Une femme, artiste, moderne, au style évolutif, avait peu de chance d'être sélectionnée pour recevoir le traitement de vedette au panthéon de sa génération. Elle vivait au Nouveau-Brunswick, et, pendant longtemps, en ce qui concernait les institutions artistiques canadiennes centrales, la culture coulait comme le Saint-Laurent vers les Maritimes, et résolument pas en direction opposée. Ensuite, son âge a pu aussi jouer un rôle : elle était un peu plus âgée que ses pairs sur la scène locale et nationale. Il se peut aussi que sa marginalité ne soit pas du tout due à des éléments biographiques, mais esthétiques. Or, cet argument est problématique : quand les critiques contemporains s'intéressaient au travail de Crawford, leurs observations étaient positives – particulièrement si ces critiques se tenaient loin des cercles d'artistes où elle était « personnellement connue », comme elle le disait.

Vu que Crawford avait commencé sa carrière comme institutrice dans une école de campagne au Nouveau-Brunswick sans formation artistique, il ne faudrait pas sous-estimer le travail acharné et le talent qui lui ont permis d'exposer ses peintures au Canada et dans le monde, de se distinguer et d'être louangée par la critique. Crawford a fait les choix typiques de nombreuses

artistes canadiennes : elle ne s'est jamais mariée, n'avait pas d'enfants et devait se débrouiller le plus clair de son temps pour trouver un moyen de gagner sa vie. Elle a toutefois réussi à maintenir ses activités de création, continuant à se développer et à expérimenter en tant que peintre moderne pendant quarante ans, malgré ses difficultés personnelles et le manque de patronage et de soutien institutionnel. Et pourtant, l'*habitus* de Crawford n'était pas bien adapté pour engranger les récompenses que le milieu de la peinture offrait sur la scène locale, nationale et internationale. Elle était dans une certaine mesure naïve à propos des stratégies nécessaires pour « jouer le jeu », mais chose importante, elle *avait choisi* sa ligne de conduite. Crawford, par exemple, ne croyait pas à la concurrence entre les œuvres d'art. Ses sentiments à l'égard de la vente de ses tableaux étaient pour le moins ambigus, et envers les marchands d'art, dédaigneux. Ses insuccès et échecs, mesurés à l'aune des valeurs vénérées dans le milieu, peuvent aussi être interprétés comme des refus – refus traduisant des normes de valeurs différentes.

Une chose importante me frappe dans le cas de Crawford, c'est le mélange d'acceptation des règles de l'artiste moderne – essentiellement, les règles esthétiques – et sa résistance aux autres règles moins explicitement énoncées : celles qui ont trait à la concurrence, à la hiérarchie, à l'auto-encensement et à la recherche de marchés plus importants que les locaux. L'examen de la manière dont l'*habitus* de Crawford a guidé sa trajectoire dans le domaine – à la fois les forces et les *choix* qui ont présidé à son obscurité présente – illustre certaines des caractéristiques du domaine lui-même, plus précisément les éléments caractéristiques de l'état d'« artiste » qui n'a rien à voir avec l'art de la création.

Dans un contexte très différent, Antonio Gramsci a écrit : « Quoi qu'on fasse, on joue toujours le jeu de quelqu'un, l'important c'est de faire son possible pour jouer son propre jeu avec succès – autrement dit, de gagner de façon décisive ». Julia Crawford n'a pas gagné de façon décisive. En revanche, elle a joué son propre jeu tant qu'elle a pu. Se souvenir de cela avec admiration pourrait nous entraîner sur la voie de commettre ce que Bourdieu appelle une « transgression inexpiable » dans le domaine de la production culturelle : « mettent en question non une manière de jouer le jeu, mais le jeu lui-même et la croyance qui le fonde [. . .] ».



Ordinary Affects: Folk Art, Maud Lewis, and the Social Aesthetics of the Everyday

ERIN MORTON

The folk art category in Nova Scotia has long participated in a larger search for optimism that emerged there at the end of the twentieth century, in the midst of a shifting socio-economic landscape that radically shaped the parameters within which folk art would be understood. Folk art was an optimistic construction in the sense that it provided public history makers of influence in and around Nova Scotia with a cultural object upon which they might affix their desire for an organized daily life under the disorganized and despondent realities of late capitalism.¹ Indeed, Nova Scotia was a place that, beginning in the 1950s, saw overwhelming social reorganization by centralized bureaucracies aimed at advancing an urban, modernizing ideal over traditional ways of rural living.² This “decade of development” in Atlantic Canada saw workers moving away from an industrial-labour base in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and mining and towards newly expanding trade and service sectors.³ Yet by the 1960s, despite the fact that Atlantic Canadian politicians on the whole maintained faith in local material progress and confidently asserted that economic disparity between the region and the rest of Canada would narrow, many working Nova Scotians still struggled to earn a living wage.⁴ In 1969, unemployment in the province was nearly double what it was in the rest of the country, and personal incomes were almost half of what they were in Ontario.⁵ The resulting increase in Atlantic Canadian out-migration prompted one leading economist of the day to suggest in 1966 that “a cheap one-way fare to Montreal would solve the region’s economic problems.”⁶ Yet optimism remained at the fore of provincial politics because of such new federal actions on regional development as the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in 1969, which promised to consolidate the distribution of federal resources across Atlantic Canada.⁷ Amidst these changing socio-economic conditions, in which rural Nova Scotians were both materially marginalized by and resistant to the regional development

Detail, still of Maud Lewis painting, surrounded by her decorated household items, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

programs that sought to modernize them, folk art provided a means to optimistically reimagine the everyday realities of working people, both in cultural contexts and beyond them.⁸ And there was one self-taught artist in particular whose painted landscapes of rural Nova Scotia helped to visualize late capitalism's overwhelming disorganization of the ordinary: Maud Lewis (1903–1970) of Marshelltown, Digby County.

Since her death, conventional accounts of Maud Lewis have positioned her as an isolated, poor, disabled woman who went largely without recognition in her own lifetime.⁹ Prominent examples here include the 1997 Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS) retrospective of her paintings and the 1998 National Film Board of Canada (NFB) documentary of the same title, “The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis.” Both of these public history projects presented Lewis as an artist who “led a confined life, rarely going far from her own home.”¹⁰ Like other artists saddled with the “folk” label, such positioning signals that Lewis was ignorant of conventional art-world mechanisms in her lifetime, here specifically as a result of her rural marginalization in Marshelltown. In fact, the closed community in which folk art is typically thought to be created did not truly exist for Lewis, and by the time of her death in 1970, the local *Digby Courier* had already recognized Lewis as an “internationally known primitive style artist.”¹¹ A 1964 transcript of a *Digby Courier* editorial makes a similar point, noting that Lewis’s paintings “have become famous throughout Canada,” with orders arriving to the Lewis home by mail “from Newfoundland, British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba and if we remember correctly the U.S.A. The local demand, too, is heavy, said Mrs. Lewis, as the editor placed an order for two.”¹²

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Lewis’s reputation grew far beyond her local community: her everyday life and creative processes were explored in radio and television broadcasts from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), documentaries from the NFB, and popular press articles. In the words of one writer, recognition of Lewis’s work grew quickly because such public attention focused on her story as “a rural, isolated, poverty stricken, handicapped, female folk artist – the ultimate marginalized outsider.”¹³ Lewis seemed to triumph over such obstacles as disability, gendered economic marginalization, and rurality through the joyful optimism of her small painted panel board landscapes, which infused everyday scenes of Digby County life with bright colours painted in a raw, gestural way (Fig. 1). Moreover, because Lewis’s paintings portrayed such rural activities as oxen-pulling, fishing, and logging, they came to serve as a novel example of the resilience of traditional living for those public history makers seeking to grapple with the province’s increased modernization during the 1960s and 1970s. This theme has since become the central component of narrations of



1 | Maud Lewis, *Moored Cape Islander*, ca. 1960, oil on board, 23.2 × 30.5 cm, on loan to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia from Tony and Benita Cormier, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. (Photo: Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia)

her story – one that, for many late-twentieth-century antimodernists, spoke to her folkish perseverance in a rapidly changing world. As former AGNS director Bernard Riordon put it in 2007, her art-making in the face of a shifting cultural and economic milieu came to represent a “human condition of triumph” that many people were in search of during her lifetime.¹⁴ Indeed, the AGNS and other public history makers like it have long advanced a narrative that continues to make Lewis’s story compelling for audiences up to the present: her apparent ability to rise above the everyday tragedy of her life through an indefatigable optimism.

An interpretative framework for that optimism might be described here by using the term “ordinary affect.” As anthropologist Kathleen Stewart explains, ordinary affects “are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they’re also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life.”¹⁵ This article employs

Stewart's concept of the ordinary affect to argue that Lewis's life story provided public history makers of influence an optimistic opportunity to fuse ideas about ordinariness with late-capitalist antimodernist fantasy. It examines this process using what cultural theorist Lauren Berlant calls "a materialist context for affect theory."¹⁶ Affect, in short, is understood here as an empathic register on the body, which has the potential to produce history, politics, subjectivity, and consciousness.¹⁷ When it comes to positioning such affective structures historically, Berlant argues for a viewpoint that reads people's respective historical presents in terms of the affects that have subsequently been organized into "an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back."¹⁸ What this means in Lewis's case is that empathic visions of her biography have helped public history makers to create a novel account of one woman's ability to triumph over her material reality through the cultural production of folk painting. Rather than offering a systematic investigation of the larger historical factors that produced either this socio-economic circumstance, or the folk construct, in the first place, ordinary affects produced and circulated by public history makers have emphasized Lewis's biography. By contrast, drawing on materialist affect theory allows for an examination of the ways in which the ordinary nature of Lewis's life was not simply a means for public history makers of the 1960s and 70s to nostalgically remember an antimodernist golden age that Lewis was thought to represent in their historical present. Instead, it becomes possible to analyze how the ordinary affects of tragedy and optimism provided a way to address the particular postwar crises of late capitalism through the advancement of the folk art category; for it was folk art, above all, that enabled public history makers to find examples of extraordinary people in ordinary settings who could rise above the economic subjugation that many Nova Scotians were then experiencing.¹⁹

Maud Lewis was born Maud Dowley, the only daughter of John Nelson Dowley and Agnes Mary Germaine, in South Ohio, Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia, on 7 March 1903. She had a chronic physical condition that has been identified as everything from the aftereffects of polio²⁰ to arthritis²¹ to "multiple birth defects,"²² which impacted her mobility and dexterity. Perceptions about Lewis's disability have also been fundamental to building her public biography, with credit often attributed to her mother, Agnes, for encouraging Maud to paint Christmas cards despite what might have been considered her daughter's physical limitations.²³ In 1937, after the deaths of both of her parents and her sister, Lewis was apparently unable to support herself alone and moved to Digby to live with her maternal aunt, Ida Germaine. On 16 January 1938, she married Everett Lewis (1893–1979) of Marshalltown and moved into his small, one-room home, where she would



2 | Lewis home, Marshalltown, Digby County, 1965. (Photo: © Bob Brooks)

live until her death in 1970. It was the residence she shared with Everett that ultimately helped to solidify Maud Lewis's reputation as what the AGNS has called "Canada's best loved folk artist," for it was there that she began painting her now-famous wooden panel landscapes to sell to local people and tourist passersby (Fig. 2).²⁴ The Lewises' Marshalltown home was located on a busy highway that facilitated visitor access. A place without modern conveniences such as electricity or indoor plumbing, it provided an architectural framing for an ordinary life – one that represented the ability to eke out a traditional existence and that was juxtaposed with the daily activities of a modernizing Nova Scotian populace.

The narrative of the Lewises living a precarious life in rural surrounds and isolated from the evolving modern atmosphere around them had possibilities for optimism that public history makers were quick to capitalize upon. The first public history event that propelled Lewis's story into public

life beyond Marshalltown was a 1964 radio interview with Lewis for the CBC program *Trans-Canada Matinee*. Alida K. (Cora) Greenaway, a freelance journalist and heritage activist who worked with the CBC in Nova Scotia, produced the piece, which generated widespread interest in Maud Lewis's story.²⁵ As a result of the radio interview, the Toronto-based *Star Weekly* magazine published an illustrated article about Lewis in July 1965. The article featured a series of photographs of Maud and Everett Lewis taken by Bob Brooks,²⁶ along with a text by writer Murray Barnard, who described the Lewises' daily life "in a house so small that it might have been built for Tom Thumb. Passersby on highway no. 2 four miles west of Digby would dismiss it as a tool shed except for one thing: its white shingle walls and doors are decorated with flowers, birds and butterflies, painted in brilliant colours by Maud Lewis."²⁷ On the whole, early public history encounters with Lewis's story offered a glimpse into the perceived ordinariness of her everyday existence and spatiality, one determined by her remaining "within the 60 miles of small farms, fishing villages and lumber camps separating the towns of Digby and Yarmouth on the southern tip of Nova Scotia" throughout her life.²⁸ Lewis's life story spoke firmly to the regional and geographic space of "folk" underdevelopment, one demarcated by the kind of livelihood that processes of urban modernization were thought to be quickly displacing throughout the province.

The Lewis case therefore helps to shed light on the dominant temporal and spatial cultural associations assigned to country living that had begun decades earlier in Nova Scotia – namely, the idea of rural places as being slower in pace, as representing a time gone by, and as remaining tied to the everyday life of past eras alongside the progressive advancement of urbanization. In examining these temporal and spatial distinctions, social and cultural historians have long noted an important ideology that shapes the ways in which rural workers have been conventionally understood throughout Canada's Maritime Provinces, particularly in terms of their association with settlement of lands through pastoral agriculture. As Daniel Samson argues, for example:

If merchants were seen as world-striding entrepreneurs, settlers, on the other hand, were imagined as clearers of the land and founders of autonomous communities. Their only connection to the merchants' world was their unwillingness to devote themselves wholly to the land and their all-too-willing seduction by the easy money available in cutting timber rather than hay and harvesting fish rather than potatoes. This, together with an alleged subsistence orientation and technological backwardness of the Maritime farmer,

created a rural society characterized by its “cultural isolation” and “primitive” condition.²⁹

The highly gendered cultural characterization of the rural settler in the Maritimes as, on the one hand, an industrious “jack-of-all-trades” and, on the other, a farmer who “neglected his farm and went off to square timber” has indeed had important implications for public history narration up to the present.³⁰ Much like the proverbial farmer who participated in Nova Scotia’s economy through subsistence labour rather than through eking out a profit, Maud Lewis came to epitomize a way of life that many public history makers understood as disappearing.

Specifically, public history ventures positioned Lewis’s painting as a means towards improving her meagre lot in life, a cultural practice that could merge the simplicity of her aesthetic with ideas about her naïve understanding of capitalist exchange. Barnard, for example, explained that the Lewises’ “income is now less than \$1,500 a year. Nevertheless both are happy. ‘I don’t need anything much more than I’ve got,’ says Maude [*sic*], ‘except maybe another room for painting in.’”³¹ He also pointed to the precariousness of the Lewises’ financial situation, noting that Lewis charged only \$3 to \$4.50 per painting, since, “perhaps mistakenly, she thinks higher prices will drive her present friendly buyers away.”³² Her only interruption in days spent painting small panel landscapes to sell to passing tourists, Barnard revealed, were rides in a “vintage Model T,” in which Everett took Maud “peddling fish from village to village three days a week.”³³ Barnard’s article established Maud Lewis as “Canada’s Grandma Moses,” and it did so by further marvelling at the fact that such an artist could exist with “the distractions of modern society,” which make it “almost impossible to be a primitive painter.”³⁴ Lewis was therefore framed as a cultural producer who could not be expected to understand the material value of her work, since she was thought to produce it almost exclusively for the pure joy of creative expression.

Another part of the process of establishing Lewis as an artist on the fringe of Nova Scotia’s modernizing expansion was to rely on the art-world expertise of those who could authenticate her positioning as a folk artist.³⁵ In Barnard’s case, he solicited commentary on the cultural significance of Lewis’s painting from commercial gallery owners Bill Ferguson and Claire Stenning of Ten Mile House in Bedford, and from the Halifax-based professional artist John Cook (1918–1984). Describing Lewis as working in a “primitive style [in which] there are no shadows,” Ferguson evoked her folk status by isolating the crudeness of Lewis’s aesthetic. Likewise, Cook observed that it was “a trick of her environment” that made her “a natural primitive.”³⁶ Nor did Barnard miss the opportunity to reinforce Lewis’s economic naiveté and

cement her passivity by revealing that Stenning and Ferguson were then in the process of negotiating “high quality reproductions of Maude [sic] Lewis’s paintings” in order to “pay her royalties. Bill hopes it will be a solution to the tricky problem of giving the couple a little more security.”³⁷

Together, the accounts of Greenaway and Barnard establish a few primary tropes that would help to narrate Lewis’s story over the next few decades, among them her ability to overcome her material circumstances by painting simple, joyful landscapes that spoke to the optimism she felt about her ordinary life. They also generally separate her work from the material circumstances of its production, which included the expansion of industry, transportation, and technology across Nova Scotia. Thus when Cora Greenaway produced her second CBC piece about Lewis in 1965 – this time for the television series *Telescope* – she relied on Lewis’s contemporary paintings to provide a window into Nova Scotia’s remaining rural areas. The resulting thirty-minute broadcast, entitled “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” featured a view of Lewis’s daily life similar to the one presented in Barnard’s text, affording contextual information about Lewis’s paintings that drew on many of the same sources. Once again, Stenning, Ferguson, and Cook were called upon to authenticate Lewis as a folk artist who was allochronically distanced³⁸ from both the training of the professional art world and from urban Nova Scotia’s modernizing frontier. These three experts, in other words, situated Lewis’s existence as separated chronologically, in time, and geographically, in space, from their own. They understood her as living a “not-yet-modern” rural life that was reflected in her painterly aesthetic. The result was a narrative that centred on the ordinariness of Lewis’s artistic technique and of her economic circumstance, nodes that were easily intersected in the moving image and overlaid narration of the screen media format.

The CBC’s *Telescope* series was the ideal visual introduction to Lewis’s ordinary life, since the nature of the program format facilitated a glimpse into her and Everett’s everyday activities in Digby County through the authority of those who could authenticate her folk artist status in the first place. CBC’s *Telescope* aired from 1963 to 1972, hosted by writer, director, and film producer Fletcher Markle (Fig. 3). “The mainstay of *Telescope*,” as film historian Blaine Allan notes, “was the personality profile of the Canadian, whether a national figure, international celebrity, or a notable unknown citizen.”³⁹ *Telescope*’s narration of Lewis firmly positioned her within this third categorization, offering the viewing audience a window into Lewis’s life story by emphasizing her disconnection from the modernizing society around her, the simplicity of her daily life, and her appeal to tourists visiting Nova Scotia. The program opened with the words of Kathleen MacNeil, whom Markle identified as “Mrs. Lloyd MacNeil” and described later on in the



3 | Still of host Fletcher Markle in front of a Maud Lewis painting of an oxen team, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

broadcast as Lewis’s “friend and unofficial advisor.” “A poet is without honour in his own country,” MacNeil declared, “and that’s the way it was with Maud. She needed outside recognition before the people in this area were aware of her work.” Markle reinforced MacNeil’s positioning of Lewis as isolated from her immediate community by emphasizing the disruption of her once happy childhood by her parents’ deaths. “Once upon a time in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, there lived a little girl named Maud,” Markle recounted, “the harness-maker’s daughter. Maud loved sleigh bells and buggy rides and big black oxen, and she painted Christmas cards and sold them around town for five cents apiece. She was very happy. And then her parents died and she went to live with an aunt in Digby.”⁴⁰ The program’s foray into ordinariness facilitated a reading of Lewis as someone who saw increased hardship during her lifetime, but who nevertheless overcame it through the recognition of sophisticated outsiders who understood the value of her cultural production.

The *Telescope* program convincingly framed Lewis as an outcast of modernity who was in constant search of companionship and love, in the absence of nuclear family support. Markle pointed out that Lewis’s childhood happiness was interrupted by the deaths of her parents, and he also noted that after moving in with her aunt in Digby, Lewis “still painted a little. But



4 | Still of Maud Lewis painting, surrounded by her decorated household items, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

she worked very hard around the house and after she grew up she became badly crippled with arthritis and she was very lonely. Since Lewis was already in her thirties when she moved to Digby, it is worth noting the narrative’s strange collapse in time – imposed, perhaps, to enhance the fairy-tale quality of the story which continues as follows: “Now, not far away there was an illiterate farm hand named Everett Lewis and he was lonely too. And just like in a storybook when Maud and Everett met, they suddenly weren’t lonely anymore. Within a week they were married. That was nigh on thirty years ago.”⁴¹ In this way, Markle’s narrative establishes an interrelation between Maud’s declining happiness and its rejuvenation through her marriage to Everett. The account goes on to illustrate how, “with Everett urging her on,” Maud “began to paint in earnest – the buggies and the oxen, the birds and the lobster boats of her happy childhood, painting in a joyful, primitive

style all her own” (Fig. 4).⁴² As such, *Telescope*’s narrative positioned Everett and Maud’s marriage as a supportive gesture that enabled Maud to pursue her natural artistic talents, thus creating a sense of optimism through a tale of reciprocal life-building that used love to forestall discussion of either partner’s situation within the social and economic structures of late-capitalist modernity in Nova Scotia.⁴³

Maud’s life with Everett in their little Marshalltown home also provided the necessary evidence to organize her optimism through her marriage and relative – albeit precarious – material security, thus circumventing more difficult social questions about access to education or an unstable labour market. Indeed the film’s narrative of love made it possible to sidestep Lewis’s lack of the professional training that could have helped her negotiate art-world circles for economic benefit. If anything, Lewis’s lack of artistic education was embraced as a factor in her financial success: “She’s never had a lesson,” Markle insisted, “never been to an art gallery, never met any other painters. Tourists discovered her bright bold work, took it home to admiring friends and now she can’t keep up with the demand.”⁴⁴ This lack of formal artistic training became a catalyst for Markle to explain Lewis’s pursuit of painting as a novelty – one that attracted the interest of tourists passing through Marshalltown to see the house she shared with her husband. In order to validate the tourist interest in Lewis’s work Markle, like Barnard, enlisted the authority of Claire Stenning and Bill Ferguson. “I just can’t understand why she hasn’t been found sooner,” Stenning pondered (Fig. 5), noting further that Lewis’s work was something that only the “more sophisticated members of the community” in Digby County were aware of.⁴⁵ “Some tourists passing through dropped in with one of the Lewis paintings looking for a frame,” Ferguson offered in turn, “and we were so delighted with what we saw that we had to find out where they came from and we hunted her down.”⁴⁶ By providing the very proficiency that the *Telescope* episode established Lewis as lacking, art-world experts thus endorsed the wider public recognition of Lewis’s talent in tourist circles, and also showed that her partnership with Everett fulfilled a promise of material security, precarious as it might be.

Often, the *Telescope* episode made a narrative connection between the tourist support of Lewis’s painting and her optimistic overcoming of a precarious daily life through these limited financial exchanges. Accordingly, the episode suggested that the modern society around Maud and Everett marginalized them in their home environment, and thereby ironically nurtured the perfect “closed” atmosphere for folk-art creation. What is more, the *Telescope* broadcast’s establishment of Lewis’s isolation in Marshalltown resulted not only in proof that her contact with the outside world came about through tourist channels, but also of her continued separation from



5 | Still of Claire Stenning at Ten Mile House gallery, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

professional artistic spheres. As Barnard noted in his article, Lewis had so far “been able to resist the urging of well-meaning acquaintances that she ‘improve’ her style and paint like everybody else.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Markle again solicited expert commentary to support such claims, this time through another of Barnard’s sources, John Cook, who provided insight into this aesthetic valuation of Lewis’s paintings. “Mrs. Lewis’s work is valid,” Cook confirmed. “It’s a direct statement of things experienced or imagined and very forthright in their statement and use of colour and her drawing – definitely works of art. Possibly minor works of art, but still, she has something to say and she’s saying it.”⁴⁸ Throughout the *Telescope* episode, the program emphasized that Lewis was an artist whose creative knowledge was directly informed by her rural circumstance, as opposed to the conventions of formal composition that she would have learned in an art school or by way of museum and gallery contact. At the same time, it presented her ordinary milieu as sustaining her material and cultural marginality.

What the episode ultimately advanced, however, was a perspective on the Lewises that established the couple as outsiders even amongst rural Digby County residents, because of their continued resistance to the forces of

modernization that public history makers saw transforming Nova Scotia as a whole. The fact that rural residents such as the Lewises were both absorbed into the structure of production and resistant to it through their making and distribution of independent commodities is largely ignored, since the Lewises' life in Digby County is here understood as decidedly separate from a process of modernization that it was, in reality, quite connected to.⁴⁹ Ferguson, for example, suggested that Maud and Everett's isolation in Marshalltown made them "unique characters" in the area and thereby attracted outsider attention – even if, as he jested for the camera, "Nova Scotia is full of characters."⁵⁰ This justification of the supposedly strange simplicity of the Lewises' rural countryside home and the so-called outside world of tourist visitors also served the idea that Maud and Everett fulfilled their own needs in life through a reciprocal investment in their customers. "They do love talking to the people passing by," Stenning elucidated, "the tourists and so forth, and they get a great deal out of this. So their wants are really quite simple: their meeting with the general public and their animals and their little plot of ground and so forth. They don't want much."⁵¹ Ultimately, *Telescope* provided evidence that the Lewises' ordinariness was worthy of public consideration, since it spoke to their ability to successfully negotiate a phase of capitalism that had fundamentally challenged the ways in which most rural Digby County residents lived, and what they aspired to.

Establishing this evidence throughout the *Telescope* episode meant presenting Maud and Everett as remnants of an age gone by, one marked by the sustained manual labour of Everett's farm and field work and the peddling of fish, together with Maud's paintings, in his Model T Ford. To be sure, such activities were framed as sites of unproductive labour that existed outside of a capitalist market.⁵² "As Maud Lewis creates," Markle explained, "husband Everett toils away at tasks he learned as a boy, chores he has performed for six decades with a kind of dignity that is characteristic of him."⁵³ The accompanying footage showed Everett cutting a field by hand with a sickle and digging up potatoes from his backyard garden with a rake (Fig. 6). "I only went hardly through the first grade," Everett's overlaid narration told the camera. "When I was a little fella, I went out to work. 10 years old, I milked five cows in the mornings. What had to be had to be. All the kids then had to work . . . Cause they had no pension in them days."⁵⁴ As the camera cuts away from Everett's work on the land to Lewis's work painting her panel boards in the house (Fig. 7), she recounts, "them days gone by. We used to have a phonograph with round records. It played a round record, great big hole in it! I can see it now," she recalled; "When You and I Were Young, Maggie", and all old-fashioned songs like that."⁵⁵ While Maud describes her memories of childhood, the camera pans to one of her paintings in progress,



6 | Still of Everett Lewis gathering potatoes, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

portraying an oxen team hauling logs. “There was no cars in them days. It was all horses,” Lewis went on. “I remember a time when we used to go out for buggy rides. My father used to harness a span of horses and go for all day . . . I remember them, plain . . . Them was the days. You can travel faster now, you can go a long ways in a car.”⁵⁶ The central elements of the *Telescope* episode thereby established the Lewises’ broader connection to Euro-America’s agrarian childhood – one that had, by the last few decades of the twentieth century, long been displaced by an age of capitalist maturity that transferred farm work away from such sustenance-based local labour.⁵⁷ Indeed, modernization transformed the countryside in ways that its residents helped to shape through their subsistence living and part-time labour. But while these activities were quickly folded into the industrializing capitalist strategy, rurality itself remained a much less flexible cultural construction.

The result was a narrative that confirmed Maud Lewis’s position as an isolated rural folk artist, that assigned her and Everett to the labour of decades past in which rural Nova Scotians grew and ate their own foodstuffs and



7 | Still of Maud Lewis painting a winter scene with evergreens and oxen team, from “The Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis,” *Telescope*, 25 November 1965, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (Photo: Courtesy of the CBC)

travelled by horse and buggy, and that helped to constitute an optimistic encounter that replaced a complex and integrated modernization with a simple country existence. The “once-upon-a-time-world” of Maud Lewis presented in the 1965 *Telescope* episode was appealing in this regard because it provided a means to narrate the ordinary from the viewpoint of those who feared late capitalism’s disruption of the Lewises’ supposedly traditional rural lifestyle, particularly in terms of the way it might affect her art production. What is more, a perspective emerged that positioned the Lewises not as acting in resistance to modernity – a tactic that rural Nova Scotians had been criticized for adopting in the previous decade⁵⁸ – so much as simply being unable to adapt to it. This perspective was often negotiated in aesthetic terms. Following the broadcast, for example, a 1967 issue of the Fredericton-based *Atlantic Advocate* magazine published a feature-length article on Lewis, describing one of her paintings, “with its fresh, clear outlines and

primitive colours,” and marvelling at how such an aesthetically pleasing vision had arisen through the out-of-date material realities of her home environment. “The front door, storm door and window are gaily decorated with birds, flowers and butterflies,” the author, Doris McCoy, explained. “The interior of the house, including the massive, ancient stove, has also been treated to brilliantly coloured designs.”⁵⁹ Maud Lewis’s old-fashioned life in Marshalltown is therefore both the source of her artistic inspiration and, paradoxically, of her hardship and poverty, a contrast that only helped to optimistically reframe the contemporary rural experience at this time.

Neither conventional perceptions about the rural and the urban, nor the past and the present were easily disentangled from the iconography of Lewis’s paintings, however, since her work often lent itself to nostalgic readings of historical rural life. In fact, Lewis’s work helped public history makers articulate the parameters of her life in late twentieth-century Nova Scotia in ways that conjured up romantic ideas about the province’s modernization on the whole. For example, the Digby County-based author and playwright Lance Woolaver began tracing his community’s contemporary landscapes through the vision of the past he saw Lewis’s paintings representing. Woolaver later expressed the belief that his interest in narrating Lewis’s life story began when he searched “for a story to accompany the paintings” by arranging his family’s collection of Lewis’s works according to season.⁶⁰ As he reordered the grouping, “moving them back and forth,” placing “the winter scenes on the left, the summer ones on the right,” he “saw that Maud had captured every happiness in Digby County: every trade – a fisherman hauling lobster traps, a farmer plowing a field, a blacksmith in his forge; every place – the little bridge and brook in Acacia Valley, the old wharf in Barton, the lighthouse at Point Prim; every animal, flower and bird – cats in the tulips, oxen under the summer bower, robins in the apple blossoms.”⁶¹ The ongoing investment in claiming a rural story of optimism in Nova Scotia also served to create an affectual structure in which Lewis’s past images of simple country life could continue to define the Digby County experience into the future, even if many public history makers invested in this construction could no longer visualize such places in the present outside of Lewis’s works.

The connection between Lewis’s domestic environment as a material symbol of “art for art’s sake,” in the most conventional understanding of the phrase, was also a way for public history makers to recast late twentieth-century Nova Scotia’s crisis of the ordinary, which saw many in the province clinging to economic self-sufficiency as a social value, despite the fact that the market actually folded such labour into the logic of industrialization and urbanization.⁶² In other words, rural residents such as Everett and Maud Lewis were just as embedded in systems of capitalist development through

their peddling of paintings as were their urban counterparts whose labour could be more easily categorized as formal. Indeed, this was true even if the folk art construct necessitated using the iconographic content of Lewis's artwork to separate her cultural production from the benefits of its material value: "Mrs. Maude [sic] Lewis loves animals. She loves people. She loves life," McCoy revealed. "Money, beyond what is required to buy food and fuel, is a matter of complete indifference to her."⁶³ The idea that Lewis overcame her economic hardships through the free creation of painting her home environment also gave credence to the mythic construction of folk art as an instance of autonomous free creation. Such a presentation, however, has deep historical roots in the standard classification system of art objects and in the foundations of modern art historical scholarship.⁶⁴ In Lewis's case, this meant grounding her painting in terms of the Kantian notion of the highest form of creative expression, "art for art's sake," rather than the lowest, the production of utilitarian and commercial objects. If, according to this logic, free creation had to remain separate from material gain, then in order to establish Lewis as an autonomous free creator her painting had to be both separated from its material labour and reconfigured as the root of her optimism in the face of poverty.

Ultimately, establishing Lewis as a folk artist necessitated situating her economic marginality as both the source of her folk identity and as a manifestation of her ordinary worldly circumstance that she could visualize in her paintings – an ordinariness that she could only overcome through the optimism that free creative expression brought with it. As it happened, this was the narrative about Lewis's artwork that would determine her treatment in public history initiatives long after her death on 30 July 1970, the result of complications from a broken hip she had suffered a few years earlier. Local newspapers recorded her passing with articles that expressed how widely Lewis's artwork had become known, with a *Digby Courier* article noting, "Today Mrs. Lewis's paintings grace the White House in Washington, two having been commissioned by President Nixon. Other paintings have been commissioned by Opposition Leader Robert L. Stanfield. These paintings are in his home."⁶⁵ Similarly, the Halifax *Chronicle Herald* reported that Lewis was "the subject of a number of feature articles in national and international magazines and art journals."⁶⁶ As Lewis's "fame grew," the same article stated, "orders for her paintings increased and soon her frail health was taxed to the utmost to keep up with the demand."⁶⁷ With little commentary surrounding the actual economic circumstances that shaped Lewis's dependency on folk painting as a condition of her working life, the public history of her death in 1970 also helped to centralize the iconographic content of her painting as the root of her posthumous life story.

Up until this point, public history makers focused on the strength of the Lewises' marital relationship and, in particular, used Everett's negotiation of financial exchange surrounding Maud's artwork sales to reinscribe the fact that she painted for creative expression rather than for economic necessity.⁶⁸ Earlier representations of Maud and Everett's relationship in the *Star Weekly*, *Telescope*, and the *Atlantic Advocate*, for example, described Everett as the "first [person who] discovered his wife's artistic talent and urged her to develop it,"⁶⁹ as a "peddler [who is] very astute when it comes to business,"⁷⁰ and as "an itinerant peddler, [who] is a quiet, good-natured man."⁷¹ Moreover, in the CBC *Telescope* broadcast, Markle described Everett as "a kind of business manager," who "cuts the board on which his wife paints."⁷² Markle then went on to interview Maud about the cost she charged for her paintings, as she explained, "my prices have gone up some. I used to charge four and a half for them, but they've gone up fifty cents – five dollars. The paint costs a lot, you see. Boards, and oil colours, they all went up, so I went up in my price, five dollars. Some don't want to pay that much, and others don't mind at all."⁷³ Markle then interjected, "But if someone insisted that she take ten dollars, would she take it?"⁷⁴ Maud responded with a smile and a laugh, "oh, yes!"⁷⁵ Later on in the program, Maud's direct engagement with such financial exchanges is reinforced through a shot of her selling a painting of three black cats to a visitor for five U.S. dollars. The result of these earlier public history narrations of Maud and Everett is that the affectual interpretation of love substitutes for the materialist need of either partner, since Maud is framed as painting for joy, while Everett is understood as selling paintings in dutiful support of his wife.⁷⁶

Yet many public history makers invested in narrating Lewis's legacy came to advance readings of Lewis's paintings as being more closely connected to her material situation. Not the least of these was Cora Greenaway, producer of the CBC radio and television broadcasts on Lewis during the 1960s. While Greenaway did not offer direct commentary in either of these programs, she was interviewed as part of the NFB's 1998 *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis* documentary,⁷⁷ and also authored a 1988 article entitled "Maud's Folk Fantasies," which she published in the April issue of *Century Home* magazine.⁷⁸ Both her article and her onscreen interview provide some insight into Greenaway's understanding of Lewis's life, part of which can be read as an exercise in feminist claiming of Lewis's story, particularly in terms of using the artist's aesthetic to explain her struggle in material terms. Remarking on Lewis's days in Marshalltown for the 1998 documentary, for example, Greenaway told the camera, "The contrast between her daily life and her paintings was day and night. I would say that her daily life was poor, it was poor in every way – poor in the way she lived and poor in mind."⁷⁹



8 | Maud Lewis, *Sleigh and Village Scene*, ca. 1960, oil on pulpboard, 26.3 × 30.1 cm, on loan to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia from the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995. (Photo: Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia)

However, Greenaway was quick to argue that despite Lewis's poverty, the artist did not succumb to producing paintings that were salable, but rather worked to express her innate creativity. According to Greenaway, Lewis had "an inborn feeling for composition, a sense of colour and a sharp observant eye."⁸⁰ To make this point, Greenaway went on to describe Lewis's use of bright primary colours to portray scenes of daily life in Digby County, as in *Sleigh and Village Scene* (Fig. 8), which depicts a horse-drawn sleigh riding under a cloudy cerulean sky and over a snowy hillside dotted with evergreens and multicoloured leafy trees. For Greenaway, the use of such pigments was a testament to Lewis's creative expression, rather than her need to gain profit from their sale. "Asked how she could paint a snow scene with trees with

yellow, green and red leaves,” Greenaway remembered, “her answer was ‘Bare trees are so dull, and besides a freak snowfall does happen in the fall.’”⁸¹ The same discourse of inner creativity enabled Greenaway to tie the artist’s output to social considerations by presenting Lewis’s art as a way for her to imaginatively escape the material impoverishment of her reality.

The precise significance of Lewis’s paintings in the 1960s and 70s was that public history makers such as Greenaway later used them to reimagine the rural Nova Scotian experience as one of a noble response to poverty rather than as one that was both resistant to and integrated into the modernizing development strategies of the postwar period. This period brought with it a new brand of optimism, as public history makers in Nova Scotia became increasingly concerned with framing the socio-economic realities of Maud Lewis’s life in cultural terms, since representing the provincial transition from rural to urban living was about much more than maintaining a living wage in industry’s margins. More than this, the conditions in which rural residents such as Lewis lived helped to shape ideas about a precarious population whose very existence was dependent on the destabilizing stages of late capitalism. Indeed, without the noble efforts of the rural working poor, there would be nothing for urbanite public history makers to remain optimistic about, since the ordinary struggle that rural people represented was becoming increasingly normalized – or, at the very least, remained one without an easy development solution. The ordinary is affectual in this regard because, as Berlant argues, it is “an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on.”⁸² If the activities represented in Lewis’s paintings, from travel in horse-drawn buggies to farm and fishing work, no longer organized everyday life in rural Nova Scotia in the 1960s and 1970s, they could at least help to visualize the crisis of the ordinary in that present by creating a joyful representation of its past simplicity. In short, if Maud and Everett Lewis could no longer be found peddling fish and panel paintings to their neighbours and to tourist passersby, the public history perspective on their ordinary life had to transition as well.

NOTES

- 1 Much of my reading of optimism in the context of late capitalism is informed by Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), in which she examines “that moral-intimate-economic thing called ‘the good life’” in optimistic experiences (2). Optimism is cruel, as she puts it, “when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining

- regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming" (2).
- 2 Margaret CONRAD, "The 1950s: The Decade of Development," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, ed. E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 382.
 - 3 Ibid., 384.
 - 4 Della STANLEY, "The 1960s: The Illusions and Realities of Progress," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, 421.
 - 5 John REID, "The 1970s: Sharpening the Sceptical Edge," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, 460.
 - 6 Colin HOWELL, "Economism, Ideology, and the Teaching of Maritime History," in *Teaching Maritime Studies*, ed. Phillip Buckner (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1986), 18.
 - 7 Ibid.
 - 8 Daniel SAMSON, "Introduction: Situating the Rural in Atlantic Canada," in *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800–1950*, ed. Daniel Sampson (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press for the Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies, 1994), 1–33.
 - 9 Scholarly attention to Lewis's work that considers it from a critical perspective outside of such public history sources has been scant. Exceptions include two MA theses produced at Queen's University, Sarah Elizabeth JONES, "Filming the Folk Artist-Genius: The 'Documentation' of Maud Lewis" (MA thesis, Queen's University, 2009) and Laurie DALTON, "The Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery and the 'Folking Over' of Nova Scotia" (MA thesis, Queen's University, 2003), and a recent article by Alicia BOUTILIER, "Myths and Chosen Emphases: Representations of Maud Lewis's Life and Art," in *Raven Papers: Remembering Natalie Luckyj (1945–2002)*, ed. Angela Carr (Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2010), 133–57.
 - 10 Lance Gerard WOOLAVER, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1996), viii.
 - 11 "Digby's Artist, Maude [sic] Lewis, Laid to Rest," *Digby Courier*, 6 Aug. 1970.
 - 12 Mrs. WALLIS, "Mrs. Everett (Maude [sic]) Lewis," 5 Mar. 1964, typed interview transcript, Maud Lewis Artist's File, AGNS.
 - 13 Harold PEARSE, "The Serial Imagery of Maud Lewis," *Arts Atlantic* 15:2 (1997): 26.
 - 14 Bernard Riordon, interview with the author, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 9 Aug. 2007.
 - 15 Kathleen STEWART, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.
 - 16 BERLANT, *Cruel Optimism*, 14.
 - 17 Jill BENNETT, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 10.
 - 18 BERLANT, *Cruel Optimism*, 4.
 - 19 The collected essays in Forbes and Del Muise's seminal anthology *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* suggest that Nova Scotia experienced what David Harvey (David HARVEY, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* [London: Verso, 2006]) refers to as "uneven geographic development" throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Margaret CONRAD's essay in *The Atlantic Provinces* argues that during the 1950s, which she calls the "decade of development," there were in fact "two Atlantic Canadas, one largely rural

- and isolated . . . the other essentially urban and fully integrated into mainstream North American culture . . . ” (“The 1950s: The Decade of Development,” 382). As concentrated urban areas such as Halifax industrialized quickly, Conrad notes that “[t]he development ethic was also turned against the region’s workers, who were often accused of scaring away elusive capital investment by their attempts to resist exploitation” (391). By the 1960s, however, Della Stanley’s chapter points out that “[f]aith in material progress was accompanied by an optimistic and egalitarian idealism” (“The 1960s: The Illusions and Realities of Progress,” 421). This was indeed a time in which the faulty promises of modernization became evident, even if industrial expansion wrought benefits for some sectors in terms of employment.
- 20 Doris MCCOY, “Frail Woman with a Bold Brush,” *The Atlantic Advocate* (January 1967): 36–39.
 - 21 “Digby’s Artist, Maude [sic] Lewis, Laid to Rest.”
 - 22 WOOLAVER, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, 2.
 - 23 Peter D’ENTREMONT, dir., *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis* (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada, 1998), DVD, 50:00.00.; WOOLAVER, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, 4.
 - 24 Bernard RIORDON, “Director’s Report,” in *Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Annual Report, 1998–1999* (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1999), 4.
 - 25 Ian Laidlaw conducted the interview with Maud Lewis on 27 February 1964 for use on the CBC radio program *Trans-Canada Matinee*. I base my description of Greenaway as a heritage activist on her widespread work in building Nova Scotia’s heritage industry, including her foundational role in developing the Heritage Trust in Canada in 1959, which eventually led to the formation of Heritage Canada in 1973. Greenaway is well-known for her actions in the “discovery” and preservation of various sites in Nova Scotia, among them Halifax’s Historic Properties, the Ross Farm, and the Croscup Room, a nineteenth-century painted parlour originally situated in a home in Karsdale, which, after Greenaway’s twenty-year battle, was bought and preserved by the National Gallery of Canada. For more on the Croscup Room, see Cora GREENAWAY, “Decorated Walls and Ceilings in Nova Scotia,” *Material Culture Bulletin* 15 (Summer 1982): 83–89.
 - 26 Brooks later explained that, when the editors of Toronto’s *Star Weekly* magazine heard the radio broadcast, they “thought that the quaint story would appeal to their readers.” The magazine editors asked Brooks to do a photo-story on Lewis and, at the time, Brooks remembered that he “had no idea who she was.” The photographs from Brooks’s initial visit to the Lewises have since been used to illustrate several popular print treatments of Lewis. See Bob BROOKS and Lance WOOLAVER, *Maud’s Country: Landscapes that Inspired the Art of Maud Lewis* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1999), 3.
 - 27 Murray BARNARD, “The Little Old Lady Who Paints Pretty Pictures,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, 10 July 1965.
 - 28 Ibid., 13.
 - 29 SAMSON, “Introduction: Situating the Rural in Atlantic Canada,” 14.
 - 30 Ibid., 13.
 - 31 BARNARD, “The Little Old Lady Who Paints Pretty Pictures,” 13.
 - 32 Ibid., 14.
 - 33 Ibid.
 - 34 Ibid.
 - 35 STANLEY, “The 1960s: The Illusions and Realities of Progress,” 445.

- 36 BARNARD, "The Little Old Lady Who Paints Pretty Pictures," 14.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Johannes FABIAN's foundational argument in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) critically assesses the anthropological trope of allochronic distancing, which ensures that the ethnographer maintains a coeval and spatial separation from their subject. The ethnographic subject, as a result, "would *never have time* to become part of the ethnographer's past," or of their empirical present, because the discipline of anthropology itself is built around such "temporal discourse" (i). This means, for example, that disciplinary anthropology has typically constructed and understood so-called "primitive" or "folk" societies as being childlike, or underdeveloped, in relation to the time-space matrix of the West's empirical present. Raymond WILLIAMS's *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) likewise establishes a context in which literary producers narrated English country life as a separate and distinct living space from the historical realities of rural life. Indeed, "the great problem of English rural history" for such elite urban writers was that it spoke to "the endless complication of intermediate classes," and thereby necessitated the creation of a detached geography between the country and the city, even if there were no easy ways to slot them into separate epochs (40–41; 35).
- 39 Blaine ALLAN, "Telescope," *CBC Television Series, 1952–1982*. Accessed 10 May 2013, <http://www.film.queensu.ca/cbc/T.html>
- 40 "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis," *Telescope*, DVD, 25 Nov. 1965, 21:30.00, CBC Radio and Television Archives.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 BERLANT, *Cruel Optimism*, 181.
- 44 "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 BARNARD, "The Little Old Lady Who Paints Pretty Pictures," 14.
- 48 "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 49 Henry VELTMEYER, "The Capitalist Underdevelopment of Atlantic Canada," in *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), 26–28.
- 50 "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 VELTMEYER, "The Capitalist Underdevelopment of Atlantic Canada," 29.
- 53 "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 54 Everett Lewis quoted in *ibid.*
- 55 Maud Lewis quoted in *ibid.*
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 David GOODMAN and Michael WATTS, "Agrarian Questions: Global Appetite, Local Metabolism: Nature, Culture, and Industry in *Fin-de-Siècle* Agro-food Systems," in *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, ed. David Goodman and Michael Watts (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 10.
- 58 CONRAD, "The 1950s: The Decade of Development," 391.
- 59 MCCOY, "Frail Woman with a Bold Brush," 39.
- 60 WOOLAVER, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, xix.

- 61 Ibid.
- 62 As Daniel Samson argues, for example, industrialization and urbanization was made possible in the Maritimes because of the fact that seasonal rural workers such as the Lewises laboured in their immediate communities for subsistence rather than for profit during the early to mid-twentieth century. What this meant was that Nova Scotia's modernization depended on a subsistence economy as much as it did on a commercial one. For more, see SAMSON, "Introduction: Situating the Rural in Atlantic Canada," 1–33.
- 63 MCCOY, "Frail Woman with a Bold Brush," 39.
- 64 Michael PODRO, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), xxi; Donald PREZIOSI, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 9–11; Ruth B. PHILLIPS and Christopher B. STEINER, eds., "Introduction: Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 6–15.
- 65 AGNS, Maud Lewis Artist's File, Kathy Lynch, "Maud Lewis: Artist Dies at 67," untitled, undated newspaper clipping.
- 66 "Digby's Artist, Mrs. Maude [sic] Lewis Dies," *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, 1 Aug. 1970.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 In her master's thesis, Sarah Jones makes the astute observation that both NFB documentaries position Everett as Maud's "Kantian counterpoint . . . He serves as a marker for the material world, a fixed point that [Maud], in contrast, transcends." See JONES, "Filming the Folk Artist-Genius: The 'Documentation' of Maud Lewis," 14.
- 69 BARNARD, "The Little Old Lady Who Paints Pretty Pictures," 13.
- 70 Claire Stenning quoted in "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 71 MCCOY, "Frail Woman with a Bold Brush," 39.
- 72 Markle quoted in "The-Once-Upon-a-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis."
- 73 Maud Lewis quoted in *ibid.*
- 74 Markle quoted in *ibid.*
- 75 Maud Lewis quoted in *ibid.*
- 76 BERLANT, *Cruel Optimism*, 181.
- 77 Woolaver mentions the 1965 *Telescope* broadcast as the first in a series of "outsider" (that is, outside of Digby County) interest in Lewis. In 2006, the provincial government awarded Greenaway the Order of Nova Scotia for her work in promoting regional culture and heritage. Among the many things for which the Order praised Greenaway was her discovery and promotion of Lewis during the 1960s. Curiously, this discovery is not documented in the 1998 NFB documentary *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, which contains an interview with Greenaway about Lewis's life. In this film, Greenaway is identified as an art historian and not as someone who knew Lewis personally, thereby giving her a position of critical objectivity in relation to her biographical subject.
- 78 Cora GREENAWAY, "Maud's Folk Fantasies," *Century Home* (April 1988): 59.
- 79 Greenaway quoted in D'ENTREMONT, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, DVD.
- 80 GREENAWAY, "Maud's Folk Fantasies," 59.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 8.

Affects ordinaires : l'art populaire, Maud Lewis et l'esthétique sociale du quotidien

ERIN MORTON

Dans le présent article, nous examinons comment les artisans de l'histoire publique ont utilisé les artistes autodidactes pour fonder la catégorie de l'art populaire en Nouvelle-Écosse à la fin du xx^e siècle en nous appuyant sur le cas particulier de la peintre autodidacte Maud Lewis (1903–1970), de Marshalltown. Nous soulevons tout d'abord une question conceptuelle sur le discours de l'art populaire lui-même – à savoir le rôle qu'a joué cette catégorie en tant que forme d'expression optimiste dans les efforts déployés par les créateurs de l'histoire publique en Nouvelle-Écosse à la fin du xx^e siècle pour composer avec les crises particulières du capitalisme tardif. Nous avançons ensuite que les peintures de Maud Lewis sont devenues les manifestations les plus réussies de l'art populaire en Nouvelle-Écosse parce que l'histoire de la vie de cette artiste offrait une combinaison opportune d'éléments narratifs que l'on pouvait exploiter au profit de l'optimisme. Pour les artisans de l'histoire publique, cette femme pauvre, handicapée et isolée transcendait la réalité matérielle en mutation de la province par la joyeuse liberté que lui procurait la peinture populaire. Elle apparaissait donc comme une figure optimiste dans un climat socioéconomique maussade.

Nous élaborons le cadre de travail critique de l'« affect ordinaire », dans lequel nous entendons situer les récits publics de la vie de Lewis. Les affects ordinaires sont, comme nous le définissons dans cet article, des sentiments ou des fantasmes que les acteurs institutionnels ont produits et fait circuler au sujet du triomphe de l'histoire de l'art populaire sur l'adversité du capitalisme tardif. Que relate en définitive l'histoire publique sur la vie de Maud Lewis à cet égard? Des récits romanesques sur des artistes ruraux autodidactes qui se débattent passivement avec la modernisation au lieu de la façonner activement ou de la contester. Cette stratégie conceptuelle tient aussi compte de l'invitation de la théoricienne littéraire Lauren Berlant à fournir un contexte matérialiste à la théorie de l'affect. Nous soulignons ainsi que le récit de la vie de Lewis relevait autant de la lutte contre la pensée présentiste sur l'art, l'économie et la vie sociale que de la définition de l'art populaire en tant que catégorie d'objet historique. De plus, nous étudions les paramètres

fondamentaux des récits publics de la vie de Lewis. Nous avançons en outre que le concept d'art populaire fournissait un contexte matériel à l'optimisme qui régnait en Nouvelle-Écosse à la fin du xx^e siècle, période marquée par une évolution mondiale galopante. Selon nous, l'art populaire de Maud Lewis est devenu aux yeux des artisans de l'histoire publique un symbole idéal pour faire valoir leurs points de vue devant les changements amenés par le capitalisme tardif, aussi bien sur le plan culturel que politicoéconomique.

L'histoire de Maud et de son mari Everett menant une vie précaire à la campagne, à l'écart de la modernisation ambiante, offrait un potentiel d'optimisme que les créateurs de l'histoire publique ont vite mis à profit. Tout au long des années 1960 et 1970, la réputation de Maud Lewis avait dépassé de loin sa communauté locale. En effet, sa vie quotidienne et ses processus de création avaient fait l'objet de reportages à la radio et à la télévision de langue anglaise de Radio-Canada (CBC), de documentaires de l'ONF, et d'articles dans la presse populaire. La première manifestation de l'histoire publique qui a propulsé l'histoire de Maud Lewis dans la vie publique au-delà de Marshalltown a été une entrevue menée en 1964 dans le cadre d'une émission à la radio de la CBC intitulée *Trans-Canada Matinee*. Alida K. (Cora) Greenaway, journaliste-pigiste et militante pour la survie du patrimoine, travaillait à la CBC en Nouvelle-Écosse. Grâce à son reportage, l'histoire de l'artiste a suscité un vaste intérêt. Ainsi, en juillet 1965, à la suite de cette radiodiffusion, le magazine *Star Weekly* de Toronto a publié un article illustré sur Lewis. Il était accompagné d'une série de photos de Maud et d'Everett Lewis prises par Bob Brooks, ainsi que d'un texte de l'écrivain Murray Barnard décrivant la vie quotidienne des Lewis « dans une maison si petite qu'on aurait dit qu'elle avait été construite pour Tom Pouce ». L'article de Barnard dépeignait Maud Lewis comme la « Grandma Moses du Canada », ouvrant la voie à la réalisation d'un reportage pour la série télévisée *Telescope* de la CBC en 1965. Intitulée *Once-Upon-A-Time-World of Maude [sic] Lewis*, cette émission de trente minutes présentait la vie quotidienne des Lewis sur un mode semblable à celui de l'article de Barnard. Elle fournissait par ailleurs de l'information contextuelle sur les œuvres de Lewis provenant de plusieurs des mêmes sources. La série *Telescope* permettait d'offrir une introduction visuelle idéale à la vie ordinaire des Lewis, le format de l'émission facilitant la découverte des activités quotidiennes de Maud et d'Everett au comté de Digby par l'entremise des témoignages dignes de foi d'observateurs bien placés pour authentifier son statut de peintre d'art populaire. Or, dans toutes ces sources d'histoire publique, le récit de la vie de l'artiste reflétait de toute évidence l'espace géographique et régional du sous-développement de la culture « populaire », marginalisée par des conditions de vie que la modernisation urbaine aurait, pensait-on, rapidement balayées dans toute la province.

À l'instar du fermier traditionnel qui participait à l'économie de la Nouvelle-Écosse par un travail axé sur la subsistance plutôt que sur le profit, Maud Lewis illustrait parfaitement un mode de vie que de nombreux artisans de l'histoire publique croyaient en voie de disparition. L'émission *Telescope* décrivait de façon convaincante l'artiste comme une exclue de la modernité, à la recherche constante de compagnie et d'amour en l'absence du soutien d'une famille nucléaire. Ce portrait de la vie de Maud avec Everett dans leur maisonnette de Marshalltown permettait également d'expliquer l'optimisme de l'artiste par le bonheur de son mariage et sa sécurité matérielle relative, quoique précaire. Il passait toutefois sous silence les délicates questions sociales de l'accès à l'éducation et de l'instabilité du marché du travail. En articulant le récit de l'émission autour de l'amour de Maud et d'Everett, on pouvait en outre faire abstraction du manque de formation professionnelle de l'artiste, formation qui aurait pu l'aider à se tailler une place dans les cercles mondiaux de l'art et d'en tirer des avantages économiques. Or, si l'épisode de *Telescope* mettait cette lacune en évidence, il présentait en revanche les témoignages d'experts possédant une vaste connaissance du milieu des arts. Ainsi, leur appréciation de l'œuvre de Lewis donnait corps à la reconnaissance dont elle jouissait dans les cercles touristiques et auprès du grand public. Ces témoignages montraient enfin que le mariage de l'artiste avec Everett remplissait une promesse de sécurité matérielle, aussi précaire put-elle être.

Notre recherche montre que le récit de l'histoire publique de Lewis a commencé des décennies avant que l'Art Gallery of Nova Scotia ne la revendique pour attiser l'intérêt de ses visiteurs dans les années 1980 et 1990. Le parcours de Lewis raconté par les artisans de l'histoire publique est important pour la catégorisation générale de l'art populaire en Nouvelle-Écosse parce qu'on peut retracer son origine dans de multiples lieux de diffusion – depuis les articles de journaux populaires jusqu'aux émissions de télévision, en passant plus tard par les films documentaires et les expositions d'art. Les tableaux de Lewis sont visiblement ceux que l'on associe le plus fortement à l'art populaire de la Nouvelle-Écosse à ce jour, ce qui fait de cette artiste la plus grande histoire à succès qu'a connue l'Art Gallery of Nova Scotia en s'intéressant à des peintres autodidactes. Notre article examine donc les répercussions profondes de l'investissement constant des artisans de l'histoire publique dans l'héritage de Lewis en particulier, ainsi que dans la catégorie de l'art populaire en général, afin d'expliquer pourquoi ce genre demeure une pierre angulaire de la culture néo-écossaise.



***La chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée : une œuvre issue du modèle de la démocratie culturelle ou quand l'art féministe néo-avant-gardiste s'intègre à l'establishment**

ANITHE DE CARVALHO

Dans la compilation d'Yves Robillard, *Québec underground, 1962–1972*¹, l'auteur prétend que les expériences de son propre collectif d'artistes Fusion des arts marquent les années 1960–70 par un art opposé à l'institution, au système, bref à l'establishment. Cette pratique artistique relève de l'animation socio-culturelle et se veut engagée sur le plan politique. Plusieurs années plus tard, dans son livre *Vous êtes tous des créateurs, ou, Le mythe de l'art*, Robillard encense et consacre *La chambre nuptiale* (1976) de Francine Larivée. Il la considère comme relevant du nouvel art initié par Fusion des arts, soit « l'œuvre dite d'animation² », suivant ses termes. Elle serait donc, pour lui, l'apogée des pratiques « anti-establishment » que son propre groupe avait initiées. Et ce faisant, il établit une filiation historique et idéologique entre Larivée et son collectif. C'est pourquoi, en 1976, à titre de critique d'art, il a été le plus enthousiaste défenseur de l'œuvre dans les médias³ au moment même où elle a été produite. Les articles que Robillard a publiés sur cet environnement le démontrent. Pour lui, suivant la définition qu'il donne de l'art anti-institutionnel dans l'ouvrage sur l'*underground*, l'œuvre s'oppose à l'establishment, car elle est une forme d'expression artistique populaire qui refuse les médiums traditionnels pour être présentée hors des murs institutionnels officiels et même réalisée par de nouveaux publics. Depuis, cette vision a été reprise par Guy Sioui Durand ou encore Michel Roy, entre autres⁴.

Nous verrons toutefois dans cette étude que, malgré le fait que cette expression artistique, peu commune en arts plastiques et pratiquée principalement par des artistes qui assignent à l'art une fonction émancipatrice, ait trouvé d'autres lieux de présentation que les lieux traditionnels, elle est ici la matérialisation des tendances et enjeux historiques en matière d'étatisation de la culture, dans le cadre de la mise en place du modèle de la démocratie culturelle. Elle correspondrait également, selon

Détail, Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*, salle 2, Chambre chapelle, *L'autel du couple*. Coll. Musée de la civilisation de Québec. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

certaines caractéristiques, au paradigme de la démocratisation de la culture. C'est dire que l'environnement est issu des notions de l'art populaire et de l'art savant, qu'il se réalise avec le consentement des institutions culturelles et artistiques diverses d'un champ de l'art aux limites amplifiées et qu'il atteint d'abord des publics néophytes mais aussi des publics savants. Ce serait donc affirmer qu'elle ne se dégage pas du système de l'art. Elle s'inscrit, au contraire, dans un establishment aux frontières élargies par les artistes-mêmes. Autrement dit, ce texte défend l'idée que, pendant les années 1970, les pratiques participatives parallèles, dites aussi de *l'underground*, se sont développées dans le cadre de la mise en place d'une nouvelle vision culturelle institutionnelle. Par conséquent, elles ne sont pas anti-institutionnelles, comme l'a présumé, jusqu'à ce jour, l'histoire de l'art québécois⁵.

Selon Lise Santerre⁶, la démocratie culturelle est une politique culturelle de l'État qui relève d'une vision anthropologique. Elle apparaît au début des années 1970. Le sens du mot culture est alors compris comme étant un ensemble de manières de vivre, de traditions, de pratiques populaires d'ordre artistique qui dessinent l'identité d'une communauté. Elle a pour objectif la défense de formes d'expression culturelles méconnues et populaires découlant du divertissement, du monde du loisir ou des genres dits mineurs. Santerre, tout comme Jiri Zuzanech⁷, raconte également que les ministères collaborent entre eux et financent les arts. Par exemple, les ministères de l'emploi, des loisirs, des sports, du tourisme, etc. peuvent travailler de pair avec le Conseil des arts du Canada. Dans le dessein de pluralisme culturel, les arts sont incorporés aux autres champs d'activité favorisant ainsi l'interdisciplinarité. L'auteure affirme, par ailleurs, que ce modèle entrevoit la fonction, voire la portée sociale de la culture et cherche à assumer un rôle dans l'identification culturelle et dans le renforcement du lien social. Les publics diversifiés sont invités à s'engager volontairement au sein de rassemblements et ils deviennent les créateurs mêmes de leurs propres biens culturels.

C'est en analysant les intentions néo-avant-gardistes artistiques politisées⁸ de Francine Larivée et le statut qu'elle accorde aux nouveaux publics dans l'exécution du projet que nous allons étaler l'environnement et la performance des exploratrices et explorateurs des lieux. La catégorie de public participatif créateur proposée par Frank Popper et le stade de participation politique théorisé par Louis Jacob⁹ nous seront essentiels pour définir le statut des participant-e-s investis dans le processus créatif. L'artiste cherche à atteindre un public qui contribue à la production même de l'environnement ou qui s'engage réellement dans une prise de conscience sociale. Outre le nouveau rôle attribué au public, l'artiste remet aussi en question la fonction de l'art, le statut de l'artiste et les lieux de médiation de l'art. C'est grâce à ces remises en question que l'artiste se trouve du côté d'une attitude et d'un art d'avant-

garde dont les caractéristiques ont été détaillées, entre autres, par Francine Couture¹⁰. Les déclarations et entrevues données par l'artiste dans les médias ainsi que les lettres patentes de son collectif le Groupe de recherche et d'action sociale par l'art et les média de communication (GRASAM) sont une précieuse source d'information quant aux intentions esthétiques de l'artiste. Nous verrons donc comment Larivée réanime le projet esthétique avant-gardiste politisé en envisageant la fonction émancipatrice de l'art en tant qu'action sociologique et en assignant de nouveaux rôles à l'artiste et au public. C'est ainsi qu'elle cherche à contester l'institution, sans toutefois remarquer que cette dernière subit de très grandes transformations qui admettent l'accueil de l'art parallèle. Il sera question, en dernier lieu, d'établir des associations entre les intentions de l'artiste et les stratégies des politiques culturelles telles qu'explicitées par Lise Santerre en ce qui concerne la notion de public, puisque les idées défendues par l'artiste coïncident avec celles promues par les politiques culturelles, qu'il soit question d'un art populaire ou d'un art savant rendu accessible à l'ensemble des citoyen-ne-s.

La chambre nuptiale : une description

La chambre nuptiale est une œuvre-phare de l'histoire de l'environnement artistique québécois féministe et sociologique. Conceptualisé dans le cadre de l'Année de la femme par Francine Larivée et complété l'année suivante (1976) avec GRASAM, l'environnement a été exposé dans le cadre des Jeux olympiques de Montréal en 1976. Le centre commercial et d'activités économiques Complexe Desjardins est le premier lieu à le présenter. Ensuite, ce sera le centre commercial Carrefour Laval (1976), le pavillon du Québec *Art et société* de Terre des Hommes (1977), ancien site de l'Exposition universelle de 1967, et le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1982) lors de l'exposition *Art et féminisme* organisée par Rose-Marie Arbour, historienne de l'art.

Larivée et son groupe ont deux objectifs lorsqu'ils créent cet environnement. Le premier but consiste à interroger les stéréotypes sexistes qui déterminent les identités sociales féminine et masculine. Le deuxième objectif vise la promotion de l'activité artistique comme outil de communication sociologique¹¹. C'est pour ces raisons que l'œuvre d'animation socioculturelle se place aux frontières de l'art, de la communication et des sciences sociales. Dans le cadre de ce texte, nous tiendrons surtout compte des lieux d'exposition extramuros.

Une chambre nuptiale aux formes on ne peut plus inusitées trône en plein cœur de la grande place du complexe administratif et commercial de la Place Desjardins (Fig. 1). Un environnement blanc, une structure circulaire fermée munie d'un couloir convoque le public à pénétrer dans son antre.



1 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*. Vue extérieure de l'œuvre et de son entrée au Pavillon Québec, Art et Société. Terre des Hommes, été 1977. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

Jocelyne Aubin, auteure d'un mémoire de maîtrise sur *La chambre nuptiale*, rappelle que cette forme reprend l'idée de celle des pavillons de l'Expo 67 et que c'est une manière, non seulement d'évoquer un souvenir, mais « d'ouvrir *La chambre nuptiale* au public québécois, la lui offrant sous une forme familière [...] ¹² ». Yves Robillard¹³ raconte que la visite se fait par petits groupes d'une trentaine de personnes. Elles visionnent tout d'abord un diaporama sonorisé dans lequel Larivée expose ses intentions. Dans le film, l'artiste montre également les réactions des visiteurs précédents avant que le public présent puisse à son tour parcourir l'environnement à proprement parler. Un court film d'animation attend le public à la fin et il leur est demandé de répondre à un questionnaire, en plus de participer à une discussion d'environ une demi-heure (Fig. 2). Voici maintenant une description de l'œuvre.

Juste au-dessus des visiteurs, à la porte d'entrée, se trouvent deux corps fragmentés et suspendus, soit celui d'une femme et de son bébé naissant¹⁴. On entre, une personne à la fois, dans un étroit couloir en forme de spirale rappelant la forme du cordon ombilical. Il est agrémenté de soixante-treize



2 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*. Animation avec le public.
(Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

personnages-sculptures hyperréalistes, de dimensions humaines, qui ont des articulations, bras et jambes en polyuréthane (Fig. 3). Ces sculptures évoquent des mises en situation des diverses étapes de la vie humaine – la naissance, l'enfance et l'âge adulte – des comportements de dépendance émotive et sexuelle ainsi que des émotions. Les visages couverts de latex sont maquillés de façon étonnante. Outre leur apparence réaliste, chacune des statues adopte une attitude sociale dans les expressions corporelles et faciales. L'impressionnante similitude avec la réalité est stratégique. Larivée cherche à provoquer un sentiment d'identification chez le public. Si, dans cette première salle, le public réussit à se reconnaître dans les comportements des personnages, il est alors plus facile de l'amener à se positionner, à la fin du parcours, en faveur ou en défaveur des modèles stéréotypés des genres sexuels sociaux féminin et masculin qui y sont représentés et dont le contrat de mariage assume la pérennité. À cet espace physique aux tonalités de blanc et de beige, vient s'ajouter une bande sonore de souffles et de soupirs qui augmente le réalisme.

Ce corridor conduit à la deuxième salle de l'environnement, une chambre circulaire de neuf mètres de diamètre, la chambre-chapelle ou



3 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*, salle 1, *Couloir des angoisses*. Coll. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

encore la chambre nuptiale à proprement parler. C'est là que le public devient davantage conscientisé et prend une position politique. Si, dans le couloir des déroutantes gargouilles humaines, Larivée s'inspire soit de l'art de Rodin, notamment des *Portes de l'Enfer*, soit de la période médiévale et du courant hyperréaliste, pour ce qui des expressions des corps. Dans cette salle circulaire aux tonalités dorées et munie d'un dôme, l'artiste évoque les

environnements baroques des églises du XVII^e siècle. La raison principale de ces citations, et c'est d'ailleurs ce qui octroie un aspect intellectuel, savant et postmoderne à l'œuvre, est d'ordre idéologique, puisqu'il y est question de dénoncer l'institution du mariage telle que définie par l'Église catholique, ou encore de remettre en question la cellule de base de l'organisation sociale canadienne – le couple homme-femme. Larivée cherche à mettre en évidence le rôle que cette institution joue depuis des centaines d'années dans la répression de l'autonomie des femmes et dans la formulation des stéréotypes sexistes masculin et féminin.

Extrêmement chargée, cette pièce est surtout composée de trois autels – celui de la femme (Fig. 4), celui de l'homme (Fig. 5) et celui du couple (Fig. 6) – enjolivés de grandes étoffes de satin brodé. Les figures qui y sont peintes représentent les réalités subies par les hommes et les femmes, selon le point de vue de l'artiste. Le contenu de ces tableaux remet en question les cultes, les idéaux féminin et masculin et la réalité. Au centre de la pièce, à la manière du baldaquin du Bernin et placé au-dessus des participant-e-s, se trouve un lit-caveau mortuaire où deux automates font l'amour en habits de mariés. Sous le lit suspendu, gît une sculpture représentant une femme inanimée, évoquant les figures féminines préraphaélites dont le visage sommeille entre la vie et la mort (Fig. 7). Outre le fait que c'est par des images symboliques que Larivée livre son discours, le message ne peut être plus clair : le mariage institutionnalisé et sexiste détruit le couple¹⁵. Dans la dernière partie du parcours, l'on projette un film qui traite de l'autonomie des deux genres sexuels à l'intérieur de la famille. Soit le public adhère au propos de l'artiste, soit il le dénonce, mais il ne peut aucunement demeurer indifférent une fois qu'il y est entré. Lors des discussions, suivant une approche sociologique, les participant-e-s sont invités à remplir un formulaire de sondage sur leur expérience et leur exploration des lieux. Mais qu'est-ce qui motive l'artiste à réaliser ce type d'œuvre ?

Francine Larivée et un projet esthétique émancipateur

Si l'on se fie aux objectifs de la corporation¹⁶, GRASAM et Larivée se servent de l'art et des médias de communication pour faire de la recherche sociologique et de l'action sociale. Cette artiste a une fascination pour l'environnement d'animation socioculturelle de Fusion des arts Inc. et de Maurice Demers, qui ont mis en pratique la technique du *feedback*. Maurice Demers (v. 1936) a utilisé cette technique avec l'environnement *Travailleurs* (1970) et Fusion des arts avec l'environnement *Vive la rue Saint-Denis!* (1971). Cette technique est reprise par Larivée, mais de manière plus méthodique et développée, grâce aux techniques d'enquête comme le sondage par questionnaires.



4 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*, salle 2, Chambre chapelle, *L'autel de la femme* (détail). Coll. Musée de la civilisation de Québec. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

L'art sociologique féministe semble être la voie empruntée par Larivée. La copaternité du concept d'art sociologique, revient, entre autres, dès 1971, au sociologue et artiste français Hervé Fischer qui remet en question la pratique artistique en tant que mystification¹⁷. L'art sociologique replonge l'art dans la réalité sociale, et c'est parce qu'on tente de rejoindre le public que l'art sociologique contiendrait une force de frappe importante dans son rôle



5 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*, salle 2, Chambre chapelle, *L'autel de l'homme* (détail). Coll. Musée de la civilisation de Québec. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

social de transformation de la réalité¹⁸. Un des aspects importants de ce type d'art que Larivée semble prôner également en 1976, à la lecture des lettres patentes de GRASAM, réside dans le fait qu'il accorde une importance cruciale au public à qui il s'adresse et aux nouvelles manières de communiquer. De larges publics sont atteints : « L'œuvre va à la rencontre de lieux publics comme les centres d'achat ou tout autre lieu de rassemblement, où il y a déjà



6 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale*, salle 2, Chambre chapelle, *L'autel du couple* (détail). Coll. Musée de la civilisation de Québec. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

affluence populaire¹⁹ » dans le but de rejoindre « le plus de monde possible » et de lui apporter des outils de libération personnelle. Autrement dit, cette « exposition-environnement d'animation et d'éducation populaire du public en même temps qu'une réalisation visuelle utilisant diverses techniques » est prévue uniquement dans l'optique de faire évoluer les participant-e-s sur le plan politique, car l'œuvre peut « leur fournir des moyens d'action²² ».



7 | Francine Larivée et GRASAM, *La chambre nuptiale. Lit-tombeau et autel du couple* (détail). *Lit-tombeau*, Coll. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal et *Autel du couple*, Coll. Musée de la civilisation de Québec. (Photo : Francine Larivée, photographie de Marc Cramer, 1976, © SODRAC)

Yves Robillard dira que l'œuvre vise à « rejoindre tous les gens, quel que soit leur niveau d'instruction, leur faire vivre intensément un message et les forcer à prendre position²³ ». Larivée cherche à obtenir, selon ses dires, des participant-e-s qui ne sont plus alors passifs, mais des collaboratrices et des collaborateurs actifs qui s'expriment et coopèrent à l'aboutissement de l'environnement symbolique et à la réalisation de leurs propres vies²⁴. En

somme, l'artiste ne croit pas « que le champ de l'art doive se limiter à une définition purement esthétique²⁵ ». C'est également une démarche politique²⁶ insérée dans plusieurs instances et institutions : des lieux de diffusion diversifiés appartenant tantôt au milieu populaire tantôt au milieu savant.

Loin du rejet de l'institution officielle traditionnelle, ce qui amène Larivée à exposer son œuvre au Complexe Desjardins relève de préoccupations d'un tout autre ordre. Avant que l'œuvre ne rejoigne le public des musées, Larivée cherchait à atteindre le plus grand nombre possible de personnes à travers le Québec²⁷. En 1977, elle présente *La chambre nuptiale* au public de Terre des Hommes et, la même année, le commissaire général du pavillon de la France à Terre des Hommes envisage, dans une lettre adressée à l'artiste, la possibilité de présenter *La chambre nuptiale* au prestigieux Centre Pompidou à Paris²⁸. Toutefois, cette possibilité n'a jamais vu le jour, alors que l'artiste tentait par tous les moyens de faire exposer son œuvre. De plus, en 1977, Larivée propose son environnement au jury de la première Biennale des artistes du Québec. L'œuvre est refusée, au grand regret de l'artiste et d'Yves Robillard qui vient publiquement à sa rescousse²⁹. Sur le plan de la conservation de l'œuvre, l'artiste tente de la vendre au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal et au Musée de Québec, tel qu'expliqué à Claire Bonenfant, présidente du Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec³⁰. En 1982, dans le cadre de l'exposition collective *Art et féminisme* organisée par Rose-Marie Arbour, professeure au département d'histoire de l'art de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), *La chambre nuptiale* entre au Musée d'art contemporain pour le temps de l'événement. Outre cette forme artistique inusitée que Larivée a voulu présenter hors des murs ou dans ses antres, elle imagine des statuts différents pour l'artiste-même et le public que ceux qui leur sont accordés traditionnellement.

Larivée occupe un nouveau rôle en tant qu'animatrice sociale, ou encore à titre d'artiste et sociologue. À ce propos, elle affirme que « si un artiste a quelque chose à faire dans la société, c'est de l'aider à avancer, non pas à créer des choses qui sont hermétiques, où tu te flattes beaucoup de ton intelligence et de ton égoïsme³¹ ». L'artiste se donne ici une fonction sociale, caractéristique typiquement avant-gardiste. Elle ajoute : « Ce que nous voulons provoquer, c'est le dialogue, et pour ce faire, nous aurons des périodes d'animation avec les gens. Il faut les faire parler, il faut qu'ils s'impliquent³² ». De plus, l'environnement : « doit servir d'outil d'information, d'intervention et d'encadrement aux groupes de femmes, aux groupes communautaires, aux organismes novateurs intéressés à la question du couple, aux groupes culturels agissant sur leur milieu et aux étudiants en animation³³ ». Une fois les données compilées par Larivée, il est possible de dresser un portrait sociologique des publics qui ont participé et de leurs intentions de changement social et

personnel. C'est ainsi qu'on peut obtenir un portrait sociologique du public. L'animation, les discussions et les réponses au sondage font partie intégrante de l'action artistique, voire du projet sociologique et politique de l'artiste. En ce qui concerne davantage le public, Larivée veut qu'il soit donc partie prenante de sa propre prise de conscience sociale et politique. Mais de quelle manière l'art émancipateur proposé par Larivée s'intègre-t-il dans le champ officiel de l'art ?

L'artiste et l'État : rapprochements et dissimilitudes

Certains rapprochements entre la vision de l'artiste et celle promue par l'idéologie de la démocratie culturelle sont possibles. En fait, plusieurs des caractéristiques du discours avant-gardiste se retrouvent dans les principes de base du modèle de la démocratie culturelle et vice-versa en ce qui concerne une nouvelle idée de la notion de culture. C'est ce que nous verrons en nous penchant sur les points suivants : visions élargies de la notion de culture et de l'art, nouveau rôle accordé au public, les nouvelles sources de financement et de soutien à l'expérimentation combinée d'animation culturelle, les nouveaux lieux de médiation artistique et le nouveau rôle de l'art ainsi que ses conséquences.

Une vision anthropologique de la notion de culture

Pour le modèle de la démocratie culturelle, tel que l'explique Santerre, la notion de culture s'éloigne de l'idée du chef-d'œuvre exposé au musée et s'incarne dans diverses activités, y compris dans la participation des citoyen-ne-s à l'énonciation de leur vision de la culture. C'est en cela que la culture incarne l'art populaire, les traditions, le folklore, l'artisanat, les loisirs créatifs, le sport, etc. Au Québec, cette vision de la culture se trouvait déjà dans le livre blanc de Pierre Laporte (1964), alors ministre des Affaires culturelles. À la lecture du livre vert (1976) de Jean-Paul L'Allier, l'idée de culture comprise en son sens anthropologique a été reprise par le nouveau ministre libéral durant les années 1970, revue et augmentée par son successeur péquiste Camille Laurin en 1978³⁴. En somme, le gouvernement québécois encourage à la fois l'art savant et l'art populaire, des formes de culture s'adressant à toutes et à tous et à la portée de l'ensemble de la population.

Du côté du gouvernement fédéral, Gérard Pelletier³⁵, le secrétaire d'État responsable du volet culturel et de la jeunesse partage cette vision anthropologique et finance les activités d'animation sociale et culturelle. Dès 1968, Pelletier se donne pour mandat d'énoncer quelques orientations : « Le

temps était venu, me semble-t-il, de définir quelques grandes orientations susceptibles d'inspirer toutes les agences existantes et de les inviter à travailler de concert, ce qu'elles n'avaient guère fait jusque là³⁶ ». Pour le ministre, il est important que les Canadiennes et les Canadiens deviennent les producteurs de leur propre culture, une culture indépendante des autres pays, en particulier des États-Unis et de la France³⁷. Selon lui, « un des acquis majeurs de notre révolution culturelle, c'est que dorénavant nous demandons à voir, nous tenons à faire nous-mêmes les choix qui nous concernent, nous avons reconquis le droit de premier regard sur notre vie collective³⁸ ». Deux visions se juxtaposent alors dans les années 1970, celle de la démocratisation de la culture, c'est-à-dire l'intention de rendre l'art savant accessible à un plus grand nombre de gens, et celle de la démocratie culturelle en ce sens que ce sont les individus eux-mêmes qui décident de la culture qu'ils veulent bâtir.

C'est à travers les programmes d'employabilité « Perspectives Jeunesse » et « Programme d'initiatives locales (PIL) » ou encore grâce au programme « Explorations » du Conseil des arts du Canada que nous voyons se matérialiser cette intention de démocratie culturelle. C'est du moins le constat et l'analyse de quelques auteurs, comme Greg Baeker dans sa recherche sur l'action culturelle³⁹. L'auteur précise ce que le secrétariat d'État entend par démocratie culturelle, puisque le ministre établit clairement dans ses orientations politiques la distinction entre la démocratisation de la culture et la démocratie culturelle :

La démocratie culturelle par contre représentait un concept plus radical et pluraliste de la culture et des objectifs de la politique culturelle. Elle acceptait et encourageait de nombreuses formes de culture liées à divers groupes sociaux. Elle privilégiait la culture de la vie quotidienne et prévoyait la décentralisation de la production culturelle en permettant aux gens d'être des participants actifs et des producteurs aussi bien que des consommateurs de culture. Alors que la démocratisation n'était fondée que sur une seule norme de qualité, la démocratie culturelle repose sur des normes multiples, dont chacune est évaluée en fonction de son propre contexte⁴⁰.

Baeker ajoute que selon le secrétariat d'État, il « semblerait qu'une véritable démocratie culturelle se mettrait mieux en place par la valorisation de la culture communautaire, au sein de laquelle le processus de participation à des activités d'expression personnelle est primordial⁴¹ ».

Sans conteste, Francine Larivée œuvre sur le terrain de la démocratie culturelle. Selon ce modèle, raconte Santerre, on réhabilite des formes d'expression culturelles populaires, communautaires, minoritaires, dépréciées

et inconnues. Quant à l'œuvre à l'étude, on pourrait admettre que cette action culturelle est issue de l'exploration de nouvelles formes d'expression collective. L'environnement de *La chambre nuptiale* est le summum de l'activité d'animation socioculturelle entreprise dans les années 1970 par des artistes ou des acteurs dans le champ de l'art. En plus d'être engagé principalement sur le terrain de la démocratie culturelle et de l'art populaire, cet environnement découle en partie du modèle de la démocratisation de la culture savante. Le collectif produit une œuvre qui répond aux exigences des deux modèles culturels. Dans un document intitulé *Projet de recherche*⁴² présenté au ministère des Affaires culturelles dans le cadre du programme Aide à la création, Francine Larivée précise sa vision politique de la culture et de son environnement. Le sous-titre du projet est : « L'art traditionnel, la culture populaire et la culture officielle, ou : la petite et la grande culture chez les femmes québécoises⁴³ ».

Pour sa part, Francine Larivée partage également avec l'État une vision large de la culture. Les lettres patentes de GRASAM exposent clairement l'idée de culture telle qu'envisagée par le groupe, et Larivée se réfère directement au livre blanc du ministre d'État aux Affaires culturelles sous le gouvernement péquiste, Camille Laurin (1978)⁴⁴, lui-même inspiré du livre vert de son prédécesseur libéral, Jean-Paul L'Allier (1976), en ce qui a trait au concept anthropologique de culture. En effet, dans le document de Laurin, on lit : « Il y a toujours, au Québec et ailleurs, une *culture officielle*, et l'autre *culture* que l'on ne sait encore nommer⁴⁵ » et, selon le ministre, éveiller l'intérêt de la classe populaire pour la culture savante ne semble pas passer par une politique classique de démocratisation. Pour Laurin :

La « culture populaire » n'est pas que le magma informe des exploitations. Les chercheurs ont souvent noté l'importance qu'y ont les solidarités concrètes, les relations de parenté et de voisinage. Un savoir, des capacités originales s'y transmettent. La création s'y mêle à l'héritage. Pour ne pas être officiellement reconnue, cette culture n'en comporte pas moins ses traditions et sa fécondité⁴⁶.

Larivée favorise, elle aussi, les traditions artisanales, explique l'ampleur de son projet et se positionne contre la dichotomie traditionnellement établie entre la culture savante et la culture populaire. Pour dénoncer cette séparation, voici ce qu'elle a écrit :

Sur la question de la et des cultures, du *Livre blanc* au chapitre IV, il est nettement signifié que la classe dominante s'approprie le terme culture pour définir ses valeurs, son idéologie avec les moyens nobles

d'expression : musique, littérature et beaux-arts tandis que se rapporte au folklore tout ce qui a un caractère populaire, se transmettant de vive voix et occupant les soirées, les fêtes et les rites⁴⁷.

Larivée précise ensuite que :

Le folklore serait donc supposément la culture du peuple par opposition à la culture de la classe dominante. Ce sont ces catégories discriminatoires qu'il faudrait aujourd'hui dépasser pour reconnaître une conception moins univoque de la culture [. . .] Nous sommes devenus plus sensibles à l'idée qu'il ne faut pas imposer à toute la société la culture héritée d'une classe sociale [. . .] Une politique du développement culturel dans cette perspective [. . .] doit reconnaître la pluralité des mondes culturels et la pluralité des voies d'accès à la reconnaissance que les hommes poursuivent de leur existence commune.

S'il est vrai que la culture tout autant que l'économie peut opprimer des classes sociales, ce qu'on appelle la "culture populaire" n'est pas le magna informis des exploitations. Elle comporte des genres de vie originaux. Les chercheurs ont souvent noté l'importance qu'y ont les solidarités concrètes, les relations de parenté et de voisinage. Un savoir, des capacités originales s'y transmettent⁴⁸.

Pour Larivée, comme pour le modèle de la démocratie culturelle incarné ici par Laurin, la culture dépasse l'idée du chef-d'œuvre dévoilé au musée et prend forme dans des activités variées impliquant les citoyen-ne-s engagé-e-s dans la production de leur propre culture. Certes, partant d'une expérience d'artiste professionnelle, diplômée du monde savant, Larivée sait jumeler les deux types de culture au sein de sa production. De plus, *La chambre nuptiale* a pour objectif de « mettre à jour les manifestations, us et coutumes, dire et faire-savoir et mettre en valeur l'art des femmes relégué depuis la nuit des temps à un acquis de la culture populaire, anonyme et ignoré par la culture officielle [. . .] ⁴⁹ », nous dit l'artiste. Elle se place ici aussi, au sujet de l'affranchissement des artisanes, du côté de ce qu'elle nomme le livre noir « Égalité et Indépendance⁵⁰ ». Les auteures de ce texte, selon Larivée, font la promotion sociale et professionnelle des femmes artisanes dans la perspective de les intégrer à la vie économique.

Au regard des intentions de l'artiste, *La chambre nuptiale* est une sorte de synthèse d'art populaire et d'art savant et répond, de ce fait, aux intentions des ministres de la Culture Jean-Paul L'Allier et Camille Laurin. Dans leurs documents sur la culture, les deux formes d'art ne sont pas opposées ni

hiérarchisées, mais complémentaires, et l'on encourage les expériences populaires au même titre que les savantes. La démarche est la même pour l'environnement de Larivée et c'est pourquoi des lieux de culture populaire et de culture savante l'ont exposée, et que plusieurs institutions différentes l'ont financée. À ce propos, son père lui a fait le commentaire suivant : « Dire que tu vas avoir de l'argent du gouvernement pour critiquer une institution d'État [. . .] ! [Et Larivée d'ajouter] Il a fallu dialoguer longtemps, mais aujourd'hui ils comprennent qu'on est rendu là ».

Les programmes de subvention à l'ère de la démocratie culturelle

À l'ère de la mise en place d'un gouvernement de démocratie participative, plusieurs institutions et ministères (loisirs, main-d'œuvre, tourisme, arts) travaillent conjointement selon Lise Santerre, Jiri Zuzanek et Guy Bellavance. Certains projets sont exécutés grâce au financement d'autres ministères que celui de la culture. Quant à *La chambre nuptiale*, à la lecture des rapports financiers et des demandes de subventions remplies par Larivée, on constate que les sources de subventions de son environnement sont diversifiées. Tout compte fait, ce projet assemble toutes les possibilités de financement. L'artiste confirme ce propos : « J'avais besoin d'argent, on m'en a donné : les gouvernements, les associations, les entreprises privées [. . .] ⁵² ». Voici une liste des principales sources financières⁵³ répertoriées et classées en trois groupes : les sommes provenant d'instances gouvernementales relevant du modèle de démocratisation de la culture, celles versées par les instances ayant adopté le modèle de la démocratie culturelle, et l'aide versée par le secteur privé.

Débutons par les sources issues des institutions relevant du modèle de la démocratisation de la culture selon Santerre et Zuzanek. Alors qu'elle est déjà boursière du ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec en 1974 et du Conseil des arts du Canada en 1974 et 1975 pour *La chambre nuptiale*, Larivée reçoit, en 1975, 15 000 \$ du ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec qui, rappelons-le, est dirigé par Jean-Paul L'Allier⁵⁴, le ministre qui finance aussi *Corridart*. Le secrétariat d'État, qui assume le rôle d'un ministère des Affaires culturelles au Canada, octroie 25 000 \$ et le Conseil des arts métropolitain 15 000 \$.

En ce qui a trait aux autres ministères et instances qui financent les arts de type socioculturel et que Zuzanek associe au contexte de démocratie culturelle, le Conseil du statut de la femme contribue pour 2 500 \$, le Conseil privé sur la situation de la femme pour 5 000 \$, le ministère de la Main-d'œuvre du Canada pour 16 000 \$ grâce au projet d'employabilité de Perspectives-Jeunesse et pour 80 610 \$ grâce au programme Initiatives locales. L'artiste fait aussi une demande au Conseil des arts du Canada dans

le cadre du projet Explorations et le COJO – programme Arts et culture lui accorde 25 000 \$. Par ailleurs, l'ONF apporte aussi son soutien. Toutes ces sommes sont utilisées pour la réalisation de l'œuvre en 1975, mais lorsque celle-ci est présentée au Carrefour Laval (septembre 1976) et à Terre des Hommes (en 1977), d'autres sommes lui sont allouées⁵⁵. De plus, lorsqu'elle entre au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, en 1982, *La chambre nuptiale* reçoit la consécration de l'institution officielle traditionnelle. Dès 1975, Larivée fait des démarches, certes sans succès, pour que l'œuvre fasse la tournée du Québec avant d'être collectionnée par le musée. C'est donc dire qu'au-delà d'un discours qui promeut l'art d'animation socioculturelle hors des murs traditionnels de la médiation artistique, Larivée envisage aussi l'institutionnalisation traditionnelle de l'œuvre du collectif GRASAM.

Nouveaux espaces de médiation culturelle, publics diversifiés et acteurs à l'œuvre

Santerre explique comment, dans le modèle de la démocratie culturelle, la diffusion des activités se fait dans des endroits inusités, loin des musées et des galeries, dans les bars ou les usines, etc. Nous pouvons étendre cette catégorie d'espaces à ceux des événements à l'étude qui sont, tout compte fait, innovateurs pour l'époque, bien qu'aujourd'hui, ils soient devenus convenus. Comprise au sens anthropologique par le ministère des Affaires culturelles et le secrétariat d'État, en effet, la culture peut avoir lieu partout où se trouve l'humain.

L'artiste néo-avant-gardiste veut, elle aussi, investir de nouveaux espaces où se trouvent des publics diversifiés. Le centre commercial paraît incarner le lieu des masses fréquentées par des gens de toutes les classes sociales et de tous âges. Ce lieu public est certes, comme tous les autres, régi par des règlements auxquels l'artiste se soumet. Mais Larivée n'est pas la première à montrer une œuvre dans un centre commercial. La première expérience de ce genre a été faite par le Centre d'expression populaire d'Ahuntsic et Maurice Demers avec la fête populaire organisée dans le centre Rockland. L'œuvre de Larivée ne reste d'ailleurs pas confinée à des lieux alternatifs de médiation culturelle. Celle-ci sera adaptée et présentée, en 1982, au Musée d'art contemporain, à un public d'initiés. Dans ce lieu, l'artiste montre au public que son œuvre est savante et qu'elle comporte une dimension importante d'animation socioculturelle. Elle offre une nouvelle pratique d'exploration artistique et sociologique, chose rare dans un musée, on l'admettra.

Pour ce qui est des nouveaux publics, Lise Santerre démontre qu'ils sont très diversifiés. On encourage la créativité des personnes âgées, des jeunes, des minorités ethniques ou des handicapés. Puisque *La chambre nuptiale* est présentée dans plusieurs lieux différents, il est important de distinguer les divers publics qui l'ont parachevée. Sur le terrain de la culture de masse, c'est-

à-dire dans les centres commerciaux et à Terre des Hommes, l'environnement est vécu par une masse d'individus extrêmement variée, allant des jeunes adultes étudiant-e-s, aux couples mariés, aux femmes et hommes de tous âges, aux personnes âgées, de différentes classes sociales et ethnies.

Le nombre de personnes qui ont exploré *La chambre nuptiale* lors des deux premières présentations à l'été 1976 s'élève à 8 000, selon les informations de Jocelyne Aubin. À l'été 1977, à Terre des Hommes, on compte 22 000 personnes, et plus de 20 000 visiteurs l'ont vue au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal en 1982⁵⁶. Larivée raconte que, dans l'ensemble, le public est composé de familles, de groupes d'adolescent-e-s, de célibataires et de groupes d'ami-e-s. Dans le cadre d'un cours de sociologie de l'art à l'UQAM, Larivée effectue l'analyse des données des questionnaires compilés à Terre des Hommes⁵⁷. L'artiste y précise les origines sociales, l'âge et le sexe des répondant-e-s au questionnaire. Elle affirme aussi que de manière générale, à Terre des Hommes, le public apprécie surtout le couloir de l'environnement. Dans les multiples appréciations, citons celle d'une enseignante mariée de 20 ans. C'est la deuxième partie de l'œuvre qui a retenu son attention, soit la chambre nuptiale même. Touchée, l'enseignante a écrit dans les commentaires :

Il faut que je change. Les problèmes illustrés dans le corridor ainsi que les rôles illustrés dans la chambre nuptiale reflètent exactement les problèmes de définition et de détermination de mon sexe aujourd'hui le 10 juillet 1977. En sortant de la chambre nuptiale, je me suis dit qu'il fallait que je sorte du moule dans lequel ma mère, mon mari et moi-même m'ont confinée. Je veux être fière de moi-même à l'avenir. Je commence demain après une bonne nuit de sommeil⁵⁸.

Hors de tout doute, si le public ne coopère pas, pour Larivée, l'œuvre demeure inachevée, puisqu'elle sert à changer la perception des comportements acquis et leur transformation. Le témoignage de la jeune enseignante est une preuve de cette vocation, d'un début de prise de conscience. Larivée a créé un environnement qui invite les membres du public à explorer les lieux et à prendre conscience de leurs conditions politiques et sociales en tant qu'hommes ou femmes, lors de leur participation aux échanges, discussions et au sondage par questionnaire. Ceux-ci peuvent aussi, par la suite, rencontrer sur place des représentant-e-s d'organismes communautaires qui permettent, comme nous en informe la journaliste Louise Lachapelle, « à ceux qui le désirent, de poursuivre leur démarche⁵⁹ ».

Au Carrefour Laval, Yves Robillard « a vu des gens de 20 ans à 60 ans se parler, se disputer, s'aimer, se déclarer⁶⁰ ». Il affirme aussi que la discussion faisait partie intégrante de l'œuvre, sans qu'elle soit forcée. Mais qui sont

ces gens ? En langage familier, on les appelle Monsieur et Madame Tout-le-monde, consommatrices et consommateurs du centre commercial qui y font leurs courses, du lèche-vitrines, des sorties culturelles ou encore qui ne font que passer. À la lecture des analyses du sondage de Terre des Hommes, on se rend compte de la diversité de ce public : des adolescent-e-s, des groupes d'ami-e-s, des jeunes couples, des femmes mariées, des hommes mariés, des célibataires, des personnes âgées, des étudiant-e-s, toutes classes confondues. Tous ces gens ont vécu l'expérience qui les a probablement sensibilisés aux rôles stéréotypés. Du moins, c'était l'intention de GRASAM et de Larivée. Au musée, l'environnement est expérimenté par d'autres personnes, plus familières de l'art d'avant-garde et de l'art féministe. Il s'agit principalement d'un public qui fréquente déjà les expositions d'art savant⁶¹ : des étudiant-e-s, des professeur-e-s, des critiques et des spécialistes de l'histoire de l'art. Gardons toutefois à l'esprit qu'avant de s'adresser à une élite, l'environnement socioculturel et politique est une expérience que l'artiste veut faire vivre aux néophytes. Et elle y parvient. Toutes et tous sont invités à se questionner sur le sens de l'union du mariage et la place de chacun dans le contrat.

Dans l'ensemble, comme le suggère la thèse défendue par le théoricien de l'art Frank Popper, le public participe à une expérience où il est invité à devenir créateur⁶² d'une nouvelle réalité. La thèse du sociologue Louis Jacob rejoint celle de Popper et, pour lui, le public de l'activité artistique collective assume un rôle de participation politique puisque, peut importe sa prise de position, celle-ci fera partie de son nouveau parcours dans la vie réelle. Selon Jacob, la participation du citoyen au processus de réalisation de l'œuvre, « implique une réflexion sur les fondements mêmes du politique comme l'appartenance, la promesse, la sollicitude, l'échange, ce que signifie être et vivre ensemble⁶³ ». Jacob ajoute que « les artistes sont véritablement engagés dans quelque chose, avec d'abord tous les gens qui se joignent au processus de l'œuvre, mais éventuellement aussi tous les autres qui en deviennent des médiateurs, les historiens, les critiques⁶⁴ » et, ce faisant, ils se trouvent sur deux terrains, le politique et l'artistique ; il serait possible pour l'artiste d'entretenir des liens avec le milieu communautaire et de favoriser la construction d'une identité collective. À ce sujet, Diane Guay suggère que le public explorateur dans *La chambre nuptiale* contribue à la structuration du projet sociopolitique⁶⁵ de l'artiste, puisque, pour Larivée, « l'art est un outil de combat politique⁶⁶ ». Cet outil trouve-t-il un milieu preneur ?

Nouvelle fonction de l'art

Comprise dans son sens anthropologique par le secrétariat d'État ou le ministère des Affaires culturelles, la culture permet à l'individu de s'épanouir,

de se divertir, de sentir qu'il appartient à une communauté. Dans le modèle de la démocratie culturelle, tel que présenté par Santerre, la culture assume un rôle social incomparable dans l'identification culturelle et dans l'intégration de groupes sociaux exclus ou minoritaires. Pour certains auteurs de l'école de Francfort, comme Herbert Marcuse, l'art et la culture joueraient ici un rôle *positif*, c'est-à-dire qu'elles seraient un outil d'aliénation sociale et donc utiles au système dans un processus d'acculturation de la population dans son ensemble⁶⁷. Les activités d'animation culturelle joueraient le rôle d'une soupape sociale, en ce sens qu'à travers la culture, les problèmes sociaux seraient évacués. Autrement dit, on s'adresse à un public pour qu'il s'intègre à la société démocratique, connue aussi pour les injustices inhérentes qui constituent ses fondements. Pensons notamment à l'organisation sociale d'une société capitaliste et patriarcale composée de classes sociales antagonistes et dont l'organisation de la famille est sexiste. Il est donc difficile d'imaginer qu'une artiste néo-avant-gardiste comme Larivée, qui critique le système, puisse utiliser la culture comme outil de paix et de cohésion sociales ou encore d'intégration des diverses populations au système socioéconomique comme le fait l'État. Cependant ses actions s'inscrivent dans une période et un contexte social et politique tellement précis qu'il est impensable de ne pas considérer l'intégration de ses productions au système socioculturel des années 1970. Un retour historique devient indispensable.

D'emblée, souvenons-nous de l'ébullition du début des années 1970. Entre 1968 et 1972, c'est l'Union nationale qui gouverne au Québec, alors que sur la scène fédérale, le gouvernement libéral est au pouvoir. Les voisins états-unien sont plongés dans la révolution des *sixties* et vivent l'avènement des mouvements de contre-culture, des hippies, du *Peace and Love*, des droits civiques des Noirs, de la musique rock et nous en passons. Pour ce qui est de la France, le pays est agité par les événements de mai 1968. En Algérie, ou encore en Amérique latine, les luttes de libération nationale de gauche grondent. Les années 1960 et 1970 sont riches aussi pour le Québec en événements sociaux et politiques. À titre d'exemple, les grèves ouvrières, celles du mouvement étudiant, le « Lundi de la matraque » (émeute du 24 juin 1968) et la manifestation « Opération McGill » ou encore « McGill français » du 28 mars 1969 organisée par des groupes indépendantistes et l'Union générale des étudiants du Québec (l'UGEQ)⁶⁸ ne laissent pas les gouvernements indifférents. L'ère est à l'agitation sociale et au bousculement des vieux mondes idéologiques. L'idée d'une révolution nationale et indépendantiste est prônée par la revue *Parti pris*. Le Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) se fait talonner pour ses bombes et gagne la sympathie des francophones de toutes les classes sociales ou encore des jeunes étudiant-e-s des cégeps ou des universités. Et tel qu'énoncé par le gouvernement fédéral, notamment Gérard

Pelletier, les étudiant-e-s grévistes de 1969 ne souhaitent pas nécessairement collaborer aux lieux de pouvoir : « A good job. A good time. A good wife. A good pension. Ce programme ne convenait plus à beaucoup de jeunes, dans les milieux collégiaux et universitaires⁶⁹ ».

C'est dans ce contexte qu'est lancé le programme « Perspectives-Jeunesse ». Il est annoncé par Pierre Elliott Trudeau, lors d'un discours à la Chambre des ministres le 16 mars 1971, à peine cinq mois après la Crise d'octobre (1970). Ce programme, qui prêche la liberté d'action et d'initiative par et pour les jeunes, relève du secrétaire d'État et offre aux jeunes étudiant-e-s, principalement de la fin de l'école secondaire, du cégep et de l'université, l'occasion de se créer eux-mêmes un travail d'été. Il est rapporté que le nombre d'étudiant-e-s des niveaux secondaire et postsecondaire qui arrêtent leurs études pendant l'été monte alors à 1 800 000 individus. C'est pourquoi, le gouvernement décide d'accorder 57,2 millions de dollars à la création d'emplois et « d'activités utiles ». Le programme Perspectives-Jeunesse reçoit, à lui seul, une somme totale de 24,7 millions⁷⁰.

Andrew Cohen, en charge du groupe de recherche du rapport portant le même nom sur le programme « Perspectives-Jeunesse », affirme que le gouvernement avait besoin « des aspirations de la jeunesse, de son potentiel et aussi de ses limites en tant qu'agent de changement social⁷¹ », voire de son imagination. Si cette idée de mettre « L'imagination au pouvoir ! » rappelle le fameux slogan français de mai 68, il en va tout différemment dans la situation canadienne. Il est clair que l'État n'encourage pas les citoyennes et les citoyens à l'insurrection. Tout au contraire ; après avoir été demandé, l'accomplissement de l'imagination accède plutôt à l'idée de la paix sociale. Autrement dit, changer le monde demeure un dessein possible dans la mesure de ce que l'État concède comme transformations sensées. À cet effet, les projets politiques issus d'une vision nationaliste québécoise sont catégoriquement refusés par Perspectives-Jeunesse⁷². Néanmoins, comme le certifie Cohen, « les participants étaient, en principe, libres de travailler pour ou contre "l'ordre établi", ou encore, de s'en détourner complètement⁷³ ». Le fait de pouvoir créer son propre emploi peut donner l'impression qu'un pouvoir exceptionnel a été accordé à cette jeunesse assoiffée de révolte. C'est pourquoi l'artiste néo-avant-gardiste a participé à Perspectives-Jeunesse et PIL sans avoir l'impression de collaborer à l'idéologie dominante. Toutefois, selon Andrew Cohen, ces projets apportent un certain degré de participation de la part de la population à la vie citoyenne et ils sont : « d'utilité pour la collectivité, l'unité canadienne, une activité créatrice⁷⁴ ». Pierre Bourdon, à qui le gouvernement fédéral avait commandé le rapport *C'est parti* [. . .], sur la situation de la jeunesse des années 1970, explique que dans le cadre social des manifestations des années 1960, des activités du FLQ et des grèves étudiantes,

« Les conflits vont continuer à éclater partout⁷⁵ » et qu'une intervention de l'État est pressante. Nous observons alors que les projets d'animation socio-culturelle comme ceux de Larivée sont, en réalité, plus que des emplois pour les jeunes. Son œuvre est une action culturelle souhaitée par l'État dans la mesure où il cherche à intégrer au système la population, entre autres, à travers l'art.

Alors que Larivée tente, d'un côté, de contrer les institutions, son projet se trouve à y être bien inséré⁷⁶, et la portée sociale devient difficile à analyser, même si l'œuvre répond à au moins deux visées. D'une part elle vise l'affranchissement de l'individu par l'activité d'animation socioculturelle⁷⁷. D'autre part, nonobstant les intentions de l'artiste, l'œuvre atteint aussi la visée de paix sociale comprise dans l'idéologie de la démocratie culturelle à même les lignes directrices des programmes de subvention. Sans conteste, les programmes d'emploi veulent amadouer les esprits protestataires des universitaires, de la sous-culture, des marginaux, et promouvoir *l'unité canadienne* tout en freinant le taux de chômage, tel qu'expliqué dans le rapport Cohen⁷⁸. C'est donc dire que cette expérience néo-avant-gardiste est neutralisée en partie. Mais plus encore, elle coopère même à l'idéologie de la démocratie culturelle, en ce sens que la participation de cette artiste néo-avant-gardiste à des programmes aussi idéologiques reflète, outre son besoin d'argent, un compromis fait par l'organisatrice qui accepte de travailler avec les ressources gouvernementales disponibles.

Sans conteste, Francine Larivée, outre son discours sur l'art, la fonction de l'artiste et du public, dénonce l'institution sexiste du mariage. Il est étonnant de penser que l'État finance ce projet qui se veut subversif et opposé à la société phallocratique. Pourtant, c'est bel et bien le cas. Le « Programme d'initiatives locales » et « Perspectives jeunesse », en consonance avec l'idéologie contenue dans ce type de subventions, épaula le projet, car il répond à l'intention de l'État d'intégrer une jeunesse rebelle et sans-emploi au sein d'une critique bien encadrée de la société⁷⁹. À ce propos, dès 1972, au moment-même de la mise en place et du déroulement des programmes, l'écrivain et la sociologue québécois Jean-Robert Sansfaçon et Louise Vandelac ont critiqué sévèrement les programmes « Perspectives Jeunesse » et « Initiatives locales ». Les deux sont d'avis que si l'État s'intéresse aux étudiant-e-s et aux groupes marginaux, « c'est parce que ce sont eux qui risquaient de provoquer les désordres sociaux. Au cours des trois dernières années, leurs manifestations avaient alerté l'establishment et l'opinion publique, il fallait rapidement ramener les enfants au bercail, mais gentiment !⁸⁰ ». Pour Sansfaçon et Vandelac, le gouvernement a tenté d'enclaver « cette contre-culture ou du moins amoindrir certaines de ses manifestations bruyantes⁸¹ ». C'est pourquoi, puisque l'œuvre d'art

progressiste n'encourage ni à l'émeute ni à la révolution, nous affirmons qu'elle ne comporte aucun danger pour le système capitaliste et patriarcal. *La chambre nuptiale* est un emploi pour des jeunes étudiant-e-s, créé par eux-mêmes et dans la perspective d'une formation certaine de cette jeunesse au marché du travail.

Bref, ces jeunes critiques de l'institution du mariage sont bien encadrés au sein de *La chambre nuptiale* en accord avec les intentions du ministère du Travail et des responsables des orientations culturelles des politiques alors en vogue. Ainsi, l'œuvre de Larivée est acceptée des institutions diverses, car elle répond à plusieurs besoins de l'État en matière culturelle, sociale, politique et économique. En somme, parce que *La chambre nuptiale* s'introduit au cœur d'instances officielles relevant d'institutions diverses (ministère des Affaires culturelles, Conseil du statut de la femme, Conseil des arts du Canada, ministère de la Main-d'œuvre et de l'Immigration, ville de Montréal), il est difficile d'attribuer une portée subversive à ce projet. Ce qui ne signifie pas qu'il n'ait pas pu avoir un impact réel sur certaines personnes et même fait avancer la cause féministe, à sa manière. Néanmoins, son impact est limité, car il se situe dans ce contexte d'encadrement politique et culturel. L'œuvre, outre l'émancipation de l'individu par l'art, correspond aussi à la visée de cohésion sociale intrinsèque à l'idéologie des programmes de subvention et dans les modèles de la démocratie culturelle et de démocratisation de la culture. Ainsi, cette expérience de la néo-avant-garde politisée est plutôt intégrée qu'opposée radicalement à l'establishment. C'est du moins la conclusion à laquelle nous sommes arrivée et souhaitons, par le fait même, participer à poser un nouveau regard sur l'œuvre et la période étudiées.

NOTES

- 1 Yves ROBILLARD, *Québec underground, 1962–1972*, tomes I, II et III, Montréal, Médiart, 1973.
- 2 Yves ROBILLARD, *Vous êtes tous des créateurs, ou, Le mythe de l'art*, Montréal, Lanctôt Éditeur, 1998, p. 30–31.
- 3 Voir : Yves ROBILLARD, « Du courage, est-ce trop demander à un jury [...] ? », *Le jour*, 18 mars 1977, p. 36–37 ; « *La Chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée », *Vie des Arts*, n° 89, hiver 1977–1978, p. 76 ; « *La Chambre nuptiale*, une œuvre d'animation », *Le Jour*, 9 sept. 1977, p. 28. Pour ces trois articles, consulter le Fond d'archives Yves Robillard, UQAM, Dossier no 000339086.
- 4 Guy Sioui DURAND, *L'art comme alternative. Réseaux et pratiques d'art parallèle au Québec 1976–1996*, Québec, les Éditions Intervention, 1997 ; Michel ROY, « Art Progressiste. Intégration et / ou subvention : Montréal 1975–1980 », mémoire de maîtrise en histoire de l'art, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1987.

- 5 Sur la construction du mythe de l'*underground* anti-institutionnel voir : Yves ROBILLARD, *Québec underground, 1962-1972* ; Marcel SAINT-PIERRE, « A Quebec Art Scenic Tour and his contradictions itinérantes », dans *Québec underground, 1962-1972*, tome II, Montréal, Média, 1973, p. 448-71 ; DURAND, *L'art comme alternative*. Nous tenons également à avertir la lectrice et le lecteur que nous avons signé un article sur *Vive la rue Saint-Denis!* qui énonce partiellement l'hypothèse reprise dans l'article présent. Voir : Anithe DE CARVALHO, « Fin du mythe de l'art underground anti-institutionnel : L'utopie de la démocratie culturelle et l'environnement labyrinthe *Vive la rue Saint-Denis ! (1971)* », *Animation, territoires et pratiques socioculturelles*, n° 5 : Animation et jeunesse en contexte d'indignation et de révoltes nationales, hiver 2013, p. 73-88, www.atps.uqam.ca/numero/n5/pdf/ATPS_Carvalho_2013.pdf. Page consultée le 20 jan. 2012. *La chambre nuptiale* et *Vive la rue Saint-Denis!* sont deux environnements étudiés dans le cadre de ma thèse de doctorat (UQAM, 2013).
- 6 Lise SANTERRE, « De la démocratisation de la culture à la démocratie culturelle », dans *Démocratisation de la culture ou démocratie culturelle. Deux logiques d'action publique*, ed. Guy Bellavance, Québec, Les Éditions de l'IQRC, 2000, p. 47-63. Sur les notions de nouveau public et de démocratie culturelle, lire aussi Francis JEANSON, *L'action culturelle dans la cité*, Paris, Seuil, 1973 ; et Philippe URFALINO, *L'invention de la politique culturelle*, Paris, Hachette, 2004.
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- 8 Voir : Peter BÜRGER, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984 ; Rainer ROCHLITZ, *Subversion et subvention. Art contemporain et argumentation esthétique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994 ; et Hal FOSTER, *Le retour du réel, situation actuelle de l'avant-garde*, Paris, La Lettre volée, 2005.
- 9 Frank POPPER (1975), *Art, action et participation. L'artiste et la créativité aujourd'hui*, Paris, Éditions Klincksieck, 1980 ; Louis JACOB, « Spectacles spécifiques : critique, assomption et régression du spectaculaire dans le système de l'art contemporain », dans *Sociologie et société*, vol. 37, n° 1 (printemps, 2005), p. 125-50.
- 10 Francine COUTURE (sous dir.), *Mises en scènes de l'avant-garde*, Montréal, Cahiers du département d'histoire de l'art de l'UQAM, 1987, p. 9-22.
- 11 Voir document *Description du projet*. Fonds d'archives Francine Larivée au Service d'archives de l'UQAM, Dossier n° 000339121 (dorénavant FAFL UQAM).
- 12 Jocelyn AUBIN, *La Chambre nuptiale*, mémoire de maîtrise en études des arts, Université Concordia, 1994, p. 66.
- 13 ROBILLARD, « *La Chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée ». Cette description concerne l'œuvre à Terre des Hommes.
- 14 Diane GUAY, « Parler d'elles à partir d'elles-mêmes », dans *Art et féminisme*, ed. Rose-Marie Arbour, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, catalogue d'exposition, 1982, p. 36. En ce qui concerne la préservation de *La chambre nuptiale*, l'artiste a fait des dons à deux musées québécois. Les sculptures se trouvent au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal et les peintures appartiennent au Musée de la civilisation (Québec). Le reste des éléments n'existent plus.
- 15 *De Rodin au polyuréthane*, Communiqué de presse de GRASAM, FAFL UQAM.
- 16 Lettres patentes de la coopération GRASAM, p. 3, FAFL UQAM.

- 17 Hervé FISCHER, *Théorie de l'art sociologique*, Belgique, Casterman, 1977.
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- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 Anonyme, « *La Chambre nuptiale* », *La Presse*, 1976, p. E18. Voir FAFL UQAM.
- 22 Francine Larivée, Formulaire de demande de subvention au Programme de service communautaire étudiant formule de demande, secrétariat d'État, 1975, p. 19, FAFL UQAM.
- 23 ROBILLARD, « *La Chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée ».
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- 25 Correspondance de Francine Larivée avec Mme Claire Bonenfant, présidente du Conseil du Statut de la Femme, Gouvernement du Québec, 7 mai 1979, p. 8, FAFL UQAM.
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- 28 Correspondance de Francine Larivée avec Claire Bonenfant, présidente du Conseil du statut de la femme, Gouvernement du Québec, 7 mai 1979, p. 5, FAFL UQAM.
- 29 ROBILLARD, « Du courage, est-ce trop demander à un jury [...] ? », p. 37.
- 30 Correspondance de Francine Larivée avec Claire Bonenfant, 7 mai 1979, p. 9.
- 31 Francine LARIVÉE, Reportage de « Présent métropolitain », Radio-Canada, entrevue avec Pierre Baril, non paginé, non daté, FAFL UQAM.
- 32 Francine Larivée, citée dans SAUMART, « Francine Larivée et sa sculpture habitée ».
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- 34 Pierre LAPORTE, *Livre blanc*, Québec, ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1965 ; Jean-Paul L'ALLIER, *Pour l'évolution de la politique culturelle du Québec. Document de travail, Livre vert*, Québec, ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1976 ; et Camille LAURIN, *La politique québécoise du développement culturel, Livre blanc*, Québec, ministère d'État au Développement culturel, 1978.
- 35 Gérard PELLETIER, *Les années d'impatience, 1950-1960*, Montréal, Alain Stanké, 1983 ; et Gérard PELLETIER, *L'aventure du pouvoir, 1967-1975*, Montréal, Alain Stanké, 1992.
- 36 PELLETIER, *L'aventure du pouvoir, 1967-1975*, p. 23.
- 37 PELLETIER, *Les années d'impatience, 1950-1960*, p. 255.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- 39 Greg BAEKER, *Étude transversale. Politique culturelle et diversité culturelle. Rapport national du Canada*, Canada, Service des politiques et actions culturelles. Direction générale IV – Éducation, culture et patrimoine, jeunesse et sport, présenté à Strasbourg, le 6 fév. 2001, p. 37. [www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/completed/diversity/CCCULT\(2001\)5_F.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/completed/diversity/CCCULT(2001)5_F.pdf). Page consultée le 20 jan. 2012.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 69

- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 42 Francine LARIVÉE, *Projet de recherche*, non daté, FAFL UQAM.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 44 LAURIN, *La politique québécoise du développement culturel*.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 109-10.
- 47 LARIVÉE, *Projet de recherche*, p. 2. Se référer, LAURIN, *La politique québécoise du développement culturel*, p. 109-10.
- 48 Francine Larivée dans : LARIVÉE, *Projet de recherche*, p. 2. L'artiste emprunte parfois les termes et phrases de Laurin. Les emprunts se trouvent dans les pages 109 et 111 de son livre blanc.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Voir *Livre noir de la F.F.Q. sur la condition féminine : le facteur de l'issue de nos revendications – c'est nous les femmes*, Montréal, Fédération des femmes du Québec, 1978, et CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME, *Pour les Québécoises : égalité et indépendance*, Québec, Édition officiel du Québec, 1978, p. 45.
- 51 Ginette AUGER, « Francine Larivée se défend ! Le scandale de la chambre nuptiale », 1977, FAFL UQAM.
- 52 Louise LACHAPELLE, « Le mariage, une “chambre nuptiale” ou mortuaire », *Châtelaine*, novembre 1975, FAFL UQAM.
- 53 Consulter le dossier des états financiers au FAFL UQAM.
- 54 Lire à ce propos la lettre signée par L'Allier lors de l'octroi de la subvention FAFL UQAM.
- 55 Le Carrefour Laval accorde 4 000 \$. À Terre des Hommes, Larivée a, entre autres, 25 000 \$ en projets d'employabilité du ministère des Affaires sociales et du Bien-être (fédéral) et 5 000 \$ (provincial), 19 500 \$ du ministère des Affaires culturelles, 8 000 \$ du ministère de l'Éducation du Québec en projets étudiants, 4 900 \$ du Haut Commissariat et 23 500 \$ du ministère du Tourisme, de la Chasse et de la Pêche. On constate ici que les fonds proviennent de paliers associés aux deux modèles culturels. Voir le dossier des états financiers dans le FAFL UQAM.
- 56 AUBIN, « La Chambre nuptiale », p. 36-37.
- 57 Francine LARIVÉE, travail de session pour le cours HAR 9006, « Sociologie de l'art : étude d'un cas de diffusion », professeur, Barry Lord : étudiante, Francine Larivée : sujet, Analyse sommaire des questions 1, 2, 23, 24, 25 et 26 du questionnaire – *Chambre nuptiale*, septembre 1979, FAFL UQAM.
- 58 Consulter questionnaire-*Chambre nuptiale*, FAFL UQAM.
- 59 LACHAPELLE, « Le mariage, une “chambre nuptiale” ou mortuaire ».
- 60 ROBILLARD, « *La Chambre nuptiale* de Francine Larivée ».
- 61 Dans le cas précis de l'exposition *Art et féminisme*, étant donné l'intérêt d'un large public, associations de femmes, étudiant-e-s, etc., pour l'œuvre de Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, qui faisait partie de l'événement, on serait tenté de supposer qu'outre l'élite habituelle, le public s'est élargi pour *La Chambre nuptiale*. Mais cette hypothèse reste à vérifier ; est-ce le même public ? Est-ce que le public qui a vu le *The Dinner Party* a aussi vu *La Chambre nuptiale* ??
- 62 POPPER, *Art, action et participation*, p. 209-10.
- 63 JACOB, « Spectacles spécifiques », p. 143.
- 64 *Ibid.*

- 65 GUAY, « Parler d'elles à partir d'elles-mêmes », p. 38.
- 66 LARIVÉE, « Francine Larivée », p. 116.
- 67 Lire à ce sujet : Herbert MARCUSE, *La fin de l'utopie*, Paris, Neuchâtel, Delachaux, Éditions du Seuil, 1968 ; *L'homme unidimensionnel*, traduction de Monique Wittig, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1968 ; et *Vers la libération. Au-delà de l'homme unidimensionnel*, traduit de l'anglais par Jean-Baptiste Grasset, Paris, Denoël / Gonthier, « Bibliothèque Médiations », 1972.
- 68 McGill Français, consulter les archives de Radio-Canada : <http://archives.radio-canada.ca/emissions/980/>. Page consultée le 8 mars 2012.
- 69 PELLETIER, *L'aventure du pouvoir, 1967-1975*, p. 136.
- 70 Lire le rapport d'Andrew COHEN, et al., *Groupe de travail chargé de l'évaluation des programmes d'été. Secrétariat d'État. Février 1972*, Ottawa, Gouvernement du Canada, 1972. Ce rapport commente le programme Perspectives-Jeunesse. Puisqu'il était trop critique, il a été refusé en Chambre et le secrétariat d'État a commandé un deuxième rapport en 1972. Ce dernier reprend l'ensemble des données, mais n'arrive à aucune conclusion idéologique. Rédigé par une firme privée, il porte le nom SRG (Service Research Group), soit celui du groupe de recherche et a été adopté en Chambre. Quelques copies du rapport original de Cohen ont survécu. L'une d'entre elles est aux archives nationales (Bibliothèque et Archives Canada) et une autre à l'Université d'Ottawa. Seul cet exemplaire peut être emprunté. Nous n'avons trouvé aucune copie dans les bibliothèques du Québec. Dans notre texte, nous avons choisi, pour des raisons de citation, le Rapport – Cohen, ainsi intitulé par quelques auteurs qui l'ont consulté et commenté au moment même de sa parution.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. ix. Pour plus amples informations sur le sujet, nous référons le lectorat à notre thèse de doctorat d'où provient l'idée de cet article et l'analyse de l'œuvre. Voir Anithe DE CARVALHO, *Les œuvres participatives de l'underground au Québec (1967-1977) et l'émergence de la démocratie culturelle*, thèse présentée comme exigence partielle du doctorat en histoire de l'art, Université du Québec à Montréal, janvier 2013.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- 75 Pierre BOURDON, *C'est parti [...]*, p. 178. Cité dans Jean-Robert SANSFAÇON et Louise VANDELAC, *Le programme cool d'un gouvernement too much. Perspectives Jeunesse. Une analyse critique des politiques jeunesse et des programmes communautaires fédéraux*, Montréal, Agence de presse libre du Québec, 1972, p. 36.
- 76 Voir ROCHLITZ, *Subversion et subvention* et FOSTER, *Le retour du réel*.
- 77 Catherine MILLET, *L'art contemporain. Histoire et géographie*, Paris, Flammarion, 1997.
- 78 COHEN, et al., *Groupe de travail chargé de l'évaluation des programmes d'été*.
- 79 Francine LARIVÉE, Formulaire de demande de subvention au programme de service communautaire étudiant Formule de demande, Secrétariat d'État, 1975, p. 19, FAFL UQAM.
- 80 SANSFAÇON et VANDELAC, *Le programme cool d'un gouvernement too much*, p. 20.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Francine Larivée's *La chambre nuptiale*: Conforming to the Cultural Democracy Model, or When Neo-avant-garde Feminist Art Joins the Establishment

ANITHE DE CARVALHO

For many years art historiography has built up a myth around the subject of Quebec underground art, in which its artists and their works have been portrayed as operating outside the establishment. Using the example of Francine Larivée's work *La chambre nuptiale* (1976), this essay, which is based on the author's doctoral research, presents an entirely different historical view.

In his anthology *Québec underground, 1962–1972* the artist and art historian Yves Robillard claimed that during the 1960s the activities of his artists' collective, Fusion des arts, constituted a form of politically engaged socio-cultural action undertaken in opposition to powerful institutions and the larger system within which they functioned. It was, in other words, against the establishment. In a book published some years later, *Vous êtes tous des créateurs, ou, Le mythe de l'art*, Robillard eulogized Larivée's *La chambre nuptiale*, describing it as an example of the new art first defended by Fusion des arts, which he called "l'œuvre dite d'animation" – the artwork-as-intervention. He identified *La chambre nuptiale* as the culmination of the anti-establishment practices initiated by his own group, thereby establishing a clear historical and ideological link between Larivée and Fusion des arts. This is certainly why, when *La chambre nuptiale* was created in 1976, Robillard, in his role as art critic, became the work's most enthusiastic defender in the media. His reviews make his position quite clear: in accordance with the definition of anti-institutional art that he had given in his book on the Quebec underground, Robillard saw Larivée's work as anti-establishment because it was a form of popular art that rejected traditional mediums, because it was presented outside the official institutional circuit, and because it was executed and experienced by new sectors of the population. The same view has since been reiterated by other analysts, among them Guy Sioui Durand and Michel Roy.

The present study aims to demonstrate, however, that in spite of these significant factors, Larivée's work was nonetheless the result of historically-rooted trends and developments in the government control of culture, as manifested through the implementation of what has become known as

the “cultural democracy model.” It also seems to have corresponded in a number of ways to the related paradigm of the democratization of culture. In fact, *La chambre nuptiale* was rooted in notions of both popular art and “high” art, and was executed with the approbation of various cultural and art institutions. These represented an art realm of expanded parameters, and while Larivée’s work was initially presented to a relatively uninformed public, it was also seen by more sophisticated viewers. It was, then, not operating outside the art system, but within an establishment whose boundaries had been pushed back by the artists themselves. In short, the central thesis of this essay is that the marginal participatory art practices of the 1970s – the so-called underground – evolved as part of the implementation of a new institutional vision of culture. As a consequence, and despite the ongoing presumptions of Quebec art history, such practices cannot be considered anti-institutional.

According to Lise Santerre, cultural democracy is an anthropologically-based government cultural policy that first emerged during the early 1970s. The word “culture” in this context is taken to mean the ensemble of lifestyles, traditions and popular art practices that shape the identity of a community. The aim of the policy is to defend little-known and popular art practices associated with the realms of entertainment, leisure or the so-called minor art forms. Both Santerre and Jiri Zuzanech point out that different government departments collaborate with one another in the area of art funding. For example, the departments responsible for such sectors as employment, leisure, sport and tourism may work in tandem with the Canada Council for the Arts. One element of the cultural democracy model is the idea that the arts should be integrated into other areas of activity, thereby encouraging interdisciplinarity. Santerre also asserts that this approach recognizes the social function and even the social impact of culture, and seeks to position government within the development of cultural identity and the reinforcement of social links. Diverse audiences are invited to work voluntarily as part of collectives and in so doing to become the creators of their own cultural products.

Through an analysis of Francine Larivée’s politicized neo-avant-garde objectives and of the role she assigned to new audiences in the execution of her project, this essay sheds light on the importance of the location of her work and the performances of the people who experienced it *in situ*. The notion of a creatively participatory audience described by Frank Popper, and the political participation phase hypothesized by Louis Jacob, provide the foundation for a definition of the status of the participants involved in the creative process. The artist’s aim was to reach an audience who would contribute to the actual production of the installation or who would become

genuinely engaged in a process of consciousness raising. As well as assigning these new roles to the audience, the artist also raised questions concerning the function of art, the status of the artist, and art's places of mediation. Through these interrogations Larivée was aligning herself with an avant-garde attitude and practice whose characteristics have been described by Francine Couture, among others. The artist's public declarations and interviews, along with the letters patent of her collective – the Groupe de recherche et d'action sociale par l'art et les média de communication (GRASAM) – have proved valuable sources of information concerning her artistic goals. Larivée revived the politicized avant-garde as the basis for an aesthetic approach by focusing on the emancipatory function of art-as-social-action and assigning new roles to both artist and audience. But in her effort to challenge the institutional realm, she failed to recognize that major changes in this realm had already enabled it to embrace marginal art. In the final section, the essay establishes links between the artist's objectives and cultural policy strategies, with reference to the notion of the audience described by Lise Santerre. The ideas defended by the artist correspond to those promoted by cultural policy, whether related to popular art or to increasing the accessibility of “high” art among the public at large. Finally, the official government position on culture, expounded by several ministers, including Jean-Paul L'Allier and Camille Laurin, was entirely in tune with the artist's quest for cultural democracy and the social intervention and audience participation it entailed.

DEMOISELLE
SAUVAGE.



A Canadian Artist in King Arthur's Court: Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes and the Colonial Invention of British Tradition

SAMANTHA BURTON

After several years of intense work, Canadian painter and etcher Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes (1859–1912) released her elaborately illustrated children's book *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* just in time for the 1904 Christmas season in London, England. A reinterpretation of Sir Thomas Malory's "The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney," Forbes's foray into the world of Arthurian legend consisted of an original story, fourteen large watercolour illustrations, and numerous charcoal drawings. Intended as a luxury object and released in a limited print run of 350 copies, the book was a critical success: as early as 1899, the artist was elected an Associate of the Royal Watercolour Society on the strength of a portfolio of watercolours intended for the book; once released, a reviewer for the *Studio* glowingly described each "exquisite" image as "a poem in itself."¹ The book has recently been digitized, its story and illustrations made widely available for the first time.²

Despite its creator's colonial origins, *King Arthur's Wood* engages with historical and artistic traditions that are recognizably British. Indeed, the book is perhaps the most sustained engagement by a Canadian woman artist with *fin-de-siècle* debates surrounding race, culture, and empire in Britain: a clear participant in the contemporary discourse about what "Britishness" had been, what it was, and what it should be. It equally serves as a powerful, if perhaps unintentional, statement on its Canadian-born author's place in this discourse and in the British art world. This overtly British focus is especially remarkable given that Forbes spent much of her early career working in the company of aggressively *anti*-British artists such as J.A.M. Whistler and Walter Sickert. An examination of Forbes's medievalist text and illustrations in light of these shifting allegiances not only gives attention to a little-studied portion of the artist's oeuvre, but also provides the opportunity to extend the disciplinary boundaries of Canadian women's art history of the pre-First World War period by situating the field within the framework of a wider "British World."

Detail, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *La Demoiselle Sauvage*: "You are an uncourteous knight," said she, Plate XII in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

Canadian Women's Art History and the British World

Born in Ontario in 1859, Elizabeth Armstrong left Canada fourteen years later to pursue an art education in London; she attended the South Kensington Schools before returning to the land of her birth in 1877. In the following year she began a three-year period of study with William Merritt Chase at the Art Students League in New York City, then proceeded to Munich, a city she ultimately dismissed as “not at all a place in which women stood any chance of developing their artistic powers.”³ Making London again her home base, she toured the rural artist colonies of Europe in the early 1880s. When she married fellow artist Stanhope Forbes in 1889, the couple settled permanently in the Cornish colony of Newlyn and became the core of a group popularly known as the “Newlyn School.” After her marriage and the subsequent birth of her only child in 1893, Forbes continued to paint and exhibit widely until her death in 1912.⁴

Forbes enjoyed a prominent reputation during her lifetime. Her prolific career was tracked on both sides of the Atlantic, with articles devoted to the artist appearing in the *Studio*, the *Art Journal*, and *Saturday Night*, and positive mentions of her work in the exhibition reviews of – to name only a few – the *Times*, the *Illustrated London News*, and the *Canadian Magazine*. Notably, critics frequently saw fit to comment on Forbes's national identity – or, more accurately, her lack thereof. Thus, even as the author of an 1891 article in *Lady's Pictorial* saw fit to call her “A Canadian by birth . . . English by adoption,”⁵ the *New York Evening Post* could state of her participation in the 1892 Royal Academy exhibition that “decidedly the best showing by Americans is made by Mrs. Stanhope Forbes – a Canadian.”⁶ Meanwhile, Forbes later recalled that her colleagues in New York insisted on labelling her “the English girl.”⁷ These assessments suggest the difficulties her contemporaries faced in their attempts to classify this very mobile artist.

To be sure, Forbes seems to have thought of herself as something of a drifter: she records in her autobiography that her family “lived in . . . trunks” while in Canada, and takes the time to thank her “devoted mother, who had sacrificed much to accompany me on my wanderings.”⁸ Forbes continued to experience a certain restlessness even after marriage and motherhood provided a stability not previously known. The artist voiced this professionally, in two travel articles she published in the *Studio*,⁹ and in more personal venues, writing in one letter to a friend:

I am interested in your account of the little place in Normandy, for I am trying to hear of a good place to migrate to next summer. I intend to pluck my poor unwilling husband from his beloved Newlyn and

let the house if possible for a few months. He cannot bear the idea of being away long . . . but I have been struck for an entire change of air and scene and I have only been waiting for Baby to be old enough to take about and now that he is beginning to talk I have a deep laid plot to take him to France so that French shall be his first language.¹⁰

This inclination to nomadism was also noted by critic Marion Dixon, who observed in an article about the artist that “Mr. Stanhope Forbes is less a wanderer at heart than is his Canadian wife.”¹¹

Forbes’s transnational career presents continued difficulties for the twenty-first-century art historian. Namely, her life and work highlight the fundamental insufficiencies of the nationalist underpinnings of the modern art history narrative in Canada. In the decades prior to the First World War, the art worlds of North America and Europe were tightly linked, brought together by a booming economy and evolving art market, an explosion in art journalism, and innovations in communications and travel. The attendant disintegration of national schools on both sides of the Atlantic and the emergence of movements that extended across the Western world are phenomena that do not fit smoothly into the traditional geographic parameters of a discipline like Canadian art history. While today Forbes might truthfully be called a Canadian *artist* given the place of her birth, whether an object like *King Arthur’s Wood* – which was, after all, made in Britain, for a primarily British audience – can accurately be called Canadian *art* is a much more complicated question.

Still more complex is the question of whether such categories are appropriate or useful in the study of any artist working in the necessarily transnational context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism. Art historians Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz have argued of an earlier period that “to historicize British or French art in the reductive geographical terms of the British Isles or continental France is . . . profoundly to misunderstand the eighteenth-century concepts of Englishness, Britishness, or Frenchness that applied (albeit differently nuanced) to the wider Atlantic world as much as to the metropolis.”¹² Following this line of thought, attempts to label an artist like Forbes as either Canadian *or* British neglect the possibility that she, like many Canadians of the pre-First World War period, did not identify exclusively as one or the other, but alternated between the two depending on the context, and potentially did so strategically depending on what was convenient or beneficial personally and professionally. She may just as easily have identified as both. It is thus necessary to adopt a methodological framework that takes into account these slippery boundaries and acknowledges that artists like Forbes were not confined by national

borders, but rather operated within networks that stretched across the Atlantic and throughout what has come to be called the “British World.”

The theoretical model of a British World presupposes an understanding of sites as unfixed nodes in an extended network of (often unequal) political, economic, and cultural connections.¹³ By these standards, the British World signifies a different entity than the British Empire. It might include, for example, the United States, which in the later nineteenth century was attempting to reclaim its British heritage in response to an influx of non-British immigration. Conversely, it might exclude a group technically under colonial control of the British, but which was not recognized as culturally British. A flexible and dynamic set of social, cultural, economic, linguistic, class, racial, and other identifications strengthened often-fragile political ties and acted to bind people of distant and diverse locations (and to exclude others). Given its precarious status between Confederation and the First World War – a new nation that was itself pursuing colonizing activities within its borders, but one that remained tightly linked to its own colonial parent – Canada provides an especially exciting opportunity to untangle the strings that knit together the British World.

Locating the history of Canadian art in the wider context of the British World also opens up new approaches to the study of Canadian women artists of the pre-First World War period. While this model of study presents an important challenge to traditional nationalist narratives, it also extends the work of feminist art history by demanding concerted attention to questions of race and empire, and a more in-depth examination of the role that women like Forbes played in the maintenance of imperial power. Significantly, it was possible for Forbes to identify as both Canadian and British only because she was white. Whiteness, which in the nineteenth century was frequently conflated with Britishness, was an important rallying point for the otherwise heterogeneous, geographically distant population of the British World, functioning simultaneously to unite a group based on a specific racial and cultural identity, and to distinguish and elevate it above competing groups.¹⁴ In Canada, the latter included not only First Nations, black, and Asian populations, but French Canadians and other European immigrants as well. The option to call oneself a member of the British World, and to freely traverse its physical and rhetorical borders, was a privilege not available to all.

“A parcel of foreigners”: Elizabeth Armstrong and the Whistler Circle

As suggested by reviewers’ confusion as to her nationality, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes did not always find her nomad status unproblematic. Critical reaction in the early years of her career was perhaps unsurprising

given the company she kept. Throughout the 1880s, Armstrong (not yet Forbes) was one of a number of young artists who formed a circle around the man she describes (but does not name) in her autobiography as “that brilliant exponent of ‘symphonies in white’ and ‘nocturnes in blue and silver.’”¹⁵ The artist who evidently needed no introduction was J.A.M. Whistler, around whom artists such as Mortimer Menpes, Theodore Roussel, Sidney Starr, Harper Pennington, and Walter Sickert gathered. Brought together by support of their leader’s Aesthetic outlook and a shared interest in French Impressionism, this informal group crystallized through their involvement first in the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA), of which Whistler was elected President in 1886, and, after his resignation two years later, in the New English Art Club (NEAC). Art historian Anne Koval has observed that in the mid-1880s this group of “Whistler followers” quite self-consciously regarded themselves as “the emerging avant-garde” in Britain.¹⁶ And like any avant-garde, they engendered considerable resistance: notably from competing artists like Armstrong’s then-fiancé Stanhope Forbes, who, together with his own set of followers from Newlyn, argued for a more conservative “square-brush” naturalism to take its place as the national school.¹⁷ Armstrong’s personal and professional links to both the Whistler group and the Forbes faction situate the artist squarely within contemporary debates about artistic style and national identity in Britain.

In her study of the Whistler circle, art historian Anna Greutzner Robins traces the close relationships of these artists both inside and outside gallery walls.¹⁸ As Robins points out, contemporaneous critics commented on the stylistic links between Armstrong’s early work and that of her colleagues. In the 1885 winter exhibition season, Armstrong was cited alongside Sickert, Menpes, and Pennington in the *Illustrated London News* as producing works that showed “evidence of Whistler’s teaching.”¹⁹ While the decorative female figure of a painting like *Young Woman in White* (undated, location unknown) is immediately recognizable as showing Whistlerian influence, Robins argues that Armstrong’s rural genre subjects – her primary focus throughout the period – demonstrate her sympathies with the circle’s interests just as strongly. In *The Critics* (Fig. 1), begun in 1885 and exhibited at the fall 1886 Royal British Academy show, Armstrong’s Impressionist-inspired emphasis on bright light, loosely applied paint, and shallow composition reveal an allegiance to the artistic experiments in colour, composition, and surface finish being conducted by Whistler’s followers (even if their own urban subjects were generally off-limits to her as a woman). Armstrong’s affiliation with the Whistler group is especially clear when juxtaposed with the more traditional approach used by her fiancé in his own work: compare *The Critics*, for example, with the latter’s own well-known 1885 project *A Fish Sale on a*



1 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Critics*, 1885–86, oil on panel, 22.9 × 14 cm, Private collection. (Photo: Courtesy of the Richard Green Gallery, London)



2 | Stanhope Forbes, *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885, oil on canvas, 118.5 × 154 cm. From the collections of Plymouth City Council (Arts and Heritage)/Bridgeman Art Library. (Photo: Plymouth City Council (Arts and Heritage)/© Bridgeman Art Library)

Cornish Beach (Fig. 2), which made the artist's name when exhibited at the Royal Academy spring exhibition in that year.²⁰ Moreover, the theme of the small painting – art creation itself – must have also appealed to a group dedicated to exploring new directions in art-making. Forbes himself noted the visible similarities between the work of his future wife and her mentor, as well as their affinity in attitudes towards art; he further drew a distinction between their views and his own by dismissively concluding his reaction to one exhibition with “About that little Whistler – honestly it is a pretty little bit of colour and *voilà tout* – You will of course laugh and say that is everything.”²¹

Forbes strongly disapproved of his intended's friends and colleagues, writing melodramatically to her on one occasion “I really can hardly bear to think that very likely you are going to meet him [Whistler] tomorrow,” and further despairing at her involvement with the “clique” of the “Whistler gang.”²² His protestations against Armstrong's participation in this circle were numerous and vehement. First among them was the perception that the exhibitions organized by the RBA and NEAC were deliberately, even

aggressively, avant-garde and elitist. Armstrong was one of the few women to exhibit with the latter in that institution's early years, and the only one to be elected a member at its founding. Forbes was also a member, and his letters reveal that they supported opposing factions within the Club, with Forbes leading the Newlyn School side and Armstrong continuing to support the Whistler-influenced Impressionist group, now led by Sickert. Forbes's assessment of the 1888 NEAC exhibition is characteristic: despite his future wife's good placement in the show – her paintings had been placed in the "A" class, unlike those of several of the couple's Newlyn friends – he writes, "I was astonished to find the impressionists in great force in consequence of which the public will be considerably astonished . . . some production of Mssrs Starr, Roussel, Sickert, every one of which if I had my way would be sat upon." He concludes pessimistically: "unless the Whistler influence is stamped out the Club will soon go to the bad."²³ In a subsequent letter, he rather petulantly threatens to resign his membership if the "Whistler element" remained prevalent.²⁴

Forbes also combined these aesthetic concerns with moral ones. He describes Sickert's work at the NEAC, for instance, as "perfectly astonishing and I only hope it is not in any way a true reflection of the painter's mind. Tawdry, vulgarity and the sentiment of the lowest music hall."²⁵ In another letter, he complains about the placement of Armstrong's work at the RBA's 1886 fall show. Forbes was horrified to find his fiancée's canvas hung between a painting by Lady Colin Campbell (who was undergoing a scandalous and well-publicized divorce) and a portrait by "a lady you have heard of – I daresay you guess who it is."²⁶ Forbes clearly believed these notorious women – Whistler's mistress Maud Franklin was the unnamed, but apparently infamous artist – to be unsuitable wall company for his future wife.

Finally, that Forbes specifically identifies these artists as Impressionists hints at a further objection he may have had to Whistler and his circle, namely, hostility to a style that was coded as foreign. In the mid-1880s, Impressionism had yet to make inroads into the London art world. Popularly and critically dismissed, the style was accused of being not only too modern, but explicitly too French, with all of the connotations of immorality and degeneracy that implied to a British audience. While both members of the Forbes couple have since been counted among practitioners of a vaguely defined "British Impressionism" alongside the other members of the Newlyn School, in the 1880s, the *plein air* naturalism practiced in Newlyn was understood to be a distinct style; although often learned in Brittany (as was the case with Forbes), it was generally acknowledged as the international standard of the rural art colony circuit and not necessarily associated with the specific "Frenchness" of the Parisian Impressionists being aped by artists

like Sickert (and Armstrong herself).²⁷ Forbes's potential xenophobia comes into focus when viewed in relation to the popular debates around Whistler's time at the RBA. Anne Koval has found that the press persistently defined the artist's supporters and detractors in nationalist terms: Whistler was "the most un-English of painters" and his followers were "outsiders"; his opponents (like Forbes) were the true "British artists."²⁸ Whistler himself described the opposing groups in these terms upon his resignation, writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "They could not remain together, and so you see the 'Artists' have come out and the 'British' remain – and peace and sweet obscurity are restored to Suffolk Street."²⁹

As an American, Whistler was open to this criticism. Many of his followers were also foreigners: Harper Pennington was also American, while Mortimer Menpes was born in Australia, Sickert in Germany, and Roussel in France.³⁰ Armstrong, as a Canadian, fit in seamlessly with this mixed set. Like her colleagues, Armstrong experienced critical distaste directed towards the perceived foreignness of her work. This became explicit in 1889, when her submissions to the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers were rejected; Sir Seymour Haden, that society's president and one of Whistler's many enemies (and also his brother-in-law), wrote Armstrong what Forbes called a "horrid letter" to berate her for working with an unnamed French printer. According to Forbes's report to his mother, Haden "says nothing about the etching but is furious that she employed a Frenchman to print it as he is patriotic enough to say that no French man knows how to print a dry point."³¹ Although her fiancé defended her on this occasion, he fell decidedly on the side of what the *Glasgow Herald* called the "loyal Britishers"³² and pressed continually for Armstrong to sever her ties with the other camp. This attitude extended to criticizing the latter's choice of residence; of her pre-marriage decision to live in St. Ives (a colony known to be international in nature) rather than Newlyn (which was primarily home to English artists), he archly informed her that "in my opinion it is more conducive to work to be living amongst a pleasant set of men than with a parcel of foreigners with whom I have no sympathy."³³ Armstrong, who had by this time lived for significant periods of time in Canada, England, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and France, evidently did feel sympathy with this cosmopolitan community of fellow "outsiders."

The Invention of British Tradition

Ultimately, however, Forbes's dislike of the Whistler circle must have played some part in his wife's decision to distance herself from that group: after the couple married in 1889, Forbes made good on his frequent threats to leave the NEAC, and Armstrong followed. In the following decades,



3 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Will O' the Wisp*, 1900, oil on canvas, sealed to panel, triptych, 68.6 × 111.8 cm, Courtesy of the National Gallery of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay. (Photo: National Gallery of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC)

Elizabeth Forbes (now Armstrong no longer) effectively resolved any critical apprehension about her place in the British art world by turning away from the self-conscious modernity of her Impressionist colleagues and looking instead to the past. Beginning in the mid-1890s, this shift took the form of an engagement with the narrative subjects of *fin-de-siècle* Pre-Raphaelitism. *King Arthur's Wood* is just one iteration of this interest, finding its place among a large oeuvre of fairy-tale subjects, medievalist figure and costume studies, and scenes from British literature, such as *Will O' the Wisp* (Fig. 3). Although these images are clearly different in subject and style than her previous efforts, concurrent shifts in the art world ensured that the Canadian-born Forbes and her work remained at the centre of debates about the Britishness of British art.

Forbes was far from the only artist looking to history for inspiration in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, the

tendency pervaded the Academy and the avant-garde in equal measure. Furthermore, the popularity of historical – especially medieval – subjects in art was paralleled by trends in literature, theatre, and architecture, as well as regional movements to revive Celtic and other ancient native cultures in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and, Cornwall.³⁴ In a reactionary response to the alarming social confusion of the nineteenth-century present, the medieval and early modern past was celebrated as a time when class lines were firm and understood by all, when gender roles were secure and men and women content to play their parts, and when the “British World” meant simply the British Isles and their white residents. The construction of a collective memory of this history therefore functioned as a very powerful means of uniting the public under a shared cultural heritage. This narrative of a glorious British past was, then, also a narrative about the Britain of the present and the future. That this past was a myth was irrelevant.

Forbes was not the only colonial expatriate to use history to shore up hereditary *bona fides* and negotiate an unstable position within the heart of the empire. According to historian Cecilia Morgan, Canadian travellers frequently went to Britain “in the expectation that there they would find the basis for their own histories, their own meanings of ‘Canada,’ and their own membership in the British Empire.”³⁵ This colonial longing for the past was more complex than a simple interest in history; it was a longing for a shared cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial heritage, and an assertion of one’s rightful place within that celebrated lineage. This becomes apparent in the breathless references to historical and literary places, figures, and events that seem to flood Canadian writing from abroad. The industrial sights of Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham are consistently ignored in favour of the romantic history evoked by places like Tintern Abbey, the Lake District, and Stratford-upon-Avon, while the streets and squares of London are not filled by modern city dwellers, but haunted by the ghosts of Pepys, Milton, and Shakespeare. Indeed, a vocabulary of haunting, enchantment, magic spells, and ghostly voices permeates tourist accounts. Real history merges seamlessly with fiction, as historical figures like Mary, Queen of Scots, and William Wallace share the landscape with fairies, pixies, and ghostly knights and ladies. Forbes draws on this trope in her own article “An April Holiday,” writing evocatively of the “shivers” she feels upon her encounter with the spirits of the English Civil War at an Anglo-Saxon ruin:

Who knows? – other and more ungentle ghosts may howl along the valley on nights of storm; the clang of steel may echo faintly from hill above – that “Field of Blood” where Athelstan bore down on the last of the Britons; the chant of the Druid and the war-cry of the Celt may

still linger round the Fugoe Hole, mocking the latter day ghosts of Charles's time.³⁶

Combining disparate times and peoples, Forbes creates a narrative that runs continuously from the ancient past to the modern present, into which colonial expatriates like herself might smoothly slip.

Canadian journalist, feminist, and tourist Emily Murphy describes her experience at the Tower of London in a characteristic example of this kind of language. Still haunting the castle, she mourns, were the boy-princes imprisoned by Richard III: "to this day, the Anglo-Saxon heart aches for the murdered boys."³⁷ With these words, Murphy clarifies that the colonial desire for history was a specifically racial desire. Forbes's and Murphy's tourist accounts must be seen as contributing to the popular nineteenth-century discourse of medieval Anglo-Saxonism, which held that all white, English-speaking peoples were descended from an idealized pre-feudal Anglo-Saxon race in which all men were equal and united as a group. As such, historian Alex Zwerdling has argued that Anglo-Saxonism provided a powerful mythology that functioned to link the white members of the British World through a racial and familial metaphor that superseded contemporaneous political and social divisions within the greater group; moreover, this genealogy provided a long lineage, and therefore legitimacy, for that group.³⁸

The racial myth of a united, white, Anglo-Saxon race with a long and glorious heritage was a particularly strong rallying point for those of British descent in North America in the latter half of the nineteenth century, given that waves of immigration from locations such as Italy, Eastern Europe, and China were beginning to hit the shores of that continent and inspiring new fears about the racial make up and cultural character of Canada and the United States.³⁹ Further concerns stemmed from the abolition of slavery and shifting settler relationships with Aboriginal populations. These anxieties were met on an official level by new legislation that attempted to define, limit, and control social integration in order to maintain the white, Anglo-Saxon character of these nations; in Canada, these efforts included laws such as the head tax on Chinese immigrants (1885), the Indian Act (1876), and a variety of policies aimed at restricting immigration from "undesirable" places enacted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unofficial responses to this perceived threat to racial and national identity included the increased interest in cultural heritage and the study of genealogy evidenced by the organization of groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution (founded in 1890) and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (founded in 1900).⁴⁰ The search for history by Canadian travellers like Forbes and Murphy was another powerful expression of the white colonial claim to British cultural heritage.

Finally, it was the self-conscious possession of a definable culture with a lengthy history that reassured members of the extended British World that they were valuable parts of a greater whole. Historian Catherine Hall has shown that history writing played a vital role in the construction of an ideal of white Britishness in the nineteenth century, arguing that “Britons’ special status in the world was articulated in part through possession of their history, a narrative that took them from the barbarism of their ancestors to the civilization of the present.”⁴¹ This connection between history, modernity, and civilization both distinguished the modern British from the still-“uncivilized” areas of the world and provided a justification for their colonization. Once comfortably under control, British history could be beneficently bestowed upon new populations, at once uniting them with the greater Anglo-Saxon family of the British World and erasing competing local histories.

First, however, this history had to be created – a project that can be understood as one manifestation of the phenomenon that historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have memorably called the “invention of tradition.”⁴² Victorian cultural producers played a major role in this process of myth-making by working concertedly not only to revive, but to reinvent the medievalist past “in their own image”⁴³ to suit the need for a community united through a common white British heritage, if not by a stable order of gender, class, and racial relations. Significantly, the invention of British history was paralleled by the invention of British *art* history, a narrative to which Forbes and *King Arthur's Wood* also contributes through its participation in a movement that was coded by contemporaries as uniquely British: *fin-de-siècle* Pre-Raphaelitism.

My use of the term “Pre-Raphaelitism” here deserves further comment, for by the end of the century the work of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) no longer stood alone, as it once had, but had become part of a “diffuse and elusive phenomenon” that then dominated the British art world.⁴⁴ By the mid-1890s, the struggle between the Whistler circle and the Newlyn School had all but concluded with neither party emerging as the victor. Both were bested by a movement that can only be loosely defined: indeed, its primary characteristic might be a sheer lack of definition. Though very different in founding principles and visual appearance, earlier British trends as diverse as Romanticism, Neo-Classicism, and Aestheticism had, by the turn of the century, grown together into an eclectic medley that was distinct from, but in many ways a logical successor to the mid-century PRB. With a uniting interest in narrative subjects, especially historical and literary themes, the phenomenon was an important driver of the Victorian medievalist revival. Although these styles remained relatively distinct in terms of their formal characteristics, the nationalist social and political associations their subjects invoked in their publics merged over time such that the

movement could comfortably take its place as the foundation of the modern British school by the end of the century.

Scattered as it was, art historian Tim Barringer notes that this approach to artistic production was “underpinned by a *fin-de-siècle* anxiety about the end of tradition”⁴⁵ brought on not only by various political and social crises, but by the confusion of the modern art world as well. Artists’ active adoption of earlier styles must be seen in the context of a deliberate “strategy of revival”⁴⁶ of these modes of expression by British artists and critics in search of a homegrown art tradition. This revival was an explicitly nationalist and imperialist project: an attempt to locate and celebrate an authentic and exclusively British art in the face of French dominance of the art world. The varying aesthetic characteristics of these styles were, as art historian Julie Codell argues, also understood as national characteristics: this was an art that was democratic and morally sound, worthy of colonizers, not the colonized (unlike, it was perceived, the increasingly primitivized abstraction of modern French painting).⁴⁷ That many of these styles had themselves been belittled as overly French not even a decade earlier was evidently not a problem, and this Aestheticized and vastly expanded Pre-Raphaelitism was, in the end, welcomed by audiences throughout the British World. By 1907, even Stanhope Forbes had apparently changed his views: an article from that year reveals that a “choice set of Whistler etchings formed the chief decoration” of one wall of the Newlyn artist’s studio. The accompanying photograph shows that the prints were joined by his wife’s *Will O’ the Wisp* hanging above the mantel.⁴⁸

King Arthur’s Wood: Representing Empires Past and Present

Elizabeth Forbes’s engagement with British historical and literary subjects in the later stages of her career must be understood as actively participating in the construction of this “consensual, celebratory”⁴⁹ history and art history of the British World. Indeed, the artist deliberately inserted herself into this genealogy by linking herself to several of the most pre-eminent figures involved in the concerted effort to secure a national art tradition; those singled out for mention in her autobiography include John Ruskin, Frederic Leighton, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁵⁰ This self-identification with her forebears continued in her work: Forbes’s *The Leaf* (before 1906, private collection), for example, is subtitled with lines from a Rossetti poem, while *Will O’ the Wisp* illustrates PRB associate William Allingham’s 1850 poem “The Fairies.”

King Arthur’s Wood was Elizabeth Forbes’s most sustained effort in this arena, taking up recognizably British cultural traditions in both its Arthurian content and Pre-Raphaelite-influenced style. The book was just

one of innumerable nineteenth-century reimaginings of Sir Thomas Malory's 1485 *Le Morte Darthur*, the first compilation, translation into English, and printed publication of a variety of earlier texts about the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. After falling into disfavour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Arthurian tales burst back into fashion in the early nineteenth century when Malory's volume was re-printed in 1816–17; the vogue heightened at mid-century, encouraged by the prolific contributions of poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.⁵¹

Materially speaking, *King Arthur's Wood* was very much a product of its era and speaks to a Pre-Raphaelite influence in medium as much as it does in content and pictorial style. Created during a golden age of book illustration, Forbes's adaptation would have circulated in the same market as several other high-profile editions of the tales. William Morris's Kelmscott Press, established in 1891 with the goal of producing not simply reading material, but beautiful objects in the model of medieval illuminated manuscripts, intended to publish an edition of Malory with illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones as its first project, and contributed a copy of Morris's own Arthurian poem "The Defense of Guinevere" (1858) in 1892.⁵² Publisher J.M. Dent, in competition with the prospective Kelmscott version, produced what is now the best-known *fin-de-siècle* version when he released an edition of Malory illustrated lavishly by Aubrey Beardsley in that same year.⁵³ Innovative illustrator Arthur Rackham released 500 copies of his own *The Romance of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* in 1917. These versions were joined by dozens more, including several by other female artists.⁵⁴ These objects, advertised as gift books (and often released during the Christmas season, as Forbes's was), offered artists a wide audience for their work; Forbes further increased her public visibility by showing the original illustrations for *King Arthur's Wood* at a solo show at London's Leicester Galleries in 1904.⁵⁵

The illustrated book was perhaps the ideal medium for medievalist subject matter. The format allowed medium and style to support the subject matter and create an aesthetically cohesive object. This had been the primary aim of the PRB at mid-century, who believed that British art would be rejuvenated through this "return to artistic integrity."⁵⁶ In the service of this goal, *King Arthur's Wood* includes decorated letters throughout the text, visually uniting word and image in a way that recalls illuminated manuscripts, while the cover's simple woodblock print calls to mind earlier forms of printing. Forbes showed interest in these goals in her painting as well. *Will O' the Wisp*, for example, takes the form of a triptych, visually recalling an art form of an earlier era, while the elaborately decorated wood frame, designed by Forbes herself, extends the painted tree branches beyond the limits of the canvas, uniting the latter with its surroundings.

The enormous popularity of all things Arthurian in the nineteenth century is unsurprising. As a figure who could be retroactively seen as transcending ethnic and religious divisions in the British Isles, King Arthur was a convenient nationalist icon in the era following the Act of Union in 1800 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which reunited the British community in ways unseen in several centuries, but which were not without controversy.⁵⁷ Malory's own version of the tales had appeared at the end of the Hundred Years' War and during the Wars of the Roses – another era of anxiety about Britain's status as a united entity. Malory's nostalgic expression of desire for a more stable and glorious past clearly found a sympathetic audience in the similarly concerned Victorian era.⁵⁸

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the myth of Camelot was invoked not only as a romantic referent to an earlier golden age, but as an effective model for the contemporary social, political, cultural, and racial ideals associated with the unifying impulses of Anglo-Saxonism and the extended British World. In return, the British World was itself reimagined as a revival of the medieval feudal order, a metaphor that conveniently placed metropole and colony in a harmonious relationship in which the latter was dependent on the former, and the former duty-bound to the latter; such rhetoric explained and validated the decidedly unequal status between members, even as it masked this inequality under the veil of a fiction of a round table with no head.⁵⁹ The increasing desire for a social order that mimicked the feudal order of dependence ran parallel to a society forced to come to terms with a changing empire and to rethink how best to administer and structure it, as the slavery system that had previously supported an enormous territorial expansion was phased out over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. This desire only heightened in the second half of the century, when the continued extension of the Empire seemed, to some, poised to destroy it.⁶⁰ While the eventual destruction of Arthur's kingdom served as a warning about this overreach, the mythical promise of the King's return to Britain was ultimately a reassuring justification for current policies. That Arthur and the golden age of his reign were largely fictional was not a hindrance to their deployment as metaphors; to the contrary, the lack of solid historical sourcing made the legends easily adaptable and extremely durable.⁶¹

Forbes's book frames a specific Arthurian legend – the tale of Sir Gareth – within a second narrative of her own creation. The latter takes place in a contemporary rural setting: a young boy named Myles moves into a new house with his mother and sister after his sailor father has been lost at sea. He seeks solace in the mysterious forest nearby (the eponymous "King Arthur's Wood"), where he finds an old book and an unusual creature that claims to have known the Knights of the Round Table and who tells him Gareth's



4 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *So then in sign of peace and good fellowship they clasped hands*, Plate XIV in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

story. The framing device captures the sense of being haunted by the past that Canadian tourists sought and found in the British landscape.

Forbes's interpretation of the legend is a straightforward narrative of knightly chivalry and courtly love. It begins with the arrival of a young man at the court of King Arthur; refusing to give his name and origins, he asks only for food and drink for one year, and the promise of two other favours at the end of that time. Intrigued, Arthur grants these wishes, and the boy is sent to the kitchen to live as a servant. On the anniversary of his arrival, a mysterious woman comes to the court to plead for help in rescuing her sister, the Lady Liones, from a tyrant. Seizing his chance, the young man asks for his two favours: that he be permitted to undertake this quest and that he be knighted by Sir Launcelot. Much to the dismay of the woman, who sees him only as a servant, his wishes are granted and the two set out on the adventure.



5 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *At that word Sir Gareth put forth a mighty effort*, Plate XXII in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

Now revealed to the reader (if not yet to his companion) as Sir Gareth, son of the King of Orkney, our hero gallantly fights one enemy after another, proving not only his skill and strength, but also his patience, as the woman – the Lady Lynette, dubbed here “La Demoiselle Sauvage” – repeatedly insults his character and status. Gareth further demonstrates magnanimity and loyalty by sparing his enemies’ lives at the request of the lady and at the promise that they will serve Arthur. Having thus proven his true chivalric nature, the knight and lady reconcile and carry on with the quest (Fig. 4). After a final battle (Fig. 5), Gareth releases Liones from her captor and a happy ending is given to all as the defeated knights are brought together at court, true identities are revealed, and Gareth and Liones are married.

In the revivalist spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism, Forbes’s figures show considerable debt to her artistic predecessors. The numerous images of Gareth (Fig. 6) would no doubt have called to the minds of contemporary



6 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *And then came riding Sir Gareth*, Plate xxvi in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

audiences other popular representations of knights, especially George Frederic Watts's ubiquitous *Sir Galahad* (1862, Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge), which had, by the turn of the century, been reproduced widely in painting, print, and stained glass. Forbes's version follows the iconography set by the elder artist, striking the same balance between the powerful masculinity of an armoured body and a youthful and thoughtful facial expression. Likewise, Liones and Lynette are reminiscent of any number of icons of Aesthetic femininity as filtered through the late work of the Pre-Raphaelites rather than through Whistler. Liones (Fig. 7) seems a clear call back to Rossetti's sensual heroines: the figure's long, flowing red hair circling her head like a halo, white neck revealed by the pose with her head back, and slightly parted pink bow lips all repeat features done memorably in works like *Bocca Baciata* (1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); the flat, decorative background is also a device frequently used by Rossetti.



7 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Lady Liones*, Plate XVI in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)



8 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *La Demoiselle Sauvage*: “You are an uncourteous knight,” said she, Plate XII in *King Arthur’s Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

Lynette (Fig. 8), in appropriate contrast, recalls one of Edward Burne-Jones's more sinister female figures, with heavily shadowed contours in her face and hands that contrast her pale skin and the strong features and slim, angular body that characterize the Aesthetic female figure; compare, for example, his own Arthurian subject *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872–77, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool).⁶² While Rossetti's "fleshly" study of sensual beauty would have been an appropriate source for Forbes to draw on for her depiction of Gareth's true love, Burne-Jones's enchanting *femme fatale* was an equally well-suited model for Gareth's hot-tempered nemesis.

Although the illustrations clearly owe much to their nineteenth-century context, Forbes's text draws specifically on Malory's version of the tale (rather than Tennyson's popular update). However, by choosing to return to the medieval source, Forbes was once again following in the steps of the PRB, who also looked to the past for inspiration.⁶³ *King Arthur's Wood* clearly acknowledges its debt to Malory. The creature that tells the story also appears in the original version as a dwarf who accompanies Gareth on his adventures; in the later story, this character explicitly mentions the poet, telling Myles as he begins his tale: "So the folk still talk of the Great King and his Knights? That is well. I remember to have heard that their feats of arms and great adventures were worthily set forth by a Knight of later days, in the time when the fourth Edward was King in this land."⁶⁴ In addition to lending authority to her narrative voice, Forbes's references to Malory again function to link the colonial artist-author to a long British cultural tradition.

Gareth himself was not a character frequently tackled by artists. Art historian Christine Poulson attributes this partly to the relatively late 1872 publication of Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette," and further argues that artists and their publics viewed the didactic nature of the narrative as being more suitable for children than for their art-purchasing parents.⁶⁵ Indeed, Gareth was an ideal role model for Victorian boys: a true-hearted youth who becomes a man through his modest behaviour and heroic deeds, he embodies the archetype of the "bright boy knight" that emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Positioning Gareth as a role model seems to have been the explicit purpose of Tennyson's poem, which his wife Emily remarked was written to "describe a pattern youth for his boys."⁶⁷ Accordingly, Gareth's story was more often used to decorate the walls of schools than those of art galleries. British artist Mary Sargeant-Florence's 1903–10 frescoes for the Oakham School in Rutland, for example, illustrated the tale using depictions of the schoolboys themselves in the crowd scenes and the identifiable architecture of the school buildings as the setting. *Gareth and Lynette* was also the subject of a series of stained glass windows at Trinity College, Glenalmond, in Scotland. Gareth even became a popular boy's name in the last decades of the century.⁶⁸



9 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Black Knight of the Black Lawn*, Plate xx in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

A quintessential role model, Gareth was, then, an obvious choice for Forbes's children's book, which she dedicated to her son Alec; Alec also served as the model for the illustrations of Myles. Indeed, the framing narrative of *King Arthur's Wood* makes the intended didacticism of Gareth's tale very clear. From the start, the story is positioned as a lesson for Myles: the dwarf tells the boy to pay attention, "for though you are but a simple country lad, you may yet learn something from so shining an example."⁶⁹ And learn he does: on one occasion after another throughout the book, Myles takes inspiration from the knight he so admires. In the final sentences, the ancient dwarf takes credit for his tale's transformation of the boy into a proper gentleman: "I had a hand in making him," he says, "I and Sir Gareth of Orkney."⁷⁰ Published in the year that Alec left for boarding school, Gareth's

coming-of-age story must have resonated with the Forbes family on a personal level.

The lessons of *King Arthur's Wood* circulated beyond the Forbes household however. If, as historian Stephanie Barczewski points out, “the image of the solitary, vulnerable knight confronted with one life-threatening danger after another became one of the most frequently employed symbols of the British imperial experience,”⁷¹ then Gareth’s adventure is matched in Arthurian legend only by the quest for the Holy Grail as a metaphor for and celebration of the imperial project. The bulk of Forbes’s narrative concerns Gareth fighting a sequence of other knights, known as the Black, Green, Red, and Blue Knights, and Sir Ironside, the Red Knight of the Red Lawns (Fig. 9). The brave Gareth’s work is done when the men he has defeated arrive at Camelot to fulfill their promises to abandon their “shameful customs” and unite to serve the king.⁷² Gareth’s conquest and collection of men from across the land, and their union under one strong central force has a clear analogue in the British imperial project, while the clear colour symbolism cannot be ignored in the context of the nineteenth-century science of race. Further details – the Blue Knight’s name is Sir Persante of Inde (India); the Red Knight of the Red Lawns has an elephant tusk as a horn – support this interpretation and, although both descriptions are included in the fifteenth-century Malory version as well, would no doubt have conjured up vague visions of contemporary foes-turned-fellows in the minds of *fin-de-siècle* readers.

One notable feature of the story’s conclusion is the “strange” Sir Ironside’s promise to Gareth and Arthur to abandon his “shameful customs,” and our heroes’ subsequent forgiveness of his previous deeds. These “shameful customs” include hanging the bodies of defeated knights at the entrance to his lands as a warning to those who enter, a practice illustrated by Forbes in a large charcoal drawing (Fig. 10). Forbes represents Gareth and Lynette riding high on horseback through a dark, dense forest; surrounding them are the bodies of several knights hanging from the trees, which emerge gradually out of their dark surroundings to gruesomely surprise the viewer. In the immediate foreground, two large black carrion birds hover over a disembodied head with their claws and beaks at the ready. In contrast, we see Gareth’s reluctance to kill his enemies unless absolutely necessary. The narrative and illustration portray the enemy knight as a barbarian who operates outside the codes of civility maintained by Arthur and his Court. Gareth’s efforts to convince Ironside to abandon these practices reveal the civilizing aims of both Arthur’s Court and the modern British Empire, and by extension, provide a justification for the colonization of other lands and peoples. Gareth’s and Arthur’s generous forgiveness of Ironside’s



10 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Sir Gareth and the Damsel in the Wood Perilous*, Plate XIII in *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (London: Edward Everard, 1904), Imprint no. 152. (Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

previous misdeeds further show that both Court and Empire were built and maintained not only through strength, but mercy. This beneficent ideal, however, also required an imaginative erasure of British involvement in their own “barbaric” practices.

The theme of a harmonious, united empire underlined in the conclusion of *King Arthur's Wood* runs through Arthurian legend. Present in earlier versions of the tales, it was nevertheless one element of the story that required considerable adaptation to its nineteenth-century context, especially in light of contemporary concerns about race, ethnicity, and ancestry in the extended British World. Specifically, the “real” Arthur – a Celtic leader who made his name fighting *against* the Saxons – and his followers had to be smoothly integrated into the popular mythology that glorified Anglo-Saxons as the heroic ancestors of modern Britons. This racial conversion was an important feature of the adaptation of medieval sources for modern times, and key to making them palatable to a nineteenth-century public for whom definitions of Anglo-Saxonness, whiteness, and Britishness were frequently

conflated. Nineteenth-century adaptors of the Arthurian stories justified their use of the Celtic Arthur as a national hero by rewriting history as fiction to show that his revolt against the Saxons ended in peaceful reconciliation and a harmonious, integrated community that was strongly united against the outside world, a resolution that would no doubt have called to mind the current British World.⁷³ As a Canadian who had previously found her membership in this community contested, perhaps the story held particular resonance for Forbes.

Conclusion

Two decades after her too-early death from uterine cancer in 1912, Canadian critic Albert Robson described Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes as “a brilliant painter and etcher.” He qualified this praise, however, by remarking that her work “shows little Canadian background, and though by birth a Canadian, she takes her place as an eminent English artist.”⁷⁴ Robson succinctly expresses the frustration of categorizing Forbes and her work within the traditional boundaries of nationalist art historical narratives. In her later career, this “wanderer at heart” made a shift from an Impressionist style that was characterized as “foreign” to an engagement with historical and artistic traditions that were specifically identified as British. In light of this shift, *King Arthur’s Wood* might be seen as a claim of belonging in the British World and the British art world made by a colonial-born artist who had begun her career in a liminal position in those same worlds. Viewing issues of race, culture, and heritage through the lens of Victorian medievalism, Forbes effectively resolved the confusion about her identity that marked her early career by looking to the past.

The contemporary popularity of Pre-Raphaelitism did not ensure art historical longevity for the movement. Considered unfashionable for much of the twentieth century, historical and literary subjects were seen as overly narrative when art was moving towards abstraction, as sentimental when shock was valued, and as overtly anti-modern when urban modernity was prized above all.⁷⁵ Art historians Elizabeth Prettejohn and Tim Barringer have both noted that a critical and popular distaste for these subjects appeared at the time of the First World War, and continued throughout the twentieth century, a circumstance that they attribute to the powerful hold of modernism – and especially French modernism – on art historical writing.⁷⁶ When seen in context, however, it is clear that Forbes’s turn to the past was operating within a contemporary art historical discourse that was engaging with the definition and redefinition of what modern British art was, what it should be, and what she, as a Canadian, could contribute to that tradition. Indeed, this concerted attempt to establish a national school was so successful

that it was to its own detriment when the tide turned once again in the early twentieth century. The victory of French modernism as the only modernism of value meant that this British art was dismissed as provincial and unimportant, an attitude expressed by the painter Vanessa Bell, who (echoing Whistler's own distinction between "the artists" and "the British") wrote that the only cure for what she perceived as the dismal state of the British art world would be for "the English to get outside of their island pretty often."⁷⁷

Likewise, the after-history of *King Arthur's Wood* is a sad one. In Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Sir Gareth dies in the final tale: killed by Launcelot accidentally, his death precipitates the dismantling of the Round Table, and the eventual fall of Arthur's realm. A decade after the publication of *King Arthur's Wood*, nineteenth-century medievalism itself fell casualty to the First World War, which was ultimately, as Mark Girouard has called it, "a nightmare parody" of the ideals of Victorian medievalism.⁷⁸ Like Myles, Alec Forbes appears to have learned the lessons taught by Sir Gareth of Orkney: in 1915, at the age of twenty-one, he left architecture school and enthusiastically enlisted in the British Army. After a year spent in an officer's post in Britain, Alec was sent to join the fighting on the continent. He was killed after only three weeks at the Western Front.

Stanhope Forbes marked this sad occasion by donating one of his late wife's Shakespearean oil paintings to the young National Gallery of Canada, along with a sizable collection of watercolours, drawings, and etchings, with the agreement that the purchase price of the painting would be given to YMCA and Red Cross war efforts. *The Winter's Tale: When Daffodils Begin to Peer* (1906) (Fig. 11) was received in the land of her birth with excitement: the exchange was reported in the press, which expressed happiness that the work of this "Canadian girl" was being returned to her home, with one reporter writing that "it is gratifying to know that the National Gallery of Canada now possesses a fine representation of the work of one of its greatest artists."⁷⁹ With this act, Forbes united the British World through an art object that celebrated a shared white, Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage. At this heightened moment of shared imperial identity between the two countries, he was sure, as he later wrote to the Vancouver Art Gallery when he donated his wife's 1905 *The Woodcutter's Little Daughter* – yet another medievalist painting – that the Canadian "public will love it."⁸⁰

But perhaps Forbes should have not been so confident: the First World War also transformed the relationship between Canada and Britain significantly by providing the opportunity for a uniquely Canadian identity to be expressed on the international stage. This had ramifications in the Canadian art world, which shifted away from the internationalism of the pre-war period to see the rise in prominence of the Group of Seven and the founding of a discipline that could be called "Canadian art history" with



11 | Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Winter's Tale: When Daffodils Begin to Peer*, 1906, oil on canvas, 123.9 × 98.4 cm, Purchased 1916, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. (Photo: © National Gallery of Canada)

the 1925 publication of Newton MacTavish's *The Fine Arts in Canada*. It is no coincidence that it was at this same time that Canadian women began to be written out of art historical narratives. This erasure was partly because they were women at a time when the rugged masculinity of Canadian art was held up and celebrated in comparison to what was seen as an overly feminized pre-war tradition. However, the omission of a woman like Forbes from Canadian art history was not simply because she was not seen as the right kind of *artist*, but also partly because as an expatriate, she was not the right kind of *Canadian*. The nationalist approach to Canadian art history discounts the work of artists who worked in the transnational context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism. A model of study that examines their work within the context of the "British World," rather than as Canadians or Britons dismantles these boundaries and provides an expanded field of analysis that allows for the inclusion of artists like Forbes who might otherwise slip through the cracks.

NOTES

- 1 Review of *King Arthur's Wood*, *Studio* 33 (1905): 270.
 - 2 The book has been digitized by the Hypatia Trust and is available for online purchase. Proceeds from the sale of the book support the work of the Trust. Accessed 30 Sept. 2013, <http://hypatia-trust.org.uk/2013/09/10/king-arthurs-wood-available-again-after-109-years/>
 - 3 Mrs. Lionel BIRCH, *Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes, A.R.W.S.* (London: Cassell and Company, 1906), 61.
 - 4 The general facts of Forbes's life are recorded in a dual biography of the artist and her husband; the author, Constance Birch (writing as Mrs. Lionel Birch), was a student at the Newlyn School of Painting, which was founded and run by the artist and her husband (not to be confused with the informal "Newlyn School" group). Forbes herself wrote the chapter covering the years before her marriage; the section about her also includes reprinted articles and reviews, as well as commentary on her life and work written by Birch. A modern biography of the artist, written by Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, adds considerably to the information contained in the Birch biography. Unless otherwise noted, the dates, titles, locations, and exhibition details given for Forbes's work throughout are those listed by Cook and Hardie in the catalogue raisonné that accompanies their biography. See Judith COOK and Melissa HARDIE, *Singing from the Walls: The Life and Art of Elizabeth Forbes* (Clifton, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2000).
- Forbes's life can also be traced through the large archive of material left by her husband, now in the collection of the Tate Gallery Archives (London, UK). While her own letters were burned after her death, hundreds of his letters are extant, and give insight into the couple's professional and personal relationships in the years leading up to their marriage.
- 5 M.W., "Lady Artists," *Lady's Pictorial* (April 1891): S26.

- 6 Quoted in COOK and HARDIE, *Singing from the Walls*, 94.
- 7 BIRCH, *Stanhope Forbes*, 60.
- 8 Ibid., 55 and 62.
- 9 Elizabeth ARMSTRONG FORBES, "On the Slope of a Southern Hill," *Studio* 18 (1900): 25–34, and "An April Holiday," *Studio* 43 (1908): 191–99.
- 10 Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes to Mrs. Brooke Alder, 18 Dec. year unknown. Elizabeth Forbes artist file, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.
- 11 Marion H. DIXON, "The Art of Mrs. Stanhope Forbes," *Lady's Realm* (1904–05).
- 12 Geoff QUILLEY and Kay Dian KRIZ, eds., "Introduction: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660–1830," *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 6.
- 13 For Canadian approaches to the theoretical model of the British World, see especially the edited works of Phillip BUCKNER and R. Francis DOUGLAS, including the collections *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006) and *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005).
For art historical work dealing with similar issues, see, for example, Julie CODELL, ed., *Transculturation in British Art, 1770–1930* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012); Tim BARRINGER, "A White Atlantic? The Idea of American Art in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 9 (2009): 1–26; Tim BARRINGER, Geoff QUILLEY, and Douglas FORDHAM, eds., *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); and QUILLEY and KRIZ, *An Economy of Colour*.
- 14 See especially Radhika MOHANRAM, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- 15 BIRCH, *Stanhope Forbes*, 60.
- 16 Anne KOVAL, "The 'Artists' Have Come Out and the 'British' Remain: The Whistler Faction at the Society of British Artists," in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 93.
- 17 Studies of Forbes and the Newlyn School include Tom CROSS, *The Shining Sands: Artists in Newlyn and St. Ives, 1880–1930* (Tiverton, Devon: Westcountry Books, 1994); Caroline FOX, *Stanhope Forbes and the Newlyn School* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1993); Caroline FOX and Francis GREENACRE, *Painting in Newlyn, 1880–1930* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985); and Caroline FOX and Francis GREENACRE, *Artists of the Newlyn School, 1880–1900* (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Art Galleries, 1979).
- 18 Anna Greutzner ROBINS, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
- 19 Quoted in ROBINS, *A Fragile Modernism*, 36. A decade later, critic Evelyn Blantyre Simpson again turned to the older artist as a point of comparison in his praise of Armstrong's 1884 etching *The Girl at the Window*, proclaiming that: "To find one to measure it against, you must turn to one of Whistler's Venice etchings" ("The Paintings and Etchings of Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes," *Studio* 4:24 [1895]: 191).
- 20 And even Forbes's contribution was, in 1885 London, seen as too explicitly un-British: the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest declined to purchase the work, claiming that it was "too positively the outcome of a foreign school" (quoted in COOK and HARDIE, *Singing from the Walls*, 72). Forbes had to wait until 1889 to have his *The Health of*

the *Bride* accepted by the Trust, which in turn allowed him the financial stability to marry Armstrong, three years after their initial engagement. Perhaps this initial rejection explains some of Forbes's resistance to the perception of foreignness in the work he was associated with.

- 21 Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, 26 Dec. 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/89, Tate Gallery Archive (TGA).
- 22 Forbes to Armstrong, 23 Nov. 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/12, TGA; and Forbes to Armstrong, 6 Dec. 1886, Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/18, TGA.
- 23 Forbes to Armstrong, ca. 4 Apr. 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/100, TGA.
- 24 Forbes to Armstrong, 14 Apr. 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/107, TGA.
- 25 Forbes to Armstrong, ca. 4 Apr. 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/100, TGA.
- 26 Forbes to Armstrong, 23 Nov. 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/12, TGA.
- 27 Gabriel P. WEISBERG, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 7–8. For studies of the British reaction to French Impressionism (both negative and positive), see Kenneth MCCONKEY, *Impressionism in Britain* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1995); Kenneth MCCONKEY, *British Impressionism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989); and Anna Greutzner ROBINS, “Two Reactions to French Painting in Britain,” in *Post-Impressionism: Cross-Currents in European Painting*, ed. John House and Mary Anne Stevens (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1979), 178–82.
- 28 KOVAL, “The ‘Artists’ Have Come Out and the ‘British’ Remain,” 93–94.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 92.
- 30 ROBINS, *A Fragile Modernism*, 34.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 32 Quoted in KOVAL, “The ‘Artists’ Have Come Out and the ‘British’ Remain,” 107.
- 33 Forbes to Armstrong, ca. August/September 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, 9015/2/2/61, TGA.
- 34 In addition to innumerable studies on specific artists and authors, solid general surveys of the medievalist revival in Britain include classic texts such as Mark GIROUARD, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); and Alice CHANDLER, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).
- 35 Cecilia MORGAN, “A Happy Holiday”: *English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 109. This was also true of American travellers to Britain: see especially Christopher MULVEY, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Alex ZWERDLING, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).
- 36 FORBES, “An April Holiday,” 197.
- 37 Emily MURPHY, *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (Toronto, 1902), 48.
- 38 ZWERDLING, *Improvised Europeans*, 34–35.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 44–45; see also MULVEY, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 267.
- 40 See Katie PICKLES, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
- 41 Catherine HALL, “At Home with History: Macaulay and the *History of England*,” in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 36.

- 42 Eric HOBBSBAWM and Terence RANGER, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 43 Inga BRYDEN, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 6.
- 44 Tim BARRINGER, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 13. I employ the term “Pre-Raphaelitism” throughout for consistency, but Elizabeth Prettejohn makes a convincing case to subsume these later developments in British art under the umbrella of Aestheticism (Introduction to *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999], 2–3), while John Christian has called the artists who worked with these subjects and in these styles the “Last Romantics” (*The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art, Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer* [London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1989]).
- 45 Tim BARRINGER, “‘Not a “Modern” as the Word Is Now Understood’? Byam Shaw, Imperialism, and the Poetics of Professional Society,” in *English Art, 1860–1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 72.
- 46 BARRINGER, “‘Not a “Modern” as the Word is Now Understood’?,” 76.
- 47 Julie CODELL, “The Artist Colonized: Holman Hunt’s ‘Bio-History’, Masculinity, Nationalism, and the English School,” in *Re-Framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Ellen Harding (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 221–25. See also BARRINGER, “‘Not a “Modern” as the Word is Now Understood’?,” 76–77; and Laurel BRADLEY, “The ‘Englishness’ of Pre-Raphaelite Painting: A Critical Review,” in *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment*, ed. Margaretta Frederick Watson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 199–208.
- 48 “Houses of Today,” *The World*, 10 Sept. 1907. On the popularity of Pre-Raphaelitism in the extended British World, see David LATHAM, ed., *Scarlet Hunters: Pre-Raphaelitism in Canada* (Newcastle, ON: Penumbra Press, 1998); Katharine A. LOCHNAN, Douglas E. SCHOENHERR, and Carole SILVER, eds., *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and his Circle from Canadian Collections* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1993); and the essays in Margaretta FREDERICK WATSON, ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).
- 49 Stephanie BARCZEWSKI, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.
- 50 BIRCH, *Stanhope Forbes*, 58–59.
- 51 Christine POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art, 1840–1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 9–12.
- 52 The Kelmscott edition of *Le Morte Darthur* was ultimately only published in 1913, after the deaths of both Morris and Burne-Jones.
- 53 Muriel WHITAKER, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 259–65.
- 54 In addition to Forbes, these women include Julia Margaret Cameron, Eleanor Fortesque-Brickdale, Jessie M. King, and Florence Harrison, who all produced elaborate editions of the legends, some on more than one occasion (in 1875, 1905 and 1911, 1903 and 1904, and 1912 and 1914, respectively). Debra Mancoff includes a list of

- published illustrated books with Arthurian subjects, but does not include Forbes's iteration. See Debra MANCOFF, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 330–31. See also WHITAKER, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, Chapter II.
- 55 This exhibition, entitled *Model Children and Other People*, included over sixty works and a catalogue that featured a short essay written by Forbes herself (*Catalogue of an Exhibition of Water-Colours, entitled Model Children and Other People, By Mrs. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.W.S.* [London: The Leicester Galleries and Ernest Brown and Phillips, 1904]).
- 56 Jan MARSH and Pamela GERRISH NUNN, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1997), 54.
- 57 BARCZEWSKI, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 5–6; POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail*, 21–22.
- 58 MANCOFF, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 3–4; POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail*, 3–4.
- 59 GIROUARD, *The Return to Camelot*, 220–26.
- 60 BARCZEWSKI, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 214–23.
- 61 Ibid., 14.
- 62 Forbes would presumably have been familiar with Burne-Jones's work, given that his *King Cophetua and the Beggar Girl* (1884) was exhibited at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889, where Forbes won a medal for her own work.
- 63 MANCOFF, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 178; POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail*, 77.
- 64 FORBES, *King Arthur's Wood*, 24.
- 65 POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail*, 68–70.
- 66 The phrase is Tennyson's, used to describe a young Sir Galahad, but taken up by Debra Mancoff to describe a larger subset of Arthurian imagery, including representations of Gareth. See Debra MANCOFF, *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend Through Victorian Eyes* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 102.
- 67 Quoted in POULSON, *The Quest for the Grail*, 68.
- 68 Ibid., 68–69 and 117; GIROUARD, *The Return to Camelot*, 184; and WHITAKER, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, 311.
- 69 FORBES, *King Arthur's Wood*, 25.
- 70 Ibid., 60.
- 71 BARCZEWSKI, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 215.
- 72 FORBES, *King Arthur's Wood*, 56–57.
- 73 BARCZEWSKI, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 144–50; and BRYDEN, *Reinventing King Arthur*, 34–35.
- 74 Albert ROBSON, *Canadian Landscape Painters* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1932), 92.
- 75 CHRISTIAN, *The Last Romantics*, 18.
- 76 PRETTEJOHN, Introduction to *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 6; and BARRINGER, “Not a “Modern” as the Word Is Now Understood?,” 64–65.
- 77 Quoted in CHRISTIAN, *The Last Romantics*, 20.
- 78 GIROUARD, *The Return to Camelot*, 289.
- 79 “Group of Pictures to National Art Gallery,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 Jan. 1917.
- 80 Stanhope Forbes to the Vancouver Art Gallery, 9 Mar. 1934. Elizabeth Forbes artist file, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

Une artiste canadienne dans la cour du roi Arthur : Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes et l'invention coloniale de la tradition britannique

SAMANTHA BURTON

En 1904, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes (1859–1912), peintre et graveuse née au Canada, publie à Londres un livre-cadeau de luxe pour enfants. Intitulé « *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* » (« la forêt du roi Arthur : un conte de fées »), ce livre, inspiré de l'histoire de Gareth de Sir Thomas Malory, est acclamé par la critique. Malgré les origines coloniales de l'auteure, l'œuvre incarne les traditions typiquement britanniques que sont les légendes arthuriennes et le Préraphaélisme fin de siècle. En effet, le livre représente peut-être l'engagement le plus soutenu de la part d'une artiste canadienne envers les débats entourant la race, la culture et l'empire au Royaume-Uni ainsi que le monde de l'art britannique au tournant du ^{xxi}^e siècle. L'ouvrage est également très révélateur de la position de l'artiste à l'égard de ces polémiques. Cette approche ouvertement britannique est d'autant plus remarquable que Mme Forbes passe une grande partie de sa jeunesse sans domicile fixe et entretient, durant les cinq premières années de sa carrière, des liens étroits avec J.A.M. Whistler, artiste controversé antibritannique. Un examen de l'œuvre *King Arthur's Wood* sous l'angle de ces allégeances changeantes permet de mettre au jour un aspect peu étudié de l'œuvre de l'artiste. Il donne également la possibilité de repousser les frontières disciplinaires de l'histoire de l'art des femmes canadiennes durant la période précédant la Première Guerre mondiale, et ce, en situant le champ artistique dans le cadre d'un « monde britannique » élargi.

Née en Ontario en 1859, Elizabeth Armstrong quitte le Canada quatorze ans plus tard pour aller étudier les arts au Royaume-Uni, où elle finit par s'établir de façon permanente, au terme de longues années à voyager en Europe et en Amérique du Nord et après son mariage avec l'artiste Stanhope Forbes. De son vivant, elle jouira d'une solide réputation des deux côtés de l'Atlantique. D'ailleurs, Armstrong et ses critiques reconnaîtront ce style de vie cosmopolite dans des lettres, des articles et d'autres sources, et souligneront fréquemment l'ambiguïté de sa nationalité, la présentant tantôt comme une artiste canadienne, américaine, ou britannique, ou simplement comme une « nomade ».

Dans les années 1880, la participation d'Armstrong au groupe d'avant-garde « Whistler circle » sème une grande controverse. Soutenant le

point de vue esthétique de J.A.M. Whistler et partageant un intérêt pour l'impressionnisme français, ce groupe à caractère non officiel rassemble des artistes qui, tout comme Armstrong et Whistler, sont des expatriés vivant au Royaume-Uni. Durant cette période, les scènes rurales et les représentations de personnages féminins esthétiques décoratifs dans les œuvres d'Armstrong présentent une ressemblance marquée avec le style et l'intention des membres du Whistler circle. Or, cette similarité n'est pas toujours bien perçue. Même lorsqu'ils tentent de se tailler une réputation et de faire accepter leur style comme étant l'école dominante au Royaume-Uni, Armstrong et ses collègues se heurtent à l'hostilité de la critique, du public et du milieu artistique, qui perçoivent dans leurs œuvres un caractère étranger. L'un de ces artistes antagonistes est le futur mari d'Armstrong, dont l'école « Newlyn » prône un naturalisme plus conservateur que le style national moderne. À ce titre, les liens personnels et professionnels qu'entretient Armstrong avec le Whistler circle et le groupe de Forbes durant les premières années de sa carrière placent l'artiste en plein centre des débats contemporains sur le style artistique et l'identité nationale au Royaume-Uni.

Au cours des décennies suivantes, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes apaise les vives appréhensions du public à l'égard de son identité et de son œuvre en abandonnant la modernité convenue de ses collègues du Whistle circle pour se tourner vers le passé. Néanmoins, les changements survenant dans le monde des arts font en sorte que l'artiste d'origine canadienne demeure au cœur des débats sur la « britannicité » de l'art britannique. Plus précisément, *King Arthur's Wood*, de par son thème littéraire et son style visiblement inspiré de prédécesseurs tels que Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones et George Watts, s'inscrit dans un mouvement artistique considéré par les contemporains comme étant typiquement britannique : le Préraphaélisme fin de siècle. Ce retour en force éclectique des styles et des sujets propres au milieu du siècle est une tentative délibérée – et très réussie – d'instaurer une tradition artistique nationale authentique, « du terroir ». Le livre est aussi manifestement influencé par une tendance plus large, celle du médiévalisme victorien. La célébration de l'époque médiévale et du début de l'ère moderne, considérées comme des périodes de stabilité des classes, des genres et des races, constitue une réponse réactionnaire à l'alarmante confusion sociale du XIX^e siècle et évoque une riche mythologie capable de réunir un public de plus en plus hétérogène autour d'un héritage culturel commun. Pour les Blancs coloniaux membres du monde britannique élargi, comme Forbes, l'engagement à l'égard de ces récits populaires inspirés par l'histoire et l'histoire de l'art sert également à affirmer leur propre place dans cette lignée.

Le thème arthurien exploité dans *King Arthur's Wood* occupe une place importante dans ces discours. À cette époque centrée sur l'unification, le roi Arthur devient une icône nationaliste pratique, alors que le mythe de

Camelot sert de solide modèle de fondation pour l'Empire britannique du XIX^e siècle. Le caractère essentiellement fictif de l'histoire entourant le roi Arthur et l'âge d'or de son règne n'est pas un obstacle à l'utilisation métaphorique de ces récits. Au contraire, le manque de sources historiques fiables rend ces légendes facilement adaptables et extrêmement durables.

En particulier, la légende de Sir Gareth, adaptée par Forbes, est employée encore plus ouvertement à titre de métaphore pour symboliser le projet impérial et la célébration de ce dernier. La plus grande partie du récit décrit le combat de Gareth contre d'autres chevaliers, alors que celui-ci tente de les convaincre d'abandonner leurs coutumes barbares et de les rassembler sous la grande force unificatrice de la Table ronde. Le thème de la réconciliation entre divers peuples et de la création d'un empire harmonieux et uni contre le monde extérieur, mis en relief dans *King Arthur's Wood*, aurait sans doute évoqué pour les gens de l'époque l'état actuel du monde britannique. Cette histoire revêt une signification particulière pour Armstrong qui, en tant que Canadienne, avait auparavant trouvé sa place dans cette communauté contestée.

Si Elizabeth Armstrong centre sa pratique sur des traditions historiques et artistiques résolument britanniques, tentant ainsi de résoudre les premières interrogations sur la place qui lui revient dans le monde de l'art britannique, la carrière transnationale de l'artiste présente néanmoins des difficultés persistantes pour l'historien de l'art du XIX^e siècle. Notamment, sa vie et son œuvre mettent en évidence les lacunes fondamentales des rouages nationalistes du récit de l'histoire de l'art moderne au Canada. Bien que son lieu de naissance nous permette aujourd'hui de considérer véritablement Armstrong comme une *artiste* canadienne, il demeure beaucoup plus complexe de déterminer si l'on peut désigner une œuvre telle que *King Arthur's Wood* comme étant de l'*art* canadien. Par ailleurs, il est encore plus ardu de juger de la pertinence et de l'utilité de ces catégories lorsqu'on étudie un artiste travaillant dans le contexte transnational propre à l'impérialisme du XIX^e siècle et du début du XX^e siècle. Il est donc nécessaire d'adopter un cadre méthodologique qui prend en considération ces frontières mouvantes et qui tient compte du fait que les artistes comme Elizabeth Armstrong, plutôt que d'être confinés à des limites territoriales, évoluent dans des réseaux qui s'étendent au-delà de l'Atlantique et à l'échelle du territoire que l'on allait nommer le « monde britannique ». Pour saisir le modèle théorique du monde britannique, il faut visualiser un ensemble de sites représentés par des points mobiles, répartis sur un réseau élargi formé de connexions (souvent inégales) entre les classes, les races et des aspects sociaux, culturels, économiques, linguistiques et autres. Étant donné la situation précaire du Canada entre la Confédération et la Première Guerre mondiale, ce pays offre

des pistes particulièrement intéressantes pour explorer de nouveaux modèles permettant de concevoir l'histoire de l'art autrement que dans un cadre nationaliste classique.

Le livre *King Arthur's Wood* ainsi que son auteure constituent des objets d'analyse idéaux dans ce contexte. Elizabeth Armstrong, ainsi qu'un grand nombre de ses collègues durant la période précédant la Première Guerre mondiale, n'occupent pas la place qui leur revient dans l'histoire de l'art canadien. En effet, non seulement n'entraient-elles pas dans la bonne catégorie d'*artiste* en raison de leur statut de femmes, mais aussi n'appartenaient-elles pas, en tant qu'expatriées, à la bonne classe de *Canadiens*. Notre modèle d'étude, qui permet d'examiner leurs œuvres sous l'angle du « monde britannique » plutôt que de les considérer comme étant soit « canadiennes » soit « britanniques », abolit ces frontières et propose un champ d'analyse élargi incluant des artistes qui seraient autrement négligés.



Detail, Ishbel Aberdeen, "Guisachan, B.C.," 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

“Kodaking and Being Kodaked”: The Guisachan Album of Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen

CAROLYN MACHARDY

Late in the evening of 14 October 1891, Lord and Lady Aberdeen took possession of the 480-acre property in British Columbia's Mission Valley (now the Central Okanagan) that they had purchased, sight unseen, the year before, during the course of their first visit to Canada in 1890. Until that point they had had no connection with Canada. John Campbell Gordon (1847–1934), first Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair, and his wife Ishbel Maria, née Marjoribanks (1857–1938)¹ married in 1877, creating a “loving, progressive and activist union,”² as historian Veronica Strong-Boag elegantly puts it, and, both as a couple and as individuals, they engaged with various political and social causes. They divided their time among Haddo House, Lord Aberdeen's ancestral Aberdeenshire estate in northeastern Scotland, Edinburgh, and London and spent a brief period as viceregal couple in Ireland in 1886, returning there for a longer period from 1906 to 1915. The period of the Aberdeens' intense engagement with Canada falls between the two Irish postings, beginning with their cross-Canada railway journey in 1890, and the purchase of their first property in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. The next year, following their visit to the property that they named Guisachan, and enamoured of the Okanagan's rich possibilities for fruit growing, they purchased a second property, the Coldstream Ranch in Vernon in the north end of the Valley. There they planned to sell some of the land for lots that could be used for planting orchards on a large scale. Two years later, in 1893, they were appointed Governor General and viceregal consort to Canada, a decision prompted in part, one assumes, by their well-publicized business ventures in British Columbia and obvious interest in the country. The end of their viceregal tenure in Ottawa in 1898 did not, however, signal the end of their sustained personal and financial commitment to the Okanagan and Canada: that ended when they sold the Guisachan farm in 1903 and the Coldstream Ranch in 1906, both sales prompted by accumulating financial losses and their inability to handle the enormous financial burden by themselves.³ This paper focuses on the ten days the Aberdeens spent at Guisachan in 1891, a period marked by their optimistic faith in a glorious future for commercial fruit farming in the Okanagan Valley.

The Aberdeens arrived at Guisachan, named after the Inverness-shire estate belonging to Lady Aberdeen's family, the Marjoribanks, following a four-hour boat trip down Lake Okanagan from Vernon. Ishbel noted in her journal that "[after landing] we all walked on the two miles to Guisachan and took possession of our new domain by moonlight."⁴ They were pleasantly surprised to find that while they had expected "a flat plain with bare hills in the distance, and a few trees and bushes and a house set down in the middle of the flat," they found themselves instead "in the midst of hills looking more like Guisachan hills than any others that we have seen in Canada."⁵ Years later, their daughter Marjorie, who had accompanied them, recalled that her parents "hurried like gleeful children, along with myself, aged ten, to see their very own play-house; Guisachan, B.C."⁶

It seems likely that Marjorie, drawing on memories from nearly sixty years earlier, conflated her 1891 visit to Guisachan with her parents' Christmas gift that same year of a "holiday cottage," complete with garden, on the Haddo estate in Scotland.⁷ Still, the suggestion that Guisachan was a playhouse is intriguing, especially when set in dialogue with the several dozen Kodak photographs that Lady Aberdeen took during the course of their stay. Although Marjorie did not reveal what she meant by calling it a "play-house" – whether a theatre or "a toy house for children to play in"⁸ – I engage with the idea that, for the Aberdeens, Guisachan served as both. By linking the new home-away-from-home to the childhood place where she and her siblings had spent a significant portion of each year, Ishbel created the idea that the second Guisachan was like a toy house set in a garden, but in this case a colonial one; far from the parental home and paternal gaze, it was a place where family rituals could be explored in a more neutral setting. At the same time, the property also strayed into the second meaning of playhouse, in that Guisachan, BC, was very much like a theatre set for the staging of these rituals.

The Kodak photographs that are the focus of this paper were taken back to Britain where they were sorted and labelled and placed in various family albums for the consumption of future generations of both the Aberdeens and the Marjoribanks. In some cases, there are several copies of particular photographs and they appear in different albums. In 1893, Lady Aberdeen included twenty-one of them plus one watercolour in the two chapters devoted to the Guisachan Farm, as they called it, in *Through Canada with a Kodak*, the public – and published – account of the Aberdeens' 1890 and 1891 cross-Canada trips; within the book, (hereafter *Through Canada*), the role of the images was primarily to provide visual anchors for Lady Aberdeen's enthusiastic narrative.⁹ As discrete entities in their own right, the photographs have received little scholarly attention.¹⁰ Lady Aberdeen was an

amateur photographer and as many of the photographs in the album reveal, she struggled with the technical challenges of early Kodak photography. Her difficulty in controlling light, particularly its seeping in at the edges, is clearly visible in some of the Kodaks. *The Guisachan Album* has always been kept in the family home whose close proximity to the North Sea has resulted in some foxing of the photographs themselves and of the paper they are mounted on.

In this paper, I argue that a close reading of the Guisachan snapshots assembled by Lady Aberdeen in an album entitled *Kodak Snaps by IA [Ishbel Aberdeen] at Guisachan BC 1891 and some large views of Coldstream Ranch Vernon BC* (hereafter *The Guisachan Album*)¹¹ reveals information about the Aberdeens' first colonizing venture in the Okanagan Valley that is not disclosed in the two chapters on Guisachan in *Through Canada*. In the book, Ishbel offers a brisk and buoyant chronicle of the holiday, noting events, people, and details of the house and farm, interlaced with observations on the price of hired labour, future plans for growing fruit, and thoughts on "what class of settlers are likely to succeed in this part of British Columbia."¹² As opposed to this travel narrative aimed at the general public, the photographs, many of them not included in *Through Canada*, contain a personal, private narrative about family relationships that was not intended for public consumption. My discussion singles out those photographs that frame Guisachan Farm as a site where carefully chosen snippets of recent Marjoribanks family history could be re-envisioned and inscribed on the newly acquired land. As historian of photography Val Williams points out, "photography gave [aristocratic women] the opportunity both to identify a personal history of their own families and to place those families precisely within a certain schema. A family, once photographed, assumes a particular reality, fixed in time by its portrayer, solid against a portico or a stone balustrade, its class and its preoccupations firmly established."¹³ Following Rosalind Krauss's comments on family photography, I contend that in Lady Aberdeen's hands, the camera was "a projective tool, part of the theatre that [she constructed] to convince [herself] that the family was together and whole."¹⁴

The Aberdeens' decision to visit Canada in the autumn of 1890 is framed by Ishbel in the opening paragraph of *Through Canada* as a matter of "our desires, coupled with doctor's advice."¹⁵ She gingerly sidesteps mention of the nervous breakdown she had suffered in late 1889 and avoids any suggestion that there might have been an ulterior motive to their visit. There were other benefits besides health ones to the Canadian sojourn; as historian Marjory Harper notes, such a trip would "at least remove her from the cauldron of Liberal politics at home" and at the same time allow the philanthropic Lady Aberdeen to investigate emigration possibilities as a "solution to

socio-economic problems in Britain.”¹⁶ However, despite these compelling reasons, the crucial determining factor underlying the Aberdeens’ trip to Canada was Ishbel’s personal commitment to establishing the elder of her two younger remittance-men brothers, Coutts Marjoribanks (1860–1924), within reach of both Empire and the Presbyterian Church.¹⁷ Coutts had been managing his father’s cattle ranch in North Dakota and, by 1890, it was evident that the ranch was failing. With increasing concern within the Marjoribanks family over Coutts’s managerial abilities, it was hardly a coincidence that the Aberdeens decided to visit Canada at this point. In my view, the purchase of the Guisachan farm in October 1890, following a meeting with Coutts in Winnipeg, and his subsequent relocation to British Columbia in late 1890, was a carefully orchestrated attempt by Lady Aberdeen to re-script the biography-to-date of the brother whom she fondly called “Couttsy.” The Guisachan farm, two hundred acres of which would be used for commercial fruit-growing with the rest used for mixed-farming,¹⁸ would provide the ideal site for rehabilitating Coutts and his fortunes, and *The Guisachan Album*, compiled by Ishbel for the family, would offer documentary evidence of the success of this endeavour. However, reading *The Guisachan Album* over a century after it was compiled is complicated not only by the fact that, as Nancy Martha West has pointed out, “family photography does not seek to be understood by all,”¹⁹ but also by the fact that we know relatively little about Coutts Marjoribanks; he is a shadowy figure, only partly illuminated through biographical fragments and scattered anecdotes. Thus, if *The Guisachan Album* is to be read as a document that attempts to restore Coutts’s reputation within the family, some piecing together of these biographical fragments and untangling the strands that link him to his sister Ishbel in the years around 1890 is needed. Interrogating this album and Coutts’s centrality within it “underscore[s] the point,” as Martha Langford writes in her study of photographic albums, “that [an] album is only a fragment of a larger family history, definitive (if at all) temporarily.”²⁰

Coutts Marjoribanks was three years younger than Ishbel and the closest in age of her siblings. He was the third (and second surviving) son of Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks who became the first Baron Tweedmouth in 1881.²¹ He was educated at Harrow, served as a lieutenant in the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, and then, at the age of twenty-four or twenty-five, was sent to manage his father’s ranch in Towner, North Dakota.²² Possibly his father thought both he and his younger brother Archie, who was sent to manage a ranch in Texas, were suited to this type of work, since Aberdeen Angus cattle were raised on the Guisachan estate in the Highlands. Coutts moved to North Dakota in late 1884 or early 1885 with substantial start-up capital and an annual allowance provided by his father, and by October of 1889 had

amassed nearly 1,000 acres.²³ When the Aberdeens visited him in July 1887, Ishbel wrote in her journal that she felt "quite a pang to find how much of an American and of a ranchman he'd become," and she lamented the fact that her brother, whom she described as "a good straightforward old thing," had taken steps to become an American citizen.²⁴

It is during this 1887 visit, I suggest, that one finds the seeds of the plan to relocate Coutts somewhere within the embrace of Empire and Church. Having noted that her brother was adapting to life in the American West, Lady Aberdeen then sets out a major concern: she is uneasy about the impact of American frontier culture on the spiritual and moral life of her twenty-seven-year-old bachelor brother. She writes that Coutts had gone to church service with them twice on 3 July "but we were not successful in our churches – this morning the Episcopal one was horrid." She then notes that:

We have not yet hit upon much religious life in America – I suppose because we do not know where to find it – but there seems such whole-sale indifference, such unconsciousness of the v. meaning of truth, honesty, honour. Anything to make money. As my brother says, if there is no money to be made by any given pursuit it will not be looked at. No game or anything is ever played at except as a means of winning money.²⁵

The "steady significance of faith,"²⁶ as Veronica Strong-Boag calls it, defined the Aberdeens individually and as a couple. Ishbel's observation on the dearth of religious life in North Dakota was not simply an unvarnished comment on her part; rather I suggest that she was under no illusion as to Coutts's potential to lapse into what she deemed an irresponsible and immoral lifestyle, a concern that is supported by anecdotal accounts of Coutts's drinking and carousing in the saloons of North Dakota.²⁷ Within two years of the Aberdeens' visit, Coutts's ranch was failing amid accusations by his father that he was living too extravagant a lifestyle and neglecting his ranching duties. Despite receiving a shipment of Aberdeen Angus cattle from the Guisachan estate in Scotland, sent by his mother,²⁸ by early 1889, as historian Larry McFarlane has noted, Coutts was clearly in trouble, as were many ranchers: he was attempting to sell his cattle at low prices in a depressed market while at the same time, and despite this, enlarging his house and building more fences in early 1890.²⁹ Anecdotal accounts suggest that he lost some of his herd to cattle rustling by people he knew; if so, this added further misery.³⁰

The Aberdeens knew about Coutts's accumulating financial woes in the late 1880s. Marjorie Pentland quotes from a letter Ishbel received from her

mother around this time in which Lady Tweedmouth writes “Coutts poor boy has had ill luck with his farming: papa very angry,”³¹ and one can speculate that there must have been other letters along the same lines. The Aberdeens’ response was to visit Canada, under the official guise of doctors’ orders, and initiate plans to relocate Coutts.

By early October 1890 the Aberdeens had reached Winnipeg, where they met up with Coutts whom they had not seen for three years. Ishbel’s journal provides the only firsthand account we have of this meeting (*Through Canada* records only that her brother met them there).³² She offers a warmly enthusiastic description of Coutts’s arrival and a factual assessment of the situation he was facing in North Dakota. “Tonight Couttsy rejoiced our hearts by turning up from Dakota, leaving about 4 this morning and arriving at 6,” she wrote in her entry for 3 October. She then offers a sympathetic account of the troubles on the American ranch, writing that:

He has had a bad time of it lately between droughts and loss of stock generally – he has 1260 acres now, has enlarged his house and his barn, built two miles of fence and so on but what good if the rivers dry up and nothing will grow. He fancies sheep might do.

The solution is clear:

We are going to get Mr. Clay to report on the profitability of selling the place wh [sic] Coutts thinks will be cheap at 20,000 dollars and then try to get Coutts over into Canada into some more civilized part, probably Brit. Columbia.³³

She adds that Coutts’s “many misfortunes of late” can be attributed to “his neighbours [who] are not pleasant people to associate with, even in business relations, and everything is mortgaged.”³⁴

Plans to relocate Coutts moved quickly. Eleven days later, on 14 October, the Aberdeens, by now in Vancouver, met up with George Grant Mackay, whom Lady Aberdeen described as “an old friend who engineered the Guisachan roads for my father, did many other jobs for him in the way of buying and selling.”³⁵ Mackay, who had relocated from his native Inverness to Vancouver two years earlier, was active – and very successful – in property dealings in both Vancouver and the Okanagan; following a “prolonged lunch” with the mayor and his wife, the Aberdeens “started forth on [their] real business with Mr. Mackay i.e. to see some farms which might possibly do for Couttsy.”³⁶ Finding property in the vicinity of Vancouver too expensive, the Aberdeens settled on a farm “now belonging to a half-breed, 480 acres

with a nice house, some 70 head of cattle, horses, wheat, implements, etc., wh. [sic] Mr. Mackay was thinking of buying on his own account for 10,000 dollars a short time back."³⁷ This property in the Mission Valley belonging to John McDougall, once purchased, was immediately renamed Guisachan, thus underlining Ishbel's centrality in orchestrating the purchase. Mackay, having secured a major sale to a Scottish earl, immediately embarked on plans to develop a town directly to the east of Guisachan, which he named Benvoulin in honour of his own Highland background. By late 1890, Coutts had left North Dakota, and was settled at Guisachan. The business arrangement, outlined in Ishbel's journal, was that Coutts would work for two years without pay and that the salary he would have had would then be put into the farm; at that point he would become a partner with Lord Aberdeen and the two would divide the profits.³⁸ Ishbel mused that "It would be nice to see poor old Coutts a rich man after all!"³⁹

Much of the preceding discussion has drawn on Lady Aberdeen's private journals for an account of events as they unfolded; if there were letters or diaries by either Coutts or Mackay chronicling the same events, they have disappeared. But Ishbel was an inveterate scribbler, and the journal from this first trip, as well as the next one in 1891, offers valuable glimpses of the embryonic transformation of the Okanagan Valley from ranching to mixed farming and orcharding during this time. These journals, as they are usually called in the literature on the Aberdeens (and in this paper I follow this convention), were actually a series of letters written on Ishbel's personal notepaper and sent back to Britain to be circulated among family and friends. At some point they were assembled and then bound with a cover, possibly by Marjorie, who was the keeper of her mother's voluminous papers and correspondence and ultimate arbiter of their fate.⁴⁰ As theorist Sara Mills has noted, in the genre of travel writing it is "assumed that travellers send letters to their friends and relatives whilst they travel, which they have published when they return ... Many of the letters which form travel books were scrupulously written with a view to publication."⁴¹ This was so with Lady Aberdeen: carefully chosen selections from the journals, some of whose pages are covered in blue-penciled editorial and pagination markings, appeared as short articles first of all in serial form in the Haddo House estate magazine, *Onward and Upward*, which started publication in 1891, and then appeared, without further editing, in *Through Canada*.⁴² However, it is the unabridged sections of the journals, some of them unpublished, which command attention here. In my opinion, these journals – and especially those sections that describe the purchase of land in the Okanagan Valley in 1890 and the Aberdeens' first visit in 1891 – should be read as carefully constructed narratives, written to justify the purchase of the McDougall property and to

deflect the anticipated patriarchal disapproval of Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks who, as noted, was already angry with Coutts over the failure of the North Dakota ranch and whose capricious wrath could easily swing in their direction.⁴³

Criticism of the Guisachan purchase by Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks was not long in coming. It is likely that Ishbel either sent him a letter under separate cover or that he read one of the letters that was meant to circulate among family and friends in which she enthusiastically described the area. As her journal reveals, Mackay was a consummate salesman; he had deftly touched on alliances, relationships, and shared outlooks to persuade the Aberdeens to buy in the Mission Valley. In his carefully calibrated pitch, he painted a picture of a corner of the Empire that had already been domesticated by people from within their own social stratum in Britain, casually dropping Lord Lorne's aesthetic judgments of the landscape and Lord Elphinstone's sporting proclivities into the sales patter. The district "is now in the process of being opened up by a railway going south of the C.P.R. to Long Lake which Lord Lorne describes as the loveliest lake in Canada," Lady Aberdeen gushed, and "the place besides being on a lake is on a plateau surrounded by hills where the most splendid sport can be had." Indeed, "Lord Elphinstone [and] some other English gentlemen have bought a fishing place thereabouts."⁴⁴ In his reply, Marjoribanks senior, not as sympathetic to Coutts as Ishbel was, wrote that he hoped that "the Aberdeen Plot for Coutts would work without loss to the kind Plotters" and then went on to say, with respect to the land itself, that:

My calculations will not allow me to think that its size will admit of the Capacities you mention. As for the good times you speak of, if they came your way you would be the first people to lay down a double line of railway at your own expense. Well, as usual you are head over ears in business of your own manufacturing.⁴⁵

Ishbel clearly had her work cut out for her if she wished to persuade her father of the viability of the new enterprise.

The Guisachan Album is unusual among the albums in the Aberdeen family collection in that it has a plain dark leather cover with no embossed gold lettering; instead there is a small handwritten note on yellow paper, with the descriptive title referred to earlier, glued to the front cover. The album is slender; it measures 24.5 × 31 cm and contains a mere thirty-four pages. Within it, the arrangement of the photographs loosely follows the chronology set out in Ishbel's journal and in *Through Canada* but the main organizational impulse is thematic: hunting scenes are grouped together, views of the

house are seen on the same page and, when necessary for thematic unity, chronological sequencing is abandoned. There is a clear visual narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. The album opens with three photographs of the Aberdeens' arrival by train at Vernon on the soon-to-be completed Shuswap and Okanagan Railway, a CPR branch line from Sicamous to Vernon. Lord Aberdeen, a railway enthusiast, hired a special chartered train and thus was responsible for the first passenger train on the new line. These photos and the next six, of the boat trip down the lake and their arrival at the gates of Guisachan, visually set the stage for the middle section of the narrative which contains the majority of the photos, and which concentrates on daily life at the new farm, showing family activities, details of the farm buildings, including the house, and offering a general impression of what Guisachan Farm looked like. The closing section shows the family sitting on the boat as they retrace their steps north to Vernon to catch the train. The Guisachan idyll has come to an end, captured in a series of photos of the Aberdeens' sad faces and views of Okanagan Lake as the boat draws further and further away from Guisachan. Short captions placed under each photo describe each scene and very occasionally give some idea of the emotional tenor of the visit, and lines, drawn in ink with a straight edge, both separate and join the photos. There are several blank pages interspersed throughout the album, suggesting that Ishbel left them blank in anticipation that other photos relating to the adjacent pages might be found. It is a scrap album, a type that, Andrea Kunard has noted, "is more interactive in terms of its presentation of imagery."⁴⁶

The Guisachan Album was assembled at some point after the Aberdeens' 1891 visit to Guisachan, and possibly as late as November 1892. In addition to the 1891 Kodaks taken by Lady Aberdeen, there are twenty-six large photos by William Hanson Bourne of Calgary, who visited the Okanagan a year later, in November 1892, to photograph Guisachan and the Aberdeens' second Okanagan property, the Coldstream Ranch.⁴⁷ The decision to purchase the 13,261-acre ranch in Vernon at the end of their time at Guisachan and while they were still in British Columbia reflects the buoyant optimism the Aberdeens felt about the Okanagan Valley: Ishbel notes in her journal that her husband was "enthusiastic about the prospects of this country" and "determined to go in for it somehow."⁴⁸ In *Through Canada* she records the bounty of a neighbour's apple trees at Guisachan and presciently observes that "Such facts, and the knowledge of the ever-increasing demand for fruit of all kinds in the North-West provinces, will doubtless cause the valley to become ere long a great fruit-producing centre."⁴⁹ As Marjory Harper writes, "Mackay [who was the agent in the Coldstream transaction as well as the person who facilitated the purchase of Guisachan] persuaded Lord Aberdeen of the benefit he would confer on the district – and indeed the whole

province – if he would buy Coldstream and break up a large proportion of its 13,261 acres into compact lots for fruit growers.”⁵⁰ Despite purchasing the ranch in 1891, the Aberdeens did not visit it until 1894, a year into their tenure in Ottawa. Ishbel took a number of photographs on both their 1894 and 1895 visits, however these photographs are scattered throughout various albums and there is no Coldstream album comparable to the Guisachan one. Within *The Guisachan Album*, the nine Bourne photos devoted to Guisachan are interspersed with Ishbel’s Kodaks but the remaining seventeen, devoted to the Coldstream Ranch and Vernon and the north end of the Okanagan Valley, though not part of the Guisachan narrative and thus beyond the scope of this paper, play an important role in the album. Grouped together at the end of the album, they provide an epilogue to the Guisachan narrative, testimony to the Aberdeens’ euphoria and high hopes for their second Okanagan business venture. These Bourne photos have captions but there is no mention of his name in *The Guisachan Album*.

My discussion of *The Guisachan Album* centres on two thematic groupings within it: I look first at a group of Kodaks that focuses on the house and farm itself, photos that underscore Coutts’s centrality to the enterprise; I then consider three groups of photographs that position him within the heart of the family, participating in various activities with his sister, niece, and brother-in-law. I begin my discussion, however, with a photo that Lady Aberdeen chose not to include in *Through Canada*, likely because it was taken by someone else. Captioned “Kodaking and being Kodaked at Guisachan B.C.” (Fig. 1), it appears early in the album grouped with seven photos of the house on facing pages. It is, in many ways, the conceptual anchor of *The Guisachan Album*; the photographer, likely Marjorie, has caught Ishbel in the act of taking the Kodaks that shape a poignant vision of sought-after family cohesion during the ten days at Guisachan in 1891. With few exceptions, notably the photographs by Bourne and a few Kodaks where someone else has taken the camera so that Ishbel could be included, the photos in the album were taken by Lady Aberdeen. In this photo, she is seen, bent over her tripod and camera, taking a close-up of the exterior of the new house, a slim corner of the verandah just visible to the right. As well as establishing Ishbel’s authorship of the photographic narrative, this photo can be read as laying claim to the land, so recently in her journal purchased from the previous owner whom she dismisses as “a half-breed.” As Catherine Hall notes, “for settlers to possess the lands which they fondly constructed as ‘vacant’ they need to map them, to name them in their own language . . . to represent them visually, to civilize and cure them.”⁵¹

In this vein, one of Coutts Marjoribanks’s first self-appointed tasks had been to build a new house at Guisachan to replace the smaller one which he rejected as inadequate; this new house, plans of which he sent to Lord



Kodaking and being Kodaked at Guisachan B.C.

1 | Ishbel Aberdeen, "Kodaking and being Kodaked at Guisachan B.C.," 1891, Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

Aberdeen for approval,⁵² was quite different from the house he had built in North Dakota, and possibly drew its inspiration from one of the pre-fab bungalow-style shooting lodges being sold in Britain during the late nineteenth century.⁵³ It signified new ownership and management, and the imposition of social order on land that until recently had been owned by the McDougalls, who had pre-empted it in 1860.⁵⁴ The house was described by W.D. (William Dalglish) Hobson, a recent English immigrant, as “very large for this country . . . [and] quite luxurious compared with the shack and hotel life in Vernon.”⁵⁵ By the time the Aberdeens arrived in 1891, construction was complete, and the new house received Ishbel’s warm approval. In her journal, she described the skill with which her brother had decorated it, noting especially the “sort of gold Japanese paper” used in the hall and recording the number of bedrooms, the office, kitchen, large sitting room, and dining room. The “verandah running right round the house” pleased her, and she enthused that “It is just perfect and everything is delightful.”⁵⁶

Lady Aberdeen took several photos of the exterior of the house, and also attempted a photo of the entrance hall: unfortunately the photo is so dark that one cannot see the “horns and heads of deer shot in Dakota by my brother.”⁵⁷ What her photos do not show (and something she may have been unaware of) was that the house had no insulation and that only a thin layer of the gold “Japanese paper” covered the chicken netting over the frame, thus rendering the seven fireplaces impotent in the face of the Okanagan winters.

While it is easy in retrospect to see the problems surrounding the construction of the house as warning signs of Coutts’s incompetence, it was not apparent to Lady Aberdeen in the balmy late autumn of 1891. What she did notice, however, and what appears as the first sign of her doubt in what her father called “the Aberdeen Plot for Coutts,” was that the third house on the property (the new house was the fourth) was “a really good house” and that “It is really a better house than either of my brothers had at their other places, though Mr. Smith thinks it a poor place.”⁵⁸ She described the layout and size of the third house and noted that it had been recently painted. Her doubt crystallized around concerns about what their Edinburgh lawyer might think of the expenditure on Coutts’s bungalow. In her journal she wrote: “It is as well that Mr. Jamieson did not see it, for he would have suggested that there was no need to build a new house on the present scale.”⁵⁹ However, Mr. Jamieson did see it the following year, in November of 1892, when he came to assess the financial stability of the Aberdeens’ two Okanagan ventures, and he was blunt about what he thought. His comments were pithy and to the point:

The house is a pretty one and contrasts, of course, very favourably with those in the vicinity, but I was informed, and my own



2 | Ishbel Aberdeen, *Guisachan, B.C. October 1891 [Lord Aberdeen's Farm]*, 1891, watercolour on paper, 14 × 34.2 cm, Library and Archives Canada/Lady Pentland collection/C-004544. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada)

observations confirmed the information, that it is badly finished. No architect acquainted with the style of building and the habits of the country was employed – the thick paper generally used for partitions for warmth and deafening was not, I understand, provided – no tenders were invited from Tradesmen – two brothers, local tradesmen, very “decent” men, were simply employed – and I was told that when part of the work was found indifferent they were paid extra for restoring their own imperfect work.⁶⁰

A comparison between a watercolour sketch and a photograph, both done by Lady Aberdeen, likely at the same time and certainly in the same location, offers a useful glimpse of the disjuncture between what she saw as a painter and what she saw as a photographer. The watercolour, not included in *Through Canada*, is simply labelled “Guisachan B.C. October 1891” (Fig. 2). In it, the farm is subordinated to Lady Aberdeen’s aesthetic colonizing gaze: she focuses on the house, seen slightly to the left of centre and raised on a platform above the flat land. To the right is the house that Coutts rejected;



3 | Ishbel Aberdeen, “Guisachan, B.C.,” 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

however, most of her attention is on the hills in the background which reminded her so much of the hills around the Scottish Guisachan. There is little to tie this view to the Okanagan except the title and, if one is familiar with it, the topography; even the house is a transplant from one colony to another. This watercolour of Guisachan is essentially a painting of a country estate, done in keeping with what scholar Malcolm Andrews has referred to as the picturesque’s “homogenizing habit [that] dulls with sameness and familiarity.”⁶¹ The broad sweeps of paint throughout the foreground occlude the fact that this is land in transition, one of the early salvos in a wholesale agricultural transformation of the Okanagan.

The almost identical Kodak looks rawer, less inviting (Fig. 3). Here the foreground is bumpy and irregular, possibly the result of the recent hay

mowing or ploughing, and it looks rather like the “flat plain with bare hills in the distance” that Lady Aberdeen feared she would find. In the photo, the hills in the background are barely visible and it is the house that commands attention. While the watercolour creates an image of Guisachan as a place of possibility in a welcoming geography, the photo – grittier and more subdued – gets at something different. The magnitude of the task that the Aberdeens expected Coutts to take on – i.e. to transform this land into a successful orchard and mixed farming enterprise that would bring fellow settler capitalists – was enormous. Neither the Aberdeens nor Coutts knew much about the economic realities of large-scale intensive fruit farming with its attendant issues of irrigation, transportation, and distribution, although few others in the semi-arid Valley did either at this juncture: the capital-intensive development of orchards did not arrive in the Okanagan until the early twentieth century.⁶² Despite this, *The Guisachan Album* suggests that the Coutts-led transformation of what had been grazing land for cattle and horses is well underway, with Kodaks of haystacks, lumber, lettuce, chicken, and pigs (Fig. 4).

Lady Aberdeen’s warm support for her brother’s management skills extended to her approval of his choice of men to work the farm. In *Through Canada* she wrote that “We were fortunate in securing a very nice set of men and I am sorry our Kodak has not done them more justice . . . one would be from Ontario, another from Yorkshire, another from the States.”⁶³ Nevertheless, she included a photo from the album entitled “Employer’s [*sic*] and Employed at Guisachan B.C.,” but in *Through Canada* labelled it instead “The Guisachan Staff” (Fig. 5). The international workforce that Coutts had assembled stands and sits on the porch at the back of the house, subject to her gaze. Lord Aberdeen sits while Coutts stands to the right. I read this photo and its original label referring to employers in the plural as once again reflecting Lady Aberdeen’s support for her brother by legitimizing his role in the management of Guisachan. But there is something else in this photograph.

To our eyes, Guisachan was clearly a homosocial milieu, as were so many frontier communities in Canada and elsewhere, and as historian Adele Perry has pointed out, “drink was the most significant, traditionally all-male pursuit, and that backwoods men were ardent drinkers was a standard part of social commentary.”⁶⁴ Lady Aberdeen may have been pleased with the team Coutts had assembled, but as she confided to her journal, the nearby presence of “the ‘hotel’ and store” of their neighbour Lequime was “a centre of mischief unhappily to the neighbourhood.”⁶⁵ She noted, “It is the custom to repair to this store every Sunday after church and then to sit and drink all afternoon, evening and night, making a frightful row and disturbance.”⁶⁶ She further



4 | Ishbel Aberdeen, "White Leghorns at Guisachan B.C."; "Guisachan Pigs"; "Specimen of a Guisachan Cabbage"; "Guisachan," 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

noted that the men frequently drank away not only the week's wages but that "5 small ranches have passed into Lequime's hands in order to pay drink accounts."⁶⁷ Although she does not say so explicitly there were few signs of Empire in the Mission Valley in 1891 other than Guisachan house. Mackay's nascent community of Benvoulin, which included the farm, was mostly male, and there was no Presbyterian church; services were held in the schoolhouse with an itinerant minister coming down from Vernon, and the congregation counted very few women. It was still very much a frontier and probably much more like North Dakota than Lady Aberdeen had wished.



5 | Ishbel Aberdeen, "Employer's [sic] & Employed at Guisachan B.C.," 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

That there was no Presbyterian church must have come as a shock to the Aberdeens who had been assured by the wily Mackay that there was one in the Mission Valley. Lady Aberdeen's journal prior to her visit is unequivocal on this point: "There is a Presbyterian church, and an R.C. one, so that it will be v. different from the wilds of Dakota."⁶⁸ She later made no comment on Mackay's broken promise but she was very clear on the need for a church, writing in *Through Canada* that, "If settlers are allowed to get into a habit of not attending church . . . many opportunities for promoting religious influences, and for preventing evil will have been lost."⁶⁹ A visit from Paul Langill, the itinerant Presbyterian minister from Vernon two days after they arrived offered Ishbel the chance to avert spiritual disaster for Coutts. Lord

Aberdeen promised \$400 towards the estimated \$1,000 it would cost to build a church at Benvoulin on land that had recently been offered for that purpose by Mackay.⁷⁰ The church, named Bethel Presbyterian, was completed nearly a year later and was formally dedicated on 11 September 1892.⁷¹ The Aberdeens did not see it until their next visit to Guisachan in 1894, and the following year Ishbel described it in her journal as “the pretty little church at Benvoulin which H.E. [His Excellency] helped to build.”⁷²

That Coutts Marjoribanks was now bracketed by both Empire, as represented by the colonial bungalow and the surrounding land awaiting cultivation, and Church, which had been notably absent in North Dakota but was now symbolized by his brother-in-law’s donation towards construction of one, is clear in a Kodak entitled “Coming home from Church” (Fig. 6). In this photo, which was not included in *Through Canada*, Coutts is shown perched atop the farm wagon in the company of his sister and brother-in-law, in front of the balustraded front verandah of Guisachan. Marjorie must have taken the photo, as Lady Aberdeen is in it, seated alongside Eustace Smith, the farm manager. The Kodak serves as a record of Coutts’s participation in the family religious rituals but of course offers no proof that this was more than a token gesture; nevertheless, in Ishbel’s eyes, the support was there in a way that it had not been in North Dakota. She noted approvingly that Coutts and Smith were going to try to organize Sunday prayers for the workers and “anybody else who may care to come,” but then wrote, “Curiously enough, Coutts seemed to assent more heartily to the proposal than Mr. Eustace Smith.”⁷³ It is a stray comment, again suggesting that she is all too aware of the temptations to which Coutts might succumb, and the likelihood that his religious convictions were less resolute than hers. There are no Kodaks of the nearby temptations.

A number of photographs position Coutts firmly within the heart of the family, underlining his position as brother, brother-in-law, and uncle: he is seen riding across the farm, both alone and in the company of Lord Aberdeen and Marjorie, and heading out to hunt bear with Lord Aberdeen (amusingly, Lady Aberdeen noted in her journal that neither Coutts nor Eustace Smith had been to a bear hunt before “partly because they have been so busy watching the house and its builders”⁷⁴). But three sets of photographs are particularly important to my argument that Guisachan was a site where carefully chosen snippets of Marjoribanks family recent history could be re-envisioned and inscribed on the newly acquired land. The first set consists of two photos in *The Guisachan Album* that show the Aberdeens, with Marjorie and Coutts, planting fir trees that they have brought from the Scottish Guisachan (they did not flourish and so a similar ritual was re-enacted on their 1894 visit). For the London-born Lady



6 | Ishbel Aberdeen, “Coming home from Church with the new team Brown Bess & Baby & her foal Madge Guisachan B.C.,” 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

Aberdeen, a passionate follower of the “cult of the Highlands,”⁷⁵ the fact that her name – Ishbel – and that of the family summer home were Gaelic held deep significance (Guisachan means “place of the firs”). In the two Kodaks documenting this imperialist gesture, Coutts, whose home is now the new Guisachan, is present and seems to be watching the planting with mild interest; however, it is Lord Aberdeen who is down on hands and knees planting, not Coutts (Fig. 7).

The second set of photos under consideration shows the family gathered on the verandah of the house after a hunt. Using the carved woodwork as a pictorial frame, Lady Aberdeen (positioned both behind and in front of the



7 | Ishbel Aberdeen, “The Guisachan N.B. Scotch Firs being Planted at Guisachan B.C.” Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

lens) and no stranger to photographic studios, works within well-established conventions of hunting party photographs. In one that I find particularly interesting (Fig. 8), she carefully poses her family in a triangle within the cube of the space, revealing through its careful hierarchical structuring the dynamics of familial power at Guisachan. Reading from the lower part of the photo, we see Marjorie sitting on the steps, reinforcing her position as “the child”; but it is Coutts’s glance towards Lord Aberdeen that is particularly noteworthy. Coutts has turned away to place his gun against the wall of the house but looks back across his left shoulder at Lord Aberdeen who is casually leaning against the porch’s post. It is impossible to see either Lord Aberdeen’s or Marjorie’s eyes but Coutts, caught in the moment, looks at his brother-



8 | Ishbel Aberdeen, “Aberdeen Coutts & Marjorie guarding the game aided by ‘Spot’ & ‘Crusoe,’” 1891. Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

in-law – he is not friendly nor is he hostile, but he is wary and appraising. The focus is on the two brothers-in-law, whose lives by now were deeply entwined, but it is a relationship of unequal power; Coutts, thirty-one years old, has traded the patriarchal control of his father, Lord Tweedmouth, for that of Lord Aberdeen.

The third set of photos under consideration documents the Aberdeens’ departure from Guisachan after nine days. In her journal, Ishbel wrote, “tomorrow we must say good-bye to this delightful place, where we have enjoyed a more real holiday that [*sic*] we have ever had before.”⁷⁶ Some of the captions on the series of photos devoted to the departure and the boat ride back up the lake reveal Ishbel’s sorrow at leaving: for example, “S.S.



9 | Ishbel Aberdeen, “Uncle & Niece on boat.” Kodak photograph from *The Guisachan Album*, private archives owned by the current Lord Aberdeen. (Photo: Courtesy of Lord Aberdeen)

Penticton on Okenagan [sic] Lake waiting to bear away unwilling freight from Guisachan B.C.” and “Resignation to departure.” A photo, simply entitled “Departure” shows her, eyes downcast, as the boat pulls away from the dock. But it is the Kodak entitled “Uncle & Niece on boat” that is most compelling (Fig. 9). Here, Marjorie is seen in animated conversation with Coutts who is standing with his back to the camera looking at the seated Marjorie as the boat slips past the Guisachan-like hills that so enthralled the Aberdeens. It is the most relaxed and familial of all the Kodaks in *The Guisachan Album*,

the one that most clearly speaks to Coutts's reintegration into the family. Marjorie, who was only three years old – four, at the most – when Coutts left England for North Dakota, has, over the course of the visit to Guisachan, established her own relationship to her uncle and, as her account of the visit suggests, if there were tensions, they were not visible to a ten-year-old child.

This photo is, in my opinion, the emblematic photo of the "Coutts project" that is documented in *The Guisachan Album*. Despite the careful visual scripting of a family holiday, Coutts – the focus of the Guisachan venture – remains an enigma. We see his back, his feet widely planted and hands in pocket, and a bit of his head that is not covered by his hat. But we do not see his face or his eyes, and his thoughts about his new life remain concealed from the viewer. We know, thanks to Ishbel's journal, that he is on his way to Agassiz to meet with a government specialist about growing fruit trees; for her part, Lady Aberdeen is fretting about what Mr. Jamieson, the Edinburgh lawyer, is going to think about their purchase of the 13,000-acre Coldstream Ranch ("Will not Mr. Jamieson's hair stand on end," she wrote⁷⁷). Within a year the Aberdeens decided to place Coutts as manager of the Vernon property, effectively removing him as the estate manager of Guisachan. His time at the Coldstream Ranch was also brief; when his father died in 1894, he gave up managing it and went back to Scotland for an extended stay. This is, therefore, as far as is known, the last photograph taken by Ishbel of Coutts in the Okanagan; when they next visited in 1894, he was gone.

In her book, *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch has written of "the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life."⁷⁸ It is precisely this contradiction that underscores Lady Aberdeen's photographs of the family at Guisachan. I have argued that Lady Aberdeen sought to reintegrate her brother into the family after his troubled years in North Dakota, using her camera as a tool to convince herself and others of the success of this private family project. Some of the photos – those that show the family's recreational activities – support this. However, the reality of Guisachan was in some ways quite different from what Lady Aberdeen had imagined when first presented with a salesman's sharp promotional pitch. As a close reading of the photographic record suggests, the Aberdeens made a number of blithe assumptions about Coutts's ability to translate cattle ranching into orcharding and mixed farming. That these assumptions would soon become problematic is apparent in the photographs of both the roughly cultivated land at Guisachan and of the team that Coutts had brought together: these men were dressed as cowboys, and their recent background, like his, was ranching, not orcharding. As the astute Mr. Jamieson wrote of Coutts in 1892, "Guisachan . . . was in no respect suitable

for him: it could never be a cattle ranch, Mr. Marjoribanks was not the man to sit down to cultivate apples and pears or hops.”⁷⁹

Lady Aberdeen’s photographs can be interpreted in multiple ways but in concluding I will emphasize three points. The first is that the Aberdeens were only at Guisachan for a short time and therefore any notion that the photographs could represent family unity is as illusory as the notion that the gold wallpaper covering the chicken wire in the house could provide insulation from the harsh winter winds. The second is that despite Lady Aberdeen’s desire to bring her brother Coutts within the security of Empire and church, the Mission Valley and therefore Guisachan were distant from the imperial centre in 1891; they were the colonial fringe and there was little support for Coutts once the Aberdeens left. And, finally, Marjorie’s metaphor of the playhouse, introduced at the beginning of this paper, is useful for considering these photographs: not only was Guisachan a place where siblings could explore and enact family rituals in an idealized setting, but for ten days in October of 1891, it became a playhouse in the sense of a theatre set for a family performance choreographed by Lady Aberdeen where each member of the cast performed for the camera’s gaze – and the family album.

NOTES

I am very grateful to Alexander Gordon, the 7th Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair, for providing a welcoming place to study *The Guisachan Album* and for granting permission to publish the images; to Ian Pooley, Fern Helfand, Hanss Lujan, Nicola Mills and Niall Irvine for their assistance, and to the anonymous reviewer for their generous comments and critical eye. To Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson I extend my warm thanks for your brilliant initiative in founding CWAHI and for bringing this publication to fruition: your good humour, patience, and perceptive critiques have been invaluable.

- 1 I refer to Lady Aberdeen as either Ishbel or Lady Aberdeen for the sake of fluidity within the text. Her husband, John Campbell Gordon, is referred to as Lord Aberdeen.
- 2 Veronica STRONG-BOAG, “The Less Than Mighty Scot? The Quandary of John Gordon, Earl/later Marquess of Aberdeen (and Temair), 1847–1934” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University, Fredericton, 30–31 May and 1 June 2011). Surprisingly, there has been no in-depth scholarly study of either Lord Aberdeen or of the Aberdeens as a couple: this will be rectified with the publication of Veronica STRONG-BOAG, *Liberal Hearts and Coronets: The Lives and Times of Ishbel Marjoribanks Gordon and John Campbell Gordon, the Aberdeens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

- 3 The Guisachan Farm passed completely from their hands when it was sold in 1903; however, the Coldstream Ranch was sold to the Coldstream Estate Company Limited, in which both Aberdeens were shareholders. See Donna YOSHITAKE WUEST, *Coldstream: The Ranch Where It All Began* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2005).
- 4 *The Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 14 Oct. 1891. John Hamilton Gordon, 1st Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair fonds, MG27, 1B5, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). An edited version of the material in the Okanagan journal was published in R.M. MIDDLETON, ed., *The Journal of Lady Aberdeen: The Okanagan Valley in the Nineties* (Victoria, BC: Morriss, 1986). This paper makes use of material that was not included in Middleton's book and that has not been published.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Marjorie PENTLAND, *A Bonnie Fechter: The Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1952), 97.
- 7 John CAMPBELL GORDON, Marquis of Aberdeen and Temair, *Archie Gordon: An Album of Recollections* (England, 1910). A photograph entitled "Holiday Cottage, Haddo House" is reproduced with the caption "Given to the children on Christmas Day 1891 as their own house."
- 8 Oxford English Dictionary. Accessed 19 Apr. 2012, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/>
- 9 ISHBEL, COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak* (Edinburgh: W.H. White & Co., 1893).
- 10 The only scholarly treatment of the photographs to date is Marjory HARPER, "Introduction to the 1994 Edition," COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak* (1893; reprint, Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1994).
- 11 *Kodak Snaps by IA [Ishbel Aberdeen] at Guisachan BC 1891 and some large views of Coldstream Ranch Vernon BC*. National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS) NRAS55/22/3/5, Haddo House muniments held at Haddo Estate Office, Tarves, Aberdeenshire.
- 12 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 194.
- 13 Val WILLIAMS, *Women Photographers – The Other Observers 1900 to the Present* (London: Virago Press, 1986), 15.
- 14 Rosalind KRAUSS, "A Note on Photography and The Simulacral," in *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1990), 19. Krauss is drawing from her reading of Pierre Bourdieu's commentary on family photography. See Pierre BOURDIEU, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).
- 15 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 1.
- 16 HARPER, Introduction, xxii.
- 17 The youngest brother, Archie Marjoribanks (1861–1900), was in Texas, acting as assistant-manager of the Rocking Chair Ranch on behalf of his father. See Marjory HARPER, "A Gullible Pioneer? Lord Aberdeen and the Development of Fruit Farming in the Okanagan Valley, 1890–1921," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 1:2 (December 1986): 274, n. 7.
- 18 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 191. It is not clear if the Aberdeens were hoping to use part of the land as a cattle ranch, though it was much too small for that purpose; however, since Coutts sold the cattle soon after arriving,

arguing that there was not enough hay to feed them, that combined with the small size of the property would seem to rule out cattle-ranching as a possibility. Earlier in *Through Canada with a Kodak* (161), Ishbel noted that in Vernon “we heard many desires expressed that the large ranche-owners [sic] in the neighbourhood could be persuaded to break up some of their property into fruit farms from 20 to 100 acres,” while in her journal entry for 17 October 1891, written at Guisachan, she comments on the local ranchers there, noting that they “are greatly impeding the progress of settlement here, [and] are not cultivating their land to any extent themselves.” *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 17 Oct. 1891.

- 19 Nancy Martha WEST, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 3.
- 20 Martha LANGFORD, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 97.
- 21 *The London Gazette* (30 Sept. 1881): 4891.
- 22 Larry A. MCFARLANE, “British Remittance Men as Ranchers: the Case of Coutts Marjoribanks and Edmund Thursby, 1884–95,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 638 (1991): 55.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 24 *Private Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, unpublished, 3 July 1887. NRS55/10/2/2, Haddo House muniments held at Haddo Estate Office.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Veronica STRONG-BOAG, “Creating ‘Big Tent’ Feminism: The Suffrage Politics of Ishbel Marjoribanks Gordon, Lady Aberdeen” (paper presented at the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 9–12 June 2011).
- 27 Jonathan C. Eaton (1890–1963) worked in the land, insurance and cattle businesses in North Dakota, and as a historian of the early years in Towner, McHenry County. He compiled a considerable archive of material, now deposited with the State Historical Society of North Dakota. He writes that Coutts “liked to drink and spent much time in the local saloons with a dubious group of companions.” See Corabelle BROWN, comp., *McHenry County: Its History and its People* (Towner, ND: Mouse River Farmers Press, 1985), 17. For information on the Eaton holdings see the “John C. Eaton Papers.” Accessed 1 Jan. 2011, <http://history.nd.gov/archives/manuscripts/inventory/10147.html>
- 28 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, *We Twa*, vol. 1 (London: W. Collins Sons, 1925), 293.
- 29 MCFARLANE, “Remittance Men,” 57–58.
- 30 BROWN, *McHenry County*, 17. Eaton’s account of the cattle rustling and carousing in saloons is disputed, however, in MCFARLANE, “Remittance Men,” 61.
- 31 PENTLAND, *A Bonnie Fechter*, 70.
- 32 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 98.
- 33 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 3 Oct. 1890.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*, 14 Oct. 1890.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 *Ibid.* Lord Aberdeen was already the joint owner, with Ishbel’s older brother Edward Marjoribanks, of the Rocking Chair Ranch in Texas, whose assistant manager was

- Archie, the youngest brother. Marjory HARPER, *Adventurers and Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London: Profile Books, 2003), 318.
- 39 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 17 Oct. 1891.
- 40 These letters are now in LAC in Ottawa. The cover of the 1890 volume reads "Letters from Canada to H.D. and J.S. from I.A." – that is, letters from Ishbel Aberdeen to Henry Drummond, a close family friend, and James Sinclair, who was another close friend and aide-de-camp to Lord Aberdeen, and who married their daughter Marjorie in 1904. The cover of the collection of letters from their 1891 trip reads "Letters from Canada and the U.S.A. 1891 to H.D. and J.S." Both Marjory Harper and Robert Middleton refer to these bound volumes as journals rather than by the title "Letters from Canada" and I have done the same so as to maintain consistency. For a full account of how the lives of Henry Drummond and John Sinclair, later Lord Pentland, were interwoven with those of the Aberdeens, see Doris FRENCH, *Ishbel and the Empire* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988).
- 41 Sara MILLS, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 85.
- 42 For an account of this magazine, see James DRUMMOND, *Onward and Upward: Extracts (1891–96) from the Magazine of the Onward and Upward Association/Selected and Introduced by James Drummond* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983).
- 43 FRENCH, *Ishbel and the Empire*, 22. French writes that "her father was undoubtedly a tyrant," an opinion which has gone unchallenged in the Aberdeen literature.
- 44 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 14 Oct. 1890.
- 45 PENTLAND, *Bonnie Fechter*, 92.
- 46 Andrea KUNARD, "Photography, Ethnology, and the Domestic Arts: Interpreting the Sir Daniel Wilson Album," in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, ed. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 44.
- 47 *Vernon News*, 24 Nov. 1892.
- 48 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 27 Oct. 1891.
- 49 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 191.
- 50 HARPER, "A Gullible Pioneer," 259.
- 51 Catherine HALL, ed., "Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire," in *Cultures of Empire: A Reader: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 24–25.
- 52 Coutts Marjoribanks to Lord Aberdeen, 29 Apr. 1891. NRAS55/10/2/2, Haddo House muniments held at Haddo Estate Office.
- 53 Anthony D. KING, *The Bungalow* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 109. The house in North Dakota was very different, as a watercolour by Ishbel (now lost) shows: it is reproduced in Larry A. MCFARLANE, "British Remittance Men in Frontier America," *Journal of the West* 40:1 (2001): 46.
- 54 For the history of the McDougall family, see Shirley LOUIS, *We Heard It in the Bushes* (Calgary: The Word is Out Press, 1996).
- 55 *Diary of William Dalgleish Hobson*, 3 Dec. 1891. Hobson Family Papers, Collection Robert Hobson, Kelowna.
- 56 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 14 Oct. 1891.

- 57 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 178.
- 58 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 16 Oct. 1891. “Mr. Smith” was Eustace Smith, a friend of Coutts, born in Scotland in 1858 and described in the 1891 Census as “farm manager.” Government of Canada Census. Accessed 12 Apr. 2012, http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/1891/pdf/30953_148094-00564.pdf
- 59 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 16 Oct. 1891.
- 60 George Auldjo JAMIESON, Memorandum on the Property and Affairs of the Earl of Aberdeen in British Columbia November 1892. NRAS55/1/40/4, Haddo House muniments held at Haddo Estate Office.
- 61 Malcolm ANDREWS, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129.
- 62 An excellent resource for a discussion of the development of the fruit industry in the Okanagan is David DENDY and Kathleen M. KYLE, *A Fruitful Century*, ed. Joan McIntyre (Kelowna: British Columbia Fruit Growers’ Association, 1990).
- 63 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 182.
- 64 Adele PERRY, “Bachelors in the Backwoods: White Men and Homosocial Culture in Up-Country British Columbia, 1858–71,” in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. R.W. Sandwell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 187.
- 65 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 17 Oct. 1891.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Ibid., 14 Oct. 1890.
- 69 COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN, *Through Canada with a Kodak*, 186.
- 70 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 16 Oct. 1891.
- 71 *Vernon News*, 15 Sept. 1892.
- 72 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 20 Oct. 1895. Lord Aberdeen had been appointed Governor General in 1893.
- 73 Ibid., 17 Oct. 1891.
- 74 Ibid., 15 Oct. 1891.
- 75 For the “cult of the Highlands” see Hugh TREVOR-ROPER, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39.
- 76 *Journal of Lady Aberdeen*, 23 Oct. 1891.
- 77 Ibid., 27 Oct. 1891.
- 78 Marianne HIRSCH, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8.
- 79 JAMIESON, Memorandum.

« Kodaking and Being Kodaked » : *The Guisachan Album* d'Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen

CAROLYN MACHARDY

Lady Aberdeen, prénommée Ishbel, compile *The Guisachan Album* à la suite du voyage qu'elle effectue en 1891 avec son mari pour visiter la nouvelle propriété qu'ils ont achetée en 1890 et baptisée Guisachan, dans la Mission Valley, aujourd'hui la Vallée de l'Okanagan, en Colombie-Britannique. L'album mince, contenant à peine 34 pages, se compose essentiellement de photos Kodak que Lady Aberdeen, photographe amateur enthousiaste, a prises durant leur séjour de dix jours. Optimistes, elle et son mari partagent alors la conviction d'un avenir glorieux pour la fruiticulture commerciale dans la Vallée. Bien des années plus tard, en se remémorant cette visite de 1891, leur fille Marjorie qui les avait accompagnés, décrivait Guisachan comme la « maison de théâtre » des Aberdeen.

En 1893, Lady Aberdeen intègre vingt-et-une de ces photos ainsi qu'un pastel dans les deux chapitres consacrés à la ferme Guisachan, comme on l'appelle, dans *Through Canada with a Kodak*, récit public – et publié – des voyages de 1890 et 1891 des Aberdeen à travers le Canada ; dans ce livre (ci-après appelé *Through Canada*), les images servaient principalement à fournir des ancrages visuels à la narration passionnée de Lady Aberdeen.

J'avance qu'une lecture attentive des photographies réunies par Lady Aberdeen dans *The Guisachan Album* révèle de l'information sur la première aventure de colonisation des Aberdeen dans la Vallée de l'Okanagan, qui n'est pas divulguée dans les deux chapitres sur Guisachan dans *Through Canada*. Mon argument s'appuie sur le fait que Guisachan a été nommée d'après le domaine du comté de l'Inverness appartenant à la famille de Lady Aberdeen, les Marjoribanks. Je m'attacherai particulièrement aux photographies qui campent la ferme Guisachan comme le site où l'on pourrait réenvisager et inscrire sur cette terre nouvellement acquise des bribes, soigneusement choisies, de l'histoire récente de la famille Marjoribanks, particulièrement celles de son frère Coutts. De mon point de vue, l'achat de Guisachan en Colombie-Britannique en octobre 1890 était une tentative minutieusement orchestrée par Lady Aberdeen de réécrire la biographie à ce jour de son frère qu'elle surnommait affectueusement « Couttsy ». La ferme Guisachan, dont

deux cents acres seraient voués à la culture commerciale de fruits et le reste à la production agricole mixte, constituait le site idéal pour la réhabilitation de Coutts et ses fortunes, et l'album de Guisachan, monté par Ishbel pour la famille, fournirait des preuves documentaires de la réussite de cette entreprise.

Si *The Guisachan Album* doit être lu comme un document qui tente de rétablir la réputation de Coutts au sein de la famille, il faudrait rapiécer quelques fragments biographiques et démêler les fils qui le lient à sa sœur Ishbel autour des années 1890. L'article examine les journaux tenus par Lady Aberdeen pour démontrer son affection profonde pour son frère et son inquiétude grandissante quant à son bien-être dans son ranch au Dakota du Nord, où en 1884 ou 1885, il avait entrepris de faire de l'élevage. À mon avis, c'est au cours de la visite de 1887 de Lord et Lady Aberdeen au ranch du Dakota du Nord que l'on trouve les germes du projet d'envoyer Coutts quelque part dans l'étreinte de l'Empire et de l'Église. Ayant noté dans son journal que son frère s'adaptait à la vie dans l'Ouest américain, Lady Aberdeen expose alors sa grande préoccupation : l'influence de la culture à la frontière américaine sur la vie spirituelle et morale de son frère célibataire âgé de vingt-sept ans. La remarque d'Ishbel sur la vie religieuse déficiente au Dakota du Nord n'était pas simplement un commentaire cru de sa part ; elle traduisait plutôt, à mon avis, sa crainte de voir Coutts se laisser entraîner dans un mode de vie qu'elle jugeait irresponsable et immoral, inquiétude d'ailleurs étayée par des ouï-dire selon lesquels il buvait et faisait la fête dans les bars du Dakota du Nord. Les Aberdeens réagissent en faisant une visite au Canada, sous le prétexte officiel des ordres du médecin, et commencent les démarches pour faire déménager Coutts. Vers la fin des années 1890, Coutts quitte le Dakota du Nord pour s'installer à Guisachan.

Mon examen du *Guisachan Album* s'inspire des travaux d'historiennes comme Marjory Harper et Adele Perry, et d'historiennes de la photographie, notamment Val Williams et Marianne Hirsch. L'album renferme deux groupements thématiques : je me penche d'abord sur un groupe de photos qui focalisent la maison et la ferme proprement dite, soulignant la centralité de Coutts par rapport à l'entreprise ; j'examine ensuite trois groupes de photos qui le placent au cœur de la famille, participant à des activités avec sa sœur, sa nièce et son beau-frère. Or, la première photo s'intitule « Kodaking and Being Kodaked at Guisachan B.C. », que Lady Aberdeen a décidé de ne pas inclure dans *Through Canada*, probablement parce qu'elle avait été prise par quelqu'un d'autre. Cette photo, tout en établissant qu'Ishbel est bien l'auteure de la narration photographique, peut être interprétée comme une revendication de la terre tout récemment achetée et nommée d'après son domaine familial en Écosse.

Je puise aussi dans les journaux privés de Lady Aberdeen les récits au fil des événements. Il s'agit en fait d'une série de lettres écrites sur le papier à lettres personnel d'Ishbel et renvoyées en Grande-Bretagne pour les faire circuler parmi les amis et la famille. Elles avaient été colligées puis recouvertes d'une reliure, dans l'intention de les faire publier. Ainsi, certaines d'elles, soigneusement choisies, ont fait l'objet de courts articles parus sous forme de série dans la revue du domaine Haddo House, *Onward and Upward*, qui a commencé la publication en 1891, puis, sans autres modifications, dans *Through Canada*. Cependant, ce sont les sections intégrales des journaux, dont certaines n'ont pas été publiées, qui retiennent l'attention quand on les lit en parallèle avec les photos du *The Guisachan Album*. À mon avis, ces journaux et les photos groupées par thème dans l'album doivent être lus comme des récits minutieusement construits, compilés pour justifier l'achat de la propriété et pour détourner la désapprobation patriarcale anticipée du père de Lady Aberdeen, Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, déjà fâché contre Coutts pour son échec avec le ranch du Dakota du Nord, et dont la colère capricieuse pouvait facilement basculer en direction des Aberdeens.

Les photographies de Lady Aberdeen rassemblées dans *The Guisachan Album* permettent de multiples interprétations, mais en conclusion je m'appuie sur trois points. Le premier, les Aberdeens n'étaient restés à Guisachan que peu de temps. Il serait donc purement illusoire de penser que les photographies pourraient représenter l'unité familiale. Le deuxième, malgré le désir de Lady Aberdeen de mettre son frère en sécurité au sein de l'Empire et de l'Église, Mission Valley et donc Guisachan en Colombie-Britannique se trouvaient éloignés du centre impérial en 1891. De plus, ces lieux représentaient la frange coloniale, et il y avait peu de soutien pour Coutts après le départ des Aberdeens. Troisième point : la métaphore de la maison de théâtre, dont j'ai parlé au début de mon article, est utile pour examiner les photos : non seulement Guisachan était un endroit où la fratrie pouvait explorer et pratiquer les rituels familiaux dans un cadre idéalisé, mais pendant dix jours en octobre 1891, elle est devenue un théâtre monté pour une représentation familiale chorégraphiée par Lady Aberdeen, où chaque acteur jouait pour l'œil de l'objectif – et l'album de famille.



Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt: Identity as Performance in a Victorian Album

PATRICIA SHEPPARD

*The album constitutes an intermediate space between public and private spheres, and between the female subject's body and the body of others, for the figuring of feminine imaginings and desires which cannot otherwise be articulated, or even acknowledged.*¹

The popular leisure activity of assembling personal albums first originated within British aristocratic circles during the early part of the nineteenth century. Well-appointed, leather-bound volumes, albums took pride of place in the Victorian drawing room where friends and family would gather to share stories and engage in conversations – activities that often included an album's creator showing her book to visitors. Frequently serving as a basis for discussion, personal albums have long been sites wherein memories are recorded, oftentimes encoded. Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt (1809–1886), a British military wife and a member of the landed gentry, compiled one such album. She used it as a repository for watercolours, letters, poems and various other ephemera for almost forty years (1837–1875). The first eighteen of these were spent accompanying her military husband on postings throughout the British Empire, including four years in Canada. On the strength of this connection, the album was acquired by Dr. Lawrence M. Lande for his extensive collection of Canadiana, and subsequently donated to the Public Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada), where it forms part of the Lande Collection, a major repository of national historical memory.²

At first glance, the album's contents appear to have no chronological order. Where dates have been included they are not sequential, suggesting to the casual observer that the album may be nothing more than a random collection of memorabilia. More than half of the album's pages contain transcriptions of pre-authored texts, and it is striking that not a single sentence is expressed in Bucknall-Estcourt's own voice. In this sense, the album serves as an example of a practice that was known as *commonplacing*: one in which men and women transcribed selected passages from their

Detail, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Winter Scene with Men Warming Themselves at a Fire*, 1838, watercolour on paper, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e010964536. (Photo: author)

readings as a resource for thinking, writing, and talking. In a similar vein, Bucknall-Estcourt, although an amateur artist herself, personally created only nine of the fifty-four sketches and watercolours included in the album.

Despite the apparent lack of overt personal content, however, literary historian Kate Chedgzoy has analyzed women's practice of commonplacing as a form of "life-writing": "a process through which notebook compilations construct the self not primarily as originator of an individual story, but as something formed in conversation, listening, reading and exchange" – a subject that is both produced and yet also productive, notably through its acts of gathering, selecting, and organizing.³ In this article, I will propose that Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt's album worked in a similar way. Indeed, careful reading of the album reveals the presence of a coherent, vital, and very personal narrative. What is intriguing is that the album's creator managed to accomplish this as much through her absence as through her presence. Seeking to understand this aspect of absence, I contend that a variety of coding techniques permitted Bucknall-Estcourt to signify important events in her life. Some elements of the album, oblique and quite heavily coded, incorporate references to deeply personal events in a way that enabled the album's creator to maintain control over her privacy. These associations, in all likelihood, were ones that she would have shared with only a select few relatives and intimate acquaintances. Other techniques, by contrast, allowed Bucknall-Estcourt to incorporate more public elements of her life in an accessible fashion that would have been readily understood by those of her era. By decoding Bucknall-Estcourt's album, this essay will explore how one aristocratic Victorian woman used the material and visual culture at her disposal performatively, to express and conceal herself in a manner consonant with the time in which she lived. The public and private aspects of the album are carried through into its major themes: a celebration of the imperial project and of her husband's career.

Military Wife

Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt's role as a military wife and supporter of Empire came naturally, if not without opposition, to a woman of her time, education, and standing. Born in Cornwall in 1809, she was the daughter of Caroline Lyttleton and Reginald Pole Carew. Both parents were of the upper echelons of British society and Caroline's mother could trace her ancestry in a direct line back to King Edward III.⁴ She recognized the importance of ensuring a proper education for her daughters and was actively engaged in the process of its realization. Two watercolour paintings (Figs. 1–2), still in the family's possession, depict the sitting room at Antony House where Caroline and her sisters were taught. From these images it is apparent that the girls' education



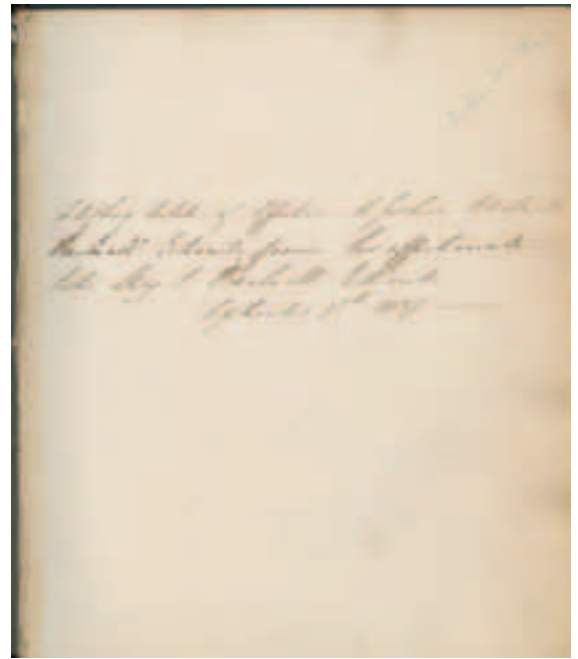
included training in the arts and was firmly grounded in the political and religious ideologies of the time: an elaborate tapestry is prominently displayed upon the walls, accompanied by a Union Jack and two paintings of the Holy Family. Busts of learned men, books, writing materials, as well as paints and brushes, are scattered upon the desks and a harp is on display in a corner of the room. Young ladies, one of whom is presumably Caroline, work diligently at their desks engaging with the objects that surround them. Bucknall-Estcourt's letters to George Perkins Marsh, written in later life, confirm her proficiency in four languages – English, Italian, French, and German – and, like the album itself, they evince the benefits that she reaped from the resources available to her.

Bucknall-Estcourt's father also played an important role in her upbringing and raised her from a very early age to value the imperial project. Reginald Pole Carew retired from his seat in Parliament at the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1816 when Caroline was only seven, choosing instead to immerse himself in family and local political affairs. In his youth, Pole Carew had served for some years as a British diplomat and, during the course of his thirty-year career as a parliamentarian, he had held ministerial office and enjoyed close ties with the British Admiralty.⁵ Pole Carew's experience and reputation were such that his advice and opinions were frequently sought even after his retirement and he often entertained British naval officers and other dignitaries at Antony House.⁶ His daughters thus grew up in an environment wherein the imperial concerns of Great Britain were an integral part of everyday life.

Caroline Pole Carew first met and fell in love with her future husband, James Bucknall-Estcourt,⁷ in 1828 when he was stationed at Devonport, a locale close to her family home, where he was often an invited guest of her father. Upon learning of his daughter's devotion to Bucknall-Estcourt and the couple's desire to wed, her father immediately opposed the match, expressing concern over financial matters as well as the quality of life that the wife of a military officer could expect.⁸ It would be almost ten years before the death of her father allowed Caroline to follow her heart into matrimony, and the couple finally married in August 1837, a year that also saw the coronation of

1 (overleaf, above) | Artist unknown, *View of Drawing Room at Antony House, Cornwall*, ca. 1830, watercolour on paper, Cornwall Records Office, CP/130/1-5. (Photo: Sharkfin Media Ltd., 2013)

2 (overleaf, below) | Artist unknown, *View of Drawing Room at Antony House, Cornwall*, ca. 1830, watercolour on paper, Cornwall Records Office, CP/130/1-5. (Photo: Sharkfin Media Ltd., 2013)



3 | Cover of Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt's Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011073016. (Photo: author)

4 | Dedication Page, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt's Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011073017. (Photo: author)

Victoria as Queen of England. Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt's album (Fig. 3) was presented to her as a wedding gift by her sister-in-law, Lucy (Fig. 4).

Marriage brought tremendous changes in the life of Bucknall-Estcourt. At the relatively late age of twenty-eight, she left her family home in Cornwall and began to navigate both the comparatively private realm of a marriage and the more public sphere that attended her position as the wife of a military officer. Just four months after their wedding, in December 1837, her husband was recalled to active duty and ordered to Canada, where he would rejoin his regiment, the Forty-third Monmouthshire Light Infantry, to help quell the uprisings that then threatened Great Britain's control over its largest and most important North American colony.

Canada: First Military Posting

Material relating to Bucknall-Estcourt's decision to follow her husband to Canada and the couple's first Canadian posting, makes up roughly two thirds of the album. Between 1837 and 1842 the British government dispatched unprecedented numbers of troops to both Upper and Lower Canada in

response to rebellions seeking greater independence from British authority and rule. This proved a pivotal juncture in Bucknall-Estcourt's life, as she later described in a letter to a friend:

I had much to be thankful for in this parting, being so different from the last. I had now a right to follow him whenever he could see an opportunity for me doing so . . . The kind captain of *The Hercules* offered to accommodate the Commissioned Officer's wife if he had one in the cabins his own wife had been occupying till the vessel was ordered to sea, where our English Captains are not allowed to take their wives.

Significantly, the account reveals that the decision about whether Caroline would accompany her husband on his overseas posting was made, in great part, by Caroline herself in the face of his own vacillation on the matter:

[James] could scarcely believe that even his wife could wish to go so far to be with him, and though he did know and believe this in his heart he could not make up his mind that it was best for her that he should allow it. He wrote two letters a day with different decisions and at last referred the matter to her and his father to decide for him.⁹

In this way, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt began her married life by following her heart and assuming a greater degree of autonomy than was often experienced by Victorian women within marriage.

The manner in which Bucknall-Estcourt chose to memorialize this life-changing event in her album is not easily decipherable, for it appears in the guise of an apparently unrelated excerpt from a poem by Samuel Rogers eulogizing the death of Lord Byron in the Greek War of Independence. Closer consideration, however, reveals an unexpected connection between Byron's life and Bucknall-Estcourt's own marriage and subsequent implication in Great Britain's foreign affairs.

George Gordon Byron fought and died on behalf of Greece in its war of independence against Turkish colonial rule. The rebellion had accorded well with Britain's interest in reducing Turkish geopolitical strength, and when government officials approached Lord Byron to enlist his private assistance on behalf of a campaign in which Britain must not be seen to be officially involved, he responded by organizing his own military force, and setting forth in a privately chartered ship, the *Hercules*.¹⁰ Fourteen years later it was this very same ship that transported Bucknall-Estcourt to her first imperial posting as wife of a British military officer. Thus, on both voyages the ship was destined for locales where the interests of imperial Great Britain were

closely involved in the outcomes of political rebellion, an irony that was clearly not lost on Bucknall-Estcourt and one that telegraphs the extent of her knowledge of British politics and history. Yet visitors' ability to read and accurately interpret the album's contents would depend greatly on the extent of their intimacy with its creator. What could on the surface be taken as a simple expression of patriotic enthusiasm for a British hero could also, to a more informed eye, allude to Bucknall-Estcourt's passion and to her determination to shape her own life in the face of the indecision of those around her – attributes that, while highly characteristic of a Byronic Romanticism, conformed less easily to Victorian notions of femininity.

The Bucknall-Estcourts sailed on 28 February 1838 and endured a “rough winter passage of four weeks.”¹¹ The range of emotions Caroline likely experienced is reflected in the excerpts she chose to transcribe. In contrast with her own recent demonstration of autonomy, these passages examine how little control we as individuals have over our own lives, and two humorous texts explore how disastrous events can overtake us as a result of minor occurrences. *Dirge on the Memory of Miss Ellen Gee of Kew* is a poem that satirically examines how Miss Gee died after being stung in the eye by a bee, while *The Gatherer* is an amusing parody that had been widely circulated in the media of the era. Based on the Privy Council investigation of the great London Parliament fire of 1834, *The Gatherer* makes fun of the tortuously long and boring report that was produced, but also highlights the senselessness and irony of the devastation that occurred when chimney flues overheated in the effort of burning massive numbers of wooden tally sticks – the by-then-obsolete memory devices for keeping track of numbers.¹²

Two additional passages convey a more serious tone. The first, *On an Altar Tomb*, is a poem that speaks not only of the bravery of warriors who die in battle, but also of the costs accruing to the women who loved them and endure the consequences of their loss. Its author, Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans (1793–1835), was a well-known Irish poet who tried to give voice to women's trials and tribulations.¹³ The second, *Epitaph on Captain Conway Shipley*¹⁴ by Reginald Heber pays homage to the death of Shipley in a British naval battle aboard the frigate *La Nymphe* in 1808 at just twenty-six years of age. Both texts resonate with the risks that Bucknall-Estcourt herself ran in choosing to accompany her husband on his posting to Canada in the midst of a political rebellion. The selections attest to her lively sense of the dangers of a military career and the violence that accompanies political rebellions, and should be seen in context with the tragic fate of the *Hercules's* previous illustrious passenger. Simultaneously, the texts invoke a higher religious power and relinquish control of fate to God. Most obviously, in her choice of verses, Bucknall-Estcourt draws attention to her deep religiosity, while establishing herself in the role of military wife, emphasizing the consequences

that her husband's career might have on her own well-being and the sacrifices that Britons – men and women alike – were called upon to make in the service of England's imperial project.

To Niagara

If Bucknall-Estcourt was circumspect to the point of being cryptic in how she alluded to the personal choices and emotions that surrounded her accompaniment of her husband on his military posting, upon her arrival in Canada she began wearing her imperialist heart on her sleeve. It is noteworthy that although her message becomes more transparent as she enters the very public realm of Empire, Bucknall-Estcourt herself, for the most part, remains hidden, choosing instead to use images and transcriptions authored by others.

There are but few exceptions to this pattern. The first one occurs when Bucknall-Estcourt chose to commemorate the beginning of her first residential posting in Canada, on the Niagara frontier, through the rare addition to her album of a watercolour that she painted herself. *Our Cottage Near the Falls of Niagara* (Fig. 5) depicts the house in which the couple lived on Lundy's Lane – a house that was significant in that it was the first independent home James and Caroline had established together.¹⁵ It has been executed in a style approaching the topographical: the location is identified directly on the painting – “*Our cottage near the Falls of Niagara: Lived there from August 20, 1838 – August 30, 1839*” – and the dry and functional style of the treatment is brought into still sharper focus by comparison with the rich and lush landscape of the area found in a watercolour she painted for inclusion in her husband's album, *Autumnal Tints – Road Behind Lundy's Lane, Falls of Niagara* (Fig. 6). Given the importance of the topographical tradition to Britain's imperial project, Bucknall-Estcourt's choice of pictorial style seems an appropriate one for her portrayal of the artist's first home in one of Great Britain's colonies and it fits well with an image of herself as an imperialist. The depiction of the couple's Niagara home is embedded

5 | Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Our Cottage Near the Falls of Niagara*, 1838, watercolour over pencil on paper, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011073015. (Photo: author)

6 | Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Autumnal Tints – Road Behind Lundy's Lane, Falls of Niagara*, 1838, watercolour over pencil on wove paper, 14.0 × 20.0 cm, James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, C-093924. (Photo: author)

within the transcription of a religious passage asking God to protect those who travel and face battle, and to care for young children and women who labour. If Bucknall-Estcourt's accentuation of the domestic realm is obviously in keeping with the private sphere conventionally accorded to women in the nineteenth century, it is equally clear that with this drawing she was simultaneously inserting herself into the very public realm of Empire and her husband's military career.

Analysis of women's travel writing undertaken by Sara Mills and others, has amply explored the contradictory ideological pressures experienced by women whose implication in the colonial project cast them in active and very public roles as representatives of Empire, even while such roles were frequently denied them as women.¹⁶ This tension was often enabling, and Bucknall-Estcourt's full participation in the imperial adventure is apparent in another sequence in the album. Here she transcribed two excerpts that were published in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book 1836*:¹⁷ *Horse Shoe Fall Niagara*, a passage describing the Falls; and *The Indian Girl*, a poem about an Indian girl who lost her life when her canoe went over the falls. These excerpts are immediately followed by a watercolour, *The Crescent Fall at Niagara from near the Clifton* (Fig. 7), painted by a senior military officer, Sir William John Codrington.

One of the most dramatic features of the Canadian landscape, Niagara Falls, lent itself particularly well to the pictorial conventions of the sublime that were so prevalent amongst British artists. As Marilyn J. McKay writes, British "landscape artists in Canada were using beautiful, sublime, and picturesque drawings and watercolours to 'make' Canada English for themselves and for their English audiences."¹⁸ In Codrington's painting, two individuals, possibly an adult accompanied by a child, are dressed in Western attire. Their presence attests to the accessibility of the site and, by extension, also to the ease with which British colonizers had access to North America. The figures are standing at the shore. Despite their proximity to the falls, they seem protected by the greenery that surrounds them and frames the painting. The sun shines brightly. Including this image in the album allowed family and friends to visualize a notable feature of an important British imperial colony, depicted in a style recognizable as their own. However, when viewed in conjunction with the narrative of the poems, it would also have allowed Bucknall-Estcourt to suggest that the colonizing British knew how to deal with the threatening landscape safely, unlike the indigenous peoples who were portrayed, however counterfactually, as being in need of protection. Codrington's watercolour also provided confirmation that political harmony had been restored, the rebellions successfully quelled, and Britain's imperial rule in North America once again secured.



7 | Sir William J. Codrington, *The Crescent Fall at Niagara from near the Clifton*, n.d., watercolour over pencil on paper, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011061967. (Photo: author)

Bucknall-Estcourt's inclusion of Codrington's image of Niagara Falls also casts some light on the social functions of her album and the company in which it would have circulated. The painting is one of a number that were executed by or copied from the British military artists that Bucknall-Estcourt met through her husband. In addition to Codrington, these included Richard George Augustus Levinge, Godfrey Charles Mundy and William Robert Herries. Both Herries and Levinge are known to have been part of an informal group of amateur artists – the so-called group of 1838 – that formed during the Bucknall-Estcourts' first posting to Canada. Consisting primarily of British military men, and their wives and/or daughters, the group first came to associate with one another in the Quebec City area, but later relocated to Niagara as British troops were displaced. Although no positive archival proof of such a group has been located, surviving works suggest the frequent exchange and copying of one another's watercolour sketches and the strong likelihood of joint sketching excursions.¹⁹ Bucknall-Estcourt has not hitherto been numbered amongst the group's members,²⁰ but her album confirms direct contact with at least one of its adherents – Captain Mundy – who wrote a brief humorous passage illustrated with an ink sketch



directly on one of its pages. It is clear through her album that Bucknall-Estcourt participated in the broader patterns of exchange and sociability that characterized imperial culture in British North America, and this too explains some of its quality of authorial absence: the images of Niagara Falls that Bucknall-Estcourt might have painted (Figs. 8 and 9)²¹ she did not keep for her own album, but gave to her husband for inclusion in his.

The March of the Forty-third

As an upper class British military wife, Bucknall-Estcourt's concern for the imperial interests of Great Britain paralleled her concern for the advancement of her husband's military career. Nowhere is this conjunction of public and private interests more apparent than in her decision to include a 3,500-word first person account – by one Private Townsend of Captain Wright's Company – of an overland trek undertaken by the Forty-third Light Infantry from New Brunswick to Quebec during the dead of winter in December of 1837, before the Bucknall-Estcourts had arrived in Canada.

In November 1837, 300 British soldiers had marched into the Richelieu Valley expecting to make quick work of an armed rebellion led by Louis-Joseph Papineau, whose demands for greater local accountability by elected officials had been resolutely rebuffed by the British. When British forces were dealt an unforeseen defeat by the *patriotes* at St. Denis, military authorities reacted by declaring martial law and calling for reinforcements. Several regiments hitherto stationed in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, including the Forty-third Light Infantry, were urgently ordered to march to Quebec during the bleakest and harshest part of the Canadian winter.

The textual narrative told by Private Townsend and illustrated by accompanying images provides a robust and comprehensive understanding of what the soldiers of the Forty-third Regiment endured that winter. The narrative of the march is prefaced by an ink drawing entitled *1st Division of the*

8 (*facing page, above*) | Attributed to Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *The Great Horseshoe Fall from the Pavilion Hotel, Niagara*, 1838, watercolour over pencil with scraping out on paper, James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, C-093919. (Photo: author)

9 (*facing page, below*) | Attributed to Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *The Horseshoe Fall from Goat Island, Niagara*, 1838, watercolour over pencil on paper with scraping out and gum arabic on paper, James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, C-093917. (Photo: author)



10 | Godfrey Charles Mundy, *1st Division of the 43rd Crossing the River St. John, New Brunswick, on the Ice*, 1837, brown ink, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011073013. (Photo: author)

43rd Crossing the River St. John, New Brunswick, on the ice (Fig. 10) by Godfrey Charles Mundy of the Forty-third. Mundy's ink drawing acquaints the viewer with the vastness of the frozen landscape. In the foreground, a rough sled pulled by two horses carries soldiers bundled up against the cold as it begins traversing the frozen river. Jagged floes of ice ram up against the river's edge and provide obstacles to the sled as it follows a caravan of similar sleds ahead of it. The frozen river occupies most of the picture plane. This, combined with the way the distant shore of the river blurs with the horizon, allows Mundy to convey the magnitude of the task with which his regiment was charged, and the image provides the viewer with a powerful entry point for envisioning a journey subsequently described as "one of the most remarkable movements on record."²² Watercolours and ink drawings by Caroline

Bucknall-Estcourt and William Robert Herries are interspersed throughout to illustrate Townsend's narrative.

One of these illustrations, a watercolour by Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Winter Scene with Men Warming Themselves at a Fire* (Fig. 11) is, in fact, a copy of another watercolour, *Troops Leaving Forest Encampment at Dawn* (Fig. 12), by William Robert Herries, who had participated in the march. The scene depicted by Herries and copied by Bucknall-Estcourt is one of a military encampment beside a lake (possibly Lake Temiscouata). Soldiers partly sheltered by a lean-to constructed of tree branches are seen warming themselves around a fire in the left foreground. Light spills from barracks that surround the lake and soldiers prepare sleds on the frozen ice. Tall evergreens envelope the scene and merge in the distance with the horizon. The golden light of the sky is reflected on the snow-covered roofs as well as upon the frozen lake recalling the effects of early dawn, as described by Townsend in his narrative: "The sun too was just rising, and gilding with his beams the tops of the tallest pines that grew on its bank leaving the rest of the scene in the holy and calm twilight which always precedes the rising of the sun on a clear morning in this part of the world."²³

A keen sense of observation and an adept use of colour allow this early dawn light and the magnificence of nature to be captured exquisitely. Herries and Bucknall-Estcourt direct our attention to the beauty and the danger inherent within the Canadian winter, creating a landscape that is simultaneously sublime and picturesque. The smallness of the foreground figures in relation to the vastness of the natural world that surrounds them creates a tension that is not out of keeping with the uncertainty surrounding England's control over their resource-rich Canadian colony. At the same time, the recognition of the beauty of the Canadian scenery reinforces the value of Britain's territorial acquisitions.

A contemporaneous sense of the significance attached to the winter march of the Forty-third Light Infantry is afforded by Richard Levinge, one of the contributors to Bucknall-Estcourt's album, and himself a participant in the affair. In his regimental history, published in 1868, Levinge comments that: "The moral influence of this march was immense. It convinced the world that there is no season at which Britain cannot reinforce her colonies, while she possesses soldiers whose dauntless spirits never quailed before a foe, or recoiled from any trial or exertion."²⁴ His response comes into sharper focus still when placed within the broader historical context of the times. Imperialists in Great Britain had not yet forgotten the American Revolution,²⁵ and Great Britain was determined that such history should not repeat itself in relation to Canada and the natural resources it provided. The result was a disproportionate and perhaps overly vigorous military response to the Canadian rebellions.



A question remains, however, as to why Bucknall-Estcourt devoted fourteen pages of her album to a trek in which neither she nor her husband had personally participated. Here the public role of Victorian albums might well be recalled: their circulation in drawing rooms and amongst visitors, where they oiled the wheels of social discourse in a society that was highly conscious of position and propriety, and within which women might subtly facilitate their husbands careers. Perhaps Bucknall-Estcourt was playing at politics – trying in some way to publicly associate her husband with the march. Such an association might well have cast him in a positive light to those who would view her album after his return to England. Certainly it would have made his first Canadian posting far more impressive from a military careerist point of view; in fact, by the time James had joined the regiment in Montreal, in June of 1838, the rebellion in Lower Canada had been suppressed, and the rumblings that subsequently sent the regiment to Upper Canada never resulted in open confrontation. James's time in Niagara was, for the most part, spent in doing road survey work.

More likely, however, as a newly-minted military wife travelling on her first overseas posting with her husband, Bucknall-Estcourt was not trying to falsify history as much as to document her own encounter with it. The sequence in which the events are portrayed in the album support such an interpretation. We have seen that her first depiction of this posting to Canada is a watercolour of their home at Niagara, and is immediately followed by a watercolour depicting the Horseshoe Falls. It is only after this that the fourteen pages relating to the march appear. Such a dramatic reversal of chronology occurs nowhere else in the first part of the album and suggests that Bucknall-Estcourt only became aware of the narrative and the existing images of the march at some point after her arrival at Niagara. Thus, their inclusion in her album is faithful to the chronology of events that she herself experienced. While the narrative and images of the march may well have served indirectly to reflect glory onto James, they also functioned as a paean to British imperial might and an expression of Bucknall-Estcourt's own vested interest and pride in the power of the British military to protect British imperial interests.

11 (*facing page, above*) | Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Winter Scene with Men Warming Themselves at a Fire*, 1838, watercolour on paper, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e010964536. (Photo: author)

12 (*facing page, below*) | Robert William Herries, *Troops Leaving Forest Encampment at Dawn*, 1837, watercolour on paper, Royal Ontario Museum, rom2006_7500_1. (Photo: author)

Unravelling Fortunes

The Bucknall-Estcourts returned to England at the beginning of 1840 and were then posted to Ireland for three years. Though Caroline would ultimately continue to work on the album for many years, nothing in it references this period, perhaps because it was a peaceful time with little to link it to the more adventurous undertakings of their Canadian days. In Ireland the couple rented a home, bought a small carriage for outings and sketching expeditions, and enjoyed a satisfying social life.²⁶

More puzzling, however is the absence of any reference in the album to the couple's next colonial posting when, from 1843 to 1846, they returned to Canada so that James might take up a post as British Boundary Commissioner, responsible for working with the Americans to survey and permanently demarcate the Canada-U.S. boundary. Differing interpretations of the border between Upper and Lower Canada and the United States – originally defined by the 1783 Treaty of Paris and executed by the Jay Treaty of 1794 – had become a source of dispute and a cause of increasing conflict between nations.²⁷ The Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 resolved this conflict and redefined the Canada-U.S. border, and in January of the following year James Bucknall-Estcourt accepted the challenge of surveying the new boundary between the source of the St. Croix River in New Brunswick and the intersection of Hall's Stream with the Forty-fifth Parallel in Quebec's Eastern Townships.²⁸ James's position was an important assignment, likely secured through family connections.²⁹ The couple spent the grueling first year of this second Canadian posting near Grand Falls on the St. John River in a tiny settlement consisting of two inns, a barracks and a cottage. Caroline lived in the cottage while her husband spent considerable time working in the wild. In February of 1844 they moved to Quebec City where they would remain until February of 1845, when fieldwork was complete. The final task of writing reports was carried out in the comfort of the British Embassy in Washington, after which the couple returned to England in the summer of 1846.³⁰

This was exactly the sort of imperialist project that earlier pages of Bucknall-Estcourt's album had so enthusiastically celebrated. Yet nothing related to it appears within the album – and this despite the fact that Caroline's winter in the wild became something of a legend in England, such that when the couple was presented to the Queen in 1854, Victoria identified Caroline as that "intrepid lady who had endured the Canadian wilderness."³¹ A number of reasons could explain such an omission: its compiler may have temporarily lost interest in the album, or it might have been left behind in England along with other possessions. What Bucknall-Estcourt could not have known is how fortuitous the exclusion would become to her later project of

defending her husband's reputation against charges of incompetence, for the first of these charges would only surface during the second Canadian posting, when – despite successfully bringing the project to conclusion – James permitted it to go considerably over budget and beyond the time allotted to it. According to her husband's biographer, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt believed that James's career had been irreparably damaged by negative reviews of his performance as boundary commissioner.³² When around the time of his death she returned to her album, it was to find a project unmarred by any inconvenient record of this professional setback.

The concerns for her husband's reputation that unsettled Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt came dramatically to the fore at the end of his military career and continued well after his death. Upon the couple's return to England, James entered the House of Commons. In 1848 he was elected as Conservative MP for Devizes, his family borough,³³ a position he held for six years, until he was once again called to active duty as war with Russia loomed. The fortunes of war seemed at first to shine favourably on James, and in early 1854 he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and appointed Adjutant-General to the British expeditionary force in the Crimea.³⁴ Ultimately, however, the gross incompetence of British military leadership during the conflict would cast a pall over the reputation of many of its senior officers.

As she had at the outbreak of rebellion in Canada, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt chose to be close to her husband, spending the winter of 1854–1855 on board the ship that brought her and her sister-in-law Maryanne to the Black Sea.³⁵ She visited her husband in camp in the Crimea when he was taken ill and was present at his side when he died of cholera on 24 June 1855.³⁶ Bucknall-Estcourt was emotionally devastated by her husband's death – a desolation intensified by the fact that she also felt tremendous guilt at not having demanded that he spend more time resting during the days leading up to his demise. As she wrote to her friend Mrs. Marsh on 29 September, she had been torn between concern for her husband's health and anxiety for his reputation. Certainly, she did not want him to appear unfit for the tasks with which he had been entrusted, for she was fully aware that criticism had been directed against senior officers blaming their incompetence for the inhumane conditions their men were forced to endure.³⁷ Public scrutiny of her husband's character and moral integrity continued posthumously, as his fitness to have occupied a leadership role in the Crimea was called into question.

Given these circumstances, it is striking to consider the way that Bucknall-Estcourt commemorated her husband's death in her album. The event is recorded on a single page bearing two images relating to the Crimean War and an immediately following page containing an extract from Manzoni's poem *Ode to Bonaparte*. As with the poem about Byron, the rationale for

this second inclusion is not immediately apparent, but Bucknall-Estcourt was, in fact, choosing to record the end of her husband's life by recounting an event that memorably marked the beginning of her own development as an imperialist.

On a July morning in 1815, when she was six years old, the British ship *Bellerophon* was moored in Torbay, a locale not far from her home, and it soon became widely known that the *Bellerophon* was carrying Napoleon Bonaparte as prisoner following his defeat at Waterloo. The ship remained moored in Torbay for roughly three weeks prior to Bonaparte's ultimate conveyance to exile and imprisonment on the island of St. Helena. The event drew thousands of spectators to the region to witness Bonaparte's prison ship as well as the defeated Emperor's daily walks on deck, his defeated figure embodying the tremendous imperial strength of the British Crown. It is easy to imagine that the pageantry and excitement surrounding this event might have had a powerful impact upon the young Caroline, and so it is fascinating to see that the page in her album upon which she includes imagery of the Crimea, where her husband died, is immediately followed by another with Manzoni's *Ode*. Without explicitly saying so, Bucknall-Estcourt has linked the death of her husband during a British imperial war with the imperial and martial glory of both Napoleon himself and the empire that defeated him, thus dramatizing both the significance of her husband's career and the profundity of the loss she had experienced. She could not have chosen a grander figure or a more grandiose imperial history with which to link her husband and commemorate his own imperial stature and career.

Life as a Widow: 1855–1886

After the death of her husband, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt made living arrangements in company with her unmarried sister-in-law Maryanne Bucknall-Estcourt at Tetbury in Gloucestershire. Much of her subsequent social life was spent with her extended family of both Bucknall-Estcourts and Pole Carews. She continued to attend the social season in London every year. Nevertheless, her grieving process was arduous and long. Only in June of 1872, a full seventeen years after James's death, did she write in a letter to her friend Mrs. Marsh "that resignation has come at last."³⁸ During this time, two pillars seemed to support her actions and assuage her pain: a deep religious faith, and a concern to set public opinion to rights on the matter of her husband's reputation, which she considered to have been unjustly besmirched.

The portion of the album compiled after the death of her husband represents roughly its final third. Unlike its earlier parts, wherein images are juxtaposed closely to literary passages and serve primarily as illustrations, the

transcribed passages and images now appear to bear little or no relation one to another. Where dates have been inscribed they only confuse the reader, for they vary widely in range and there is no obvious chronological order. Some dates apparently refer to when a given passage was actually being worked on while others relate to times during Bucknall-Estcourt's life as a married woman; still others predate her marriage. At this juncture, the album begins to take on the characteristics of a scrapbook by incorporating more of such keepsakes as letters, postcards and newspaper clippings.³⁹

Victorian culture in relation to the experience of death and the grieving process provides insight into the narrative constructed in this last portion of the album, and by extension into the identity created through it. Romanticism and Evangelicalism alike were important aspects of this process. Both movements encouraged a full and free expression of the emotions that come with the loss of a loved one, and widows were encouraged to talk and write freely of their loss and sorrow.⁴⁰ That Evangelicalism positioned the marriage-bond as a divine institution favoured by God only further emphasized the calamitous aspect of its dissolution through death.⁴¹ In the album, morbid excerpts dealing with grief and loss appear. For example, Bucknall-Estcourt transcribed an excerpt from the poem *Des Mädchens Klage* by Friedrich Schiller, first in German, and then in an English translation:

The oak forest moaned, the heavens look'd grim,
The maiden walk'd forth by the angry stream,
It rush'd on its way with right, with might
And she sang, as she gaz'd on the stormy night
With a dim and tearful eye:
"My heart is dead – the world's a void –
Each wish extinct – each hope enjoy'd
My God! Take back the poor child's breath,
Life's joys are spent – Oh! Give me death!
I have lov'd – Oh! Let me die!"

While contemporary readers of the album might be concerned for the author's safety and the state of her mental health, Victorian readers would, in all likelihood, not have responded similarly. Indeed, what distinguishes Victorian mourning from contemporary grieving processes is its public, performative nature – the intricate conventions of dress that were associated with mourning being only the most visible example.

Transcriptions of religious passages relinquishing control to God now also appear in Bucknall-Estcourt's album. Especially iconic in this regard is her inclusion of an image of the painting of Rosamund Croker by Sir



13 | Sir Thomas Lawrence, *Portrait of Miss Croker*, 1827, print after the portrait, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e011073014. (Photo: author)

Thomas Lawrence (Fig. 13). The painting had been shown in the Academy Exhibition of 1827 and an officer of the Forty-third Regiment had given her a lithographic reproduction of it. Although all who saw the painting remarked on Miss Croker's ravishing beauty, Bucknall-Estcourt quite likely identified with something quite different, for Miss Croker had chosen to live a pious life dedicated to religious and philanthropic work, believing that it was for this purpose that God had chosen to bless her with good looks and excellent health.⁴² Bucknall-Estcourt's total immersion in her religious beliefs may have helped her to endure the sacrifices she had made in her efforts to further the imperial interests of Great Britain. She seemed also to take comfort in her belief in the hereafter, as is reflected in the following passage from "The Stream of Time" which she transcribed into the album:

Methought I saw a stream
The dark bed choked with many ruin'd things,

And all along its' Banks, were cities high,
 And villages, and crests of lofty trees,
 But the Stream pass'd them, then I look'd again,
 And all was gone, but mid decaying piles
 Of homes and towns, and villages, and dwellings fair,
 Vast heaps of smouldering ashes met my eye
 These were the relics of the mortal frame,
 Once full of beauty, and of life, and health,
 But there was something which the stream of time
 Could never reach – the deathless human soul
 It winged its' way thro' boundless realms of space
 Mid which the mortal eye may never pierce
 Where nought but pure immortal rivers flow,
 And Time shrinks back from bright eternity.

Protestantism also reinforced the female role of dutiful wife and guardian of the family⁴³ and during the two years immediately following her husband's death, Caroline was intensely involved in a process aimed at ensuring that he would be well remembered. She followed media coverage of the Crimean War very closely and paid careful attention to the accusations leveled at senior military officers.⁴⁴ Upon her husband's death, she played an instrumental role in having a number of eulogies to him published in England, Canada, and the United States, all written by men.⁴⁵ I contend that she also used her album to ensure James's favourable remembrance in history. Recording the dark and morbid passages in her album afforded her an instrument for the public performance of grieving. However, by also including images of her husband's successes it would have been possible to recount stories of James's military triumphs, thus overlooking the failures of his second Canadian posting and downplaying his role in the demise of British soldiers in the Crimea.⁴⁶

Life-writing

The album does not come to a natural nor definitive end. It simply appears to trickle to a close with a series of almost random images relating to Lady Caroline's life. She added to the album as late as 1875, when she was sixty-six years old. This item appears on the third to last page and consists of a brief note written to her brother-in-law Edward Bucknall-Estcourt by her long-term and dear American friend, George Perkins Marsh, in which he passed along an interesting insight regarding Shakespeare's Hamlet: "Knowing the excessive literariness of your family [I pass along the following.] Hamlet . . . was probably a journeyman who in his early youth had been poisoned by the

Roman Catholics probably by order of King Henry VIII of England!!!” The note likely was included in memoriam of her brother-in-law’s death. I am only able to infer why Bucknall-Estcourt might have selected such a keepsake for inclusion from what she wrote to Mrs. Marsh:

[He] had an excellent library and was very well read . . . We have lost in him a living example . . . [of a man with a] brilliancy of wit and memory which was more like your husband’s than that of anybody else I know, which made him the most delightful companion and the most improving you can imagine.⁴⁷

Bucknall-Estcourt clearly considered both of these men, with whom she had close relationships, to be figures of great intellect, who had provided her with guidance and stimulation as she pursued her own intellectual development, a pursuit that offered her considerable pleasure during this late phase of her life.⁴⁸

As preoccupied with her husband as she remained, however, it is noteworthy that towards the very end of the album she also begins – and for the first time – to incorporate a number of references to her own missionary work, carried out, like James’s endeavours, in aid of Empire. The first reference consists of Ojibwe translations of the Lord’s Prayer, the Collect for Grace, and the Blessing that had been given to her in 1839 by the Governor of Upper Canada, Sir George Arthur. The second is a publication of the “Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,” dating from 1849. Lady Caroline was the artist responsible for the image on the first page, *Travelling Scene in Canada* (Fig. 14).⁴⁹ As minor as these traces seem, particularly when considered within the context of the album in its entirety, they remain evidence of and testament to the work that she herself was involved with during her two Canadian postings.⁵⁰ Certainly, she developed close ties with a number of the missionaries working in North America and expressed concern for their safety during the American Civil War.⁵¹

These examples stand in marked contrast with the rest of the album – where Bucknall-Estcourt’s own participation in the imperial project is celebrated obliquely, and never in her own voice. Although her imperial message was transparent and easily read through the imagery and transcripts she chose to include, the album to this point was characterized by an almost total erasure of herself in the telling of the story; her use of Codrington’s painting of Niagara Falls rather than her own is but an exemplary instance of her strategy on the whole. Why, then, did Bucknall-Estcourt finally choose to memorialize her own contributions in aid of Empire? One possible explanation might be found in the evolving feminist movement in England during the second half of the nineteenth century, as London feminists



14 | Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, *Travelling Scene in Canada*, 1849, wood engraving on wove paper, published in *The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt Album, Library and Archives Canada, e01107301. (Photo: author)

broadened the definition of domesticity to include women's work.⁵² The time Bucknall-Estcourt spent as a widow living with her sister-in-law saw the two women working together to organize educational lectures for women of their parish. Although Caroline busied herself with the religious components of the program, her sister-in-law Maryanne organized lectures promoting the rights of women.⁵³ It was an issue widely in the air, for John Stuart Mill had published *The Subjection of Women* in 1861, advocating for women's rights to self-determination, access to education and social justice. Perhaps such a process of beginning to think about women in a different light allowed Bucknall-Estcourt finally to grant herself permission to memorialize her own work in furthering the interests of imperial Great Britain.

Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt worked on her album for almost forty years as she recorded the important events of her life. Using the visual and material culture available to her, she engaged in a complicated process wherein the event being recorded and the extent to which she identified herself as

recorder of the event came to be situated along a continuum of concealment and revelation. Over time she traced a trajectory from disguising both her message and her own role as messenger to revealing clearly both what she wished to say and that she herself was saying it. As a newly married woman who attained her goal of following her husband on his first military posting to Canada, Bucknall-Estcourt concealed both the achievement and her own role as recorder of what was achieved by using a poem embodying a heavily encoded message. Her belief in and support of the imperial interests of Great Britain were recorded enthusiastically and transparently, but without directly revealing these as her own thoughts; the images and narratives she used were created by others. Finally, as a widow, both her narrative and her own role as recorder of that narrative were allowed to become readily visible to the world: a grieving widow intent on ensuring her husband's legacy while also ultimately acknowledging the importance of her own missionary work in Canada.

NOTES

I am grateful to Dr. Kristina Huneault for her encouragement, guidance, and critique of this essay.

- 1 Samantha MATTHEWS, "Albums, Belongings, and Embodying the Feminine," in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. Katharina Boehm (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 107–08.
- 2 Journal of Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, MIKAN no. 3931084, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Lande also donated printed material to McGill University.
- 3 Kate CHEDGZOY, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36.
- 4 Cornwall Records Office (CRO), Carew Pole Family Papers – as per the family tree, in the Archives at Truro in Cornwall, CG/FX 11a and b.
- 5 Ed JAGGARD, "Introduction" to *An Exceptional Man: Reginald Pole Carew of Antony* (London: Filmer, 2011).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 110–11.
- 7 David LARGE, "General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt," *Transactions from the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 100 (1982): 5. James's grandfather married the daughter of a viscount in 1774 and in 1823, to comply with a will in their favour from her mother's Hertfordshire family, the Estcourts took the additional surname Bucknall. James had already been given the name Bucknall as his second Christian name and thus his full name became James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 7–8.
- 9 Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt to George Perkins Marsh, 21 Apr. 1856, George Perkins Marsh Collection (GPMC), University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library Special Collections, Carton (C) 2, Folder (F) 40.

- 10 Dora Neill RAYMOND, *The Political Career of Lord Byron* (1924; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1972), 191–208.
- 11 Bucknall-Estcourt to Marsh, 21 Apr. 1856, GPMC, C2/F40.
- 12 “The Gatherer,” *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* 24 (1834): 431–32.
- 13 Michael T. WILLIAMSON, “Impure Affections: Felicia Hemans’s Elegiac Poetry and Contaminated Grief,” in *Felicia Hemans – Reimagining Poetry in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Nanora Sweet and Julia Melnyk (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 19–35.
- 14 Reginald HERBER, *The Poetical Works of Reginald Herber* (London: John Murray, 1870), 324.
- 15 Bucknall-Estcourt to Marsh, 21 Apr. 1856, GPMC, C2/F40.
- 16 Sara MILLS, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); CHEDGZOY, *Women’s Writing*; S. FOSTER, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women Travellers and Their Writings* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); and Janet WOLFF, *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Los Angeles: UCLA Berkeley Press, 1990).
- 17 *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book* was one of a number of published pre-made albums that targeted the rising middle classes who desired not only the visible indicators of wealth, but also tangible indicators of knowledge. See Patrizia DI BELLO, *Women’s Albums and Photography in Victorian England* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 42–44.
- 18 Marilyn J. MCKAY, *Picturing the Land: Narrating Territories in Canadian Landscape Art, 1500–1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 48–49.
- 19 Kamille T.H. PARKINSON, “Philip John Bainbrigge and The Group of 1838 Imperial Landscapes and the Colonial Art Scene” (PhD thesis, Queen’s University, 2005), 124.
- 20 Ibid., Appendix A.
- 21 I have attributed both of these watercolours to Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt, despite the Public Archive of Canada’s database designation that *James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt painted The Great Horseshoe Fall from the Pavilion Hotel and The Horseshoe Fall from Goat Island*. This album has been disassembled with the watercolours individually mounted on separate paper along with cutouts of writing from the album pages where they were originally mounted. Both of the cutouts included with these watercolours clearly identify CBE (Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt) as the artist. Wherever James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt is the artist, he is clearly identified by the initials JBBE.
- 22 Sir R.G.A. LEVINGE, *Historical Records of The Forty-Third Regiment, Monmouthshire Light Infantry* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1868), 237.
- 23 Extract from Townsend, Private of Capt. Wright’s Company, “Account of the march of the 43rd from New Brunswick to Quebec and Sorel in the depth of winter, Dec. 1837,” n.p., Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt’s album, LAC.
- 24 Ibid., 37–38.
- 25 Gerald HALLOWELL, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004), 530–31.
- 26 LARGE, “General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt,” 13; Diary of James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt, 22 Mar. 1854, D 1571/F485, Gloucestershire County Records Office (GRO).
- 27 HALLOWELL, *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, 46.

- 28 LARGE, "General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt," 13; Henry Unwin Addington to James Bucknall-Estcourt, 9 Dec. 1842, D 1571/F470, GRO.
- 29 LARGE, "General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt," 13.
- 30 Ibid., 14–15.
- 31 Ibid., 14.
- 32 Ibid., 15.
- 33 Ibid., 13.
- 34 Ibid., 16.
- 35 Bucknall-Estcourt to Marsh, 2 June 1855, C2/F29–39, GPMC.
- 36 LARGE, "General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt," 17.
- 37 Bucknall-Estcourt to Mrs. Marsh, 29 Sept. 1855, C2/F29–39, GPMC.
- 38 Bucknall-Estcourt to Mrs. Marsh, 24 June 1872, C6/F1–13, GPMC.
- 39 Personal albums were created in blank pre-bound books that served as repositories for handwritten transcriptions as well as sketches, watercolours, and ephemera. Around mid-century, catalyzed by increased literacy and widely available printed texts and images, scrapbooks emerged as a distinct type of album, consisting primarily of cutouts of printed material.
- 40 Patricia JALLAND, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.
- 41 Ibid., 2.
- 42 "The Beautiful Miss Croker," *Nelson Evening Mail* (New Zealand), 6 Oct. 1905.
- 43 JALLAND, *Death in the Victorian Family*, 234.
- 44 Bucknall-Estcourt to Marsh, 23 May 1857, C3/F10–19, GPMC.
- 45 Bucknall-Estcourt to Marsh, 23 Nov. 1855, C2/F29–30; 21 Apr. 1856, C2/F40; and 17 Aug. 1856, C2/F40, GPMC.
- 46 LARGE, "General Sir James Bucknall Bucknall-Estcourt," 18. Large concluded that although "James was too kind and courteous and too forgiving to be ideal as the officer chiefly responsible for the discipline of the army . . . it was not a breakdown in discipline which was at the root of the Crimean disasters." Furthermore, "while having no influence in planning or directing operations, he had doubted the wisdom of the whole Crimean expedition and foreseen trouble ahead while the army was still at Varna."
- 47 Bucknall-Estcourt to Mrs. Marsh, 5 Jan. 1876, C6/F52–65, GPMC.
- 48 The level of sophistication she achieved in her intellectual pursuits is well illustrated in the album by an extract from Thomas CARLYLE's *Sartor Resartus*, a book that had propelled Carlyle to the status of a leading literary figure of Great Britain during the nineteenth century.
- 49 MIKAN no. 3931341, LAC.
- 50 This is based on dates recorded in the album. Bucknall-Estcourt obtained the Ojibwe translations during her first posting and created the lithographs during her second posting.
- 51 Bucknall-Estcourt to Mrs. Marsh, 20 July 1863, C4/F36–47, GPMC.
- 52 Leonore DAVIDOFF and Catherine HALL, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchison, 1987), xxii.
- 53 Bucknall-Estcourt to Mrs. Marsh, 11 Oct. 1866, C5/F1–13, GPMC.

Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt : l'identité et la représentation dans un album de l'époque victorienne

PATRICIA SHEPPARD

Au cours du XIX^e siècle, les femmes s'adonnaient à l'activité de loisir populaire de compiler un album d'objets d'une importance personnelle tirés du monde environnant – extraits de littérature, art amateur et diverses babioles – pour les transformer en des constructions complexes multicouches d'identité qui dépassaient la simple accumulation. Volumes reliés en cuir fin, les albums occupaient une place d'honneur dans les salons de l'ère victorienne où amis et famille se réunissaient pour raconter des histoires ou discuter, et où la créatrice de l'album montrait son œuvre aux visiteurs. Sujet de conversation fréquent, les albums personnels ont longtemps servi à enregistrer et même à encoder les souvenirs.

Lady Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt (1809–1886), femme d'un militaire britannique et membre de la noblesse avait constitué un tel album. Elle l'avait reçu en cadeau de mariage en août 1837 et l'avait utilisé pour y verser des pastels, lettres, poèmes et autres objets pendant près de quarante ans, jusqu'en 1875. Les dix-huit premières années de sa collection, elle accompagnait son mari affecté à des postes militaires dans tout l'Empire britannique. Elle a ainsi passé quatre ans au Canada au cours de deux mutations différentes, la première de 1838 à 1840, et la seconde de 1843 à 1846.

Au premier abord, le contenu de son album n'a pas l'air de suivre un ordre chronologique. Quand les dates sont précisées, elles ne sont pas séquentielles, laissant croire à l'observateur occasionnel que l'album ne serait qu'un ramassis de souvenirs classés au hasard. Notons aussi que pas une seule phrase transcrite dans l'album n'exprime la voix de Bucknall-Estcourt. Bien qu'elle soit artiste amateur, elle n'a personnellement créé que neuf des cinquante-quatre croquis et pastels contenus dans l'album. Or, une lecture attentive de l'album révèle la présence d'une narration cohérente, dynamique et très personnelle.

Chose intrigante, Lady Bucknall-Estcourt s'arrange pour remplir son album aussi bien pendant son absence que sa présence. À notre avis, elle utilisait toute une série de techniques de codage pour signaler les événements importants de sa vie. En effet, certains éléments de l'album, détournés et lourdement codés, comportaient des références à des événements profondément personnels d'une manière qui lui permettait de conserver le

contrôle de son intimité. Ces associations, selon toutes probabilités, étaient celles qu'elle n'aurait partagées qu'avec une poignée de membres de sa famille et amis intimes triés sur le volet. En revanche, d'autres techniques lui permettaient d'incorporer plus d'éléments publics de sa vie d'une façon accessible, facile à comprendre des personnes de son époque. En décodant l'album de Lady Bucknall-Estcourt, cette étude explore comment une aristocrate de l'époque victorienne utilise représentativement la culture matérielle et visuelle à sa disposition pour garder le secret ou s'exprimer en accord avec son époque. Les aspects publics et privés de l'album sont menés à bonne fin, dans ses thèmes principaux : l'éloge du projet impérial et de la carrière de son mari.

La documentation relative à la décision de Lady Bucknall-Estcourt de suivre son mari au Canada à peine six mois après leur mariage et la première mutation du couple au Canada constituent à peu près les deux tiers de l'album. Bien que les circonstances inhabituelles qui l'ont conduite à la décision d'accompagner son mari soient extrêmement encodées par les passages littéraires qu'elle a choisi d'intégrer dans l'album, une fois au Canada, elle commémore plus ouvertement sa première mutation résidentielle au service de l'Empire. Bucknall-Estcourt était une ardente impérialiste, caractéristique qui est reflétée dans sa décision de consacrer quatorze pages entières de son album à un récit de 3 500 mots raconté à la première personne – par un certain soldat Townsend de la compagnie du capitaine Wright – d'une marche exténuante entreprise par la Quarante-troisième unité d'infanterie légère, du Nouveau-Brunswick au Québec, pendant la période la plus rude et la plus glaciale de l'hiver canadien. Ce récit est important parce que l'événement précède l'arrivée de Bucknall-Estcourt au Canada et n'avait absolument aucun lien direct, ni avec le séjour du couple au Canada, ni avec la carrière militaire de son mari. La rapidité avec laquelle les militaires britanniques avaient répondu avec succès aux soulèvements au Canada malgré les conditions hivernales extrêmes témoignait de façon impressionnante de la puissance impériale britannique.

Les Bucknall-Estcourt retournèrent en Angleterre au début de 1840, furent mutés en Irlande pendant trois ans et revinrent au Canada en 1843. Nommé commissaire frontalier, son mari était chargé de travailler avec les Américains pour délimiter de façon permanente la frontière canado-américaine entre la source du fleuve Sainte-Croix, au Nouveau-Brunswick, et le croisement de la rivière Halls avec le quarante-cinquième parallèle dans les Cantons de l'Est du Québec. Le couple passa une première année éreintante près de Grand Falls au bord de la rivière Saint-Jean, dans un minuscule hameau comprenant deux auberges, une caserne et une petite maison. Caroline vivait dans la maison pendant que son mari travaillait beaucoup dans les régions sauvages. C'était exactement le genre de projet impérialiste que les premières pages

de l'album avaient glorifié avec enthousiasme. Or, rien lié à cette période ne figure dans l'album –, et cela, même si les hivers de Caroline dans les régions reculées étaient devenus une légende en Angleterre. De nombreux motifs pourraient expliquer cette omission : sa compilatrice se serait désintéressée provisoirement de l'album, ou elle l'aurait laissé en Angleterre. Bucknall-Estcourt n'aurait toutefois pas pu saisir tout le caractère fortuit que prendrait cette omission dans son projet ultérieur de défendre la réputation de son mari contre des accusations d'incompétence.

En 1854, James Bucknall-Estcourt a été promu au grade de brigadier général, puis nommé adjudant général pour la force d'expédition britannique en Crimée où il mourut du choléra le 24 juin 1855. Il faisait partie des officiers supérieurs de l'armée britannique accusés d'incompétence grave et blâmés pour les conditions inhumaines que leurs troupes étaient forcées de subir. Caroline, bien qu'accablée par la mort de son mari, a activement veillé à ce que sa mémoire soit respectée. Nous prétendons que son album lui a servi dans cette démarche. Entrecoupant les passages sombres et morbides liés au chagrin du deuil de l'époque victorienne, elle a inséré des images illustrant les succès militaires de son mari. En inscrivant des passages liés au deuil, son album lui offrait un instrument pour la représentation publique du chagrin. Or, en y versant aussi des images des succès de son mari, il aurait été possible de retracer les histoires de ses triomphes militaires, minimisant ainsi son rôle dans la débâcle des soldats en Crimée.

L'album ne se termine pas de façon naturelle ou définitive. D'après les dates consignées, Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt a alimenté son album jusqu'en 1875 ; elle avait alors soixante-six ans. Aussi préoccupée par son mari qu'elle l'était encore, il convient de noter que vers la toute fin de l'album elle a aussi commencé – et pour la toute première fois – à incorporer de nombreuses références à son propre travail de missionnaire en appui à l'Empire. La première référence consiste en des traductions en ojibwe de prières (*Lord's Prayer*, *Collect for Grace*, *The Blessing*) que lui a données en 1839 le Gouverneur du Haut-Canada, Sir George Arthur. Aussi mineures que soient ces traces, elles demeurent des preuves, et le testament, du travail missionnaire auquel elle a participé personnellement au cours de ses deux mutations au Canada.

Caroline Bucknall-Estcourt a monté son album pendant près de quarante ans, enregistrant les événements de sa vie. À l'aide de la culture visuelle et matérielle à sa disposition, elle s'est engagée dans un processus compliqué où l'événement consigné et son identification à l'auteure de l'enregistrement de cet événement s'inscrivent dans un continuum de secrets et de révélations. Au fil des ans, elle a tracé une trajectoire allant du déguisement de son message et de son rôle de messenger à la révélation claire et nette de ce qu'elle souhaitait dire et de ce qu'elle disait elle-même.



Crafting Empire: Intersections of Irish and Canadian Women's History

ELAINE C. PATERSON

The home arts movement is a valuable and unique part of the history of late nineteenth-century art and display practices and their intersection with Victorian women's working lives. Centrally organized through the London-based Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA), the British home arts movement promoted the concept of handicrafts as an alternative mode of production through the ideal of rural workshops for the hand production of exquisitely crafted objects.¹ Both the Dun Emer Guild (Dublin, 1902) and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild (Montreal, 1905) subscribed to the home arts ideals of advocating the handmade, supporting rural regeneration, and promoting artistic innovation as these gained a global currency at events such as international expositions and world fairs.²

At the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, both the Irish Dun Emer Guild and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild displayed craft objects and their makers for the many international visitors welcomed to the Irish Pavilion and the Canadian Building. Within the Fair, the Dun Emer Guild exhibited at the Irish Industrial Exhibition, organized by the Irish government's Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. This pavilion presented a variety of craftwork produced by Irish home arts and industries associations. Similarly, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild – still, at this time, the Home Arts and Handicrafts Committee of the Montreal branch of the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) – received a substantial grant from the Canadian Department of Agriculture.³

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild exhibit at St. Louis was often presented in glowing terms by the press, with one report describing how “two niches contain green stained oak cabinets, in one of which [is] some lovely Irish lace, made in Canada by the same Irish woman who made the flounces for Her Majesty's [Queen Alexandra's] wedding gown.”⁴ A rare photograph of this craftswoman's lace work was later published in the *Canadian Geographical*

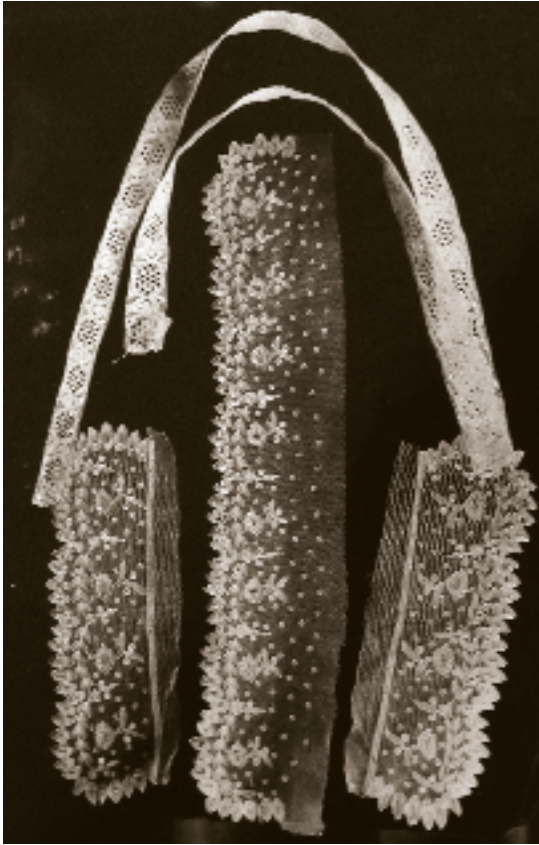
Detail, Dun Emer postcard, ca. 1911. Guild worker May Kerley wears a “rational dress” with Celtic style embroidery, made at Dun Emer. (Photo: Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin)

Journal, which explained that this piece of fine lace had been produced by an “Irish immigrant woman” as part of another Canadian Handicrafts Guild gift, this one to Queen Mary on the occasion of her coronation (1911) and representing “each craft practiced in Canada”⁵ (Fig. 1). In a draft letter to the Queen, Guild members hoped that “these specimens will express to Your Majesty the tribute of many hearts, emanating in various chords and quaint strains, but uniting in one earnest, patriotic prayer for the happiness of Your Majesty.”⁶ The intersections of Irish and Canadian craft history discussed in this paper are embodied in this one anonymous lacemaker – a craftswoman singled out in most accounts of the Canadian Guild and always described in terms of her immigrant status in Canada, her Irish origins, her contribution to these royal gifts and, by extension, her participation in these gestures of colonial deference to the British metropole.

In this article I will highlight the “quaint strains” of Irish Canadian craftswomen in order to explore how women of differing political, social, class, and religious affiliations performed the nation (whether Irish or Canadian) at these guilds through the processes of encouraging, making and displaying beautifully crafted objects. These women were expected to identify with the cultural nationalism imagined by each guild’s middle-class founders and presented in the design and material of the craftwork on view at important international displays, such as the World’s Fair, where it was reported that the Canadian Building housing the display of craft was “the most popular on the ground.”⁷

The historical diversity within Canada is evident in the frequent references to the cultural origins of craft practices promoted by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, including the Irish tradition of lacemaking. In her writing on Canadian historiography, Magda Fahrni underlines the importance of examining “particular localities” in their broader contexts, while keeping in mind their links with other localities, and the ways in which these might be structured by, and participate in, networks of communication and exchange – borrowing, lending and sometimes excluding people, goods and ideas.⁸ It is the existence of such a mutually constituting network of people, craft traditions and material objects that I wish to reveal by exploring the particular intersection of Canadian and Irish women’s history that emerges through the shared international exhibiting activities of the Montreal-based Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the Dun Emer Guild in Dublin, and the Home Arts and Industries Association in London.

In these three different settings – international display, the craft revival of the home arts movement and the guild model – the crafted object worked to establish social relationships among women on a global scale, and these in turn developed a network significant in promoting the creative lives of



1 | Photograph of Canadian Handicrafts Guild lacework by “an Irish immigrant woman.” Published in *Canadian Geographical Journal* (October 1934): 202. (Photo: author)



2 | Photograph of a Dun Emer Guild hand-tufted wool carpet of Celtic design. Published in *The Studio* (January 1905). (Photo: author)

women in Ireland and Canada. In examining this social network, I will begin in Ireland and work my way toward Canada by tracing the working lives of craftswomen involved in this international craft movement.⁹

The Intricacies of Crafting Women’s Social Networks: The Dun Emer Guild

In January 1905, the London-based art journal *The Studio* singled out a magnificent hand-tufted wool carpet with Celtic design woven by rural Irish women working at the Dun Emer Guild (Fig. 2).¹⁰ The journal praised the Dun Emer craftswomen for their ability to produce the swirling interlace pattern of the carpet, something difficult to work in hand-weaving on an



3 | Photograph of the craftswomen of the Dun Emer Guild gathered around its founders: Evelyn Gleeson, centre in black dress, with Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats and Elizabeth Yeats, kneeling with her elbow on her sister's lap. (Photo: Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin)

upright loom. In addition to its visibly Irish design, the object's materials and its makers were also Irish. The "Irishness" woven into this Dun Emer carpet, by both its makers and by the press, indicates how the crafted object is culturally marked and how perceptions of it might change according to variables in what, following anthropologist Igor Kopytoff, we might term its "cultural biography."¹¹

Founded as part of the home arts movement in 1902, the Dun Emer Guild was, in part, a response to increased rural depopulation in Ireland. The three educated, middle-class women who directed the Guild – Evelyn Gleeson (1855–1944) with Lily (1866–1949) and Elizabeth (1868–1940) Yeats – sought to bring together the exhibition and sale of beautiful objects with improved living and working conditions for Irish peasants and rural labourers. The Guild specialized in weaving, embroidery and printing on a hand press. Although most accounts of the Dun Emer Guild focus upon the Yeats sisters, it was Evelyn Gleeson who initiated the Guild and who was responsible for the astounding success of its weaving department (Gleeson is pictured at the centre of Figure 3 among the Dun Emer Guild's craftswomen, ca. 1905).¹²

Following the workshop model favoured by the home arts movement, the Dun Emer Guild was installed in a large home in the Dublin suburb of Dundrum.¹³ The embroidery, tapestry and weaving workrooms were on the upper floor of the house in a large room, while the printing press was set up in a separate room. The Yeats sisters lived with their father some twenty minutes away, but Evelyn Gleeson lived at Dun Emer with her sister, Constance McCormack, and her nieces and nephew.¹⁴ Every Thursday, the workrooms were opened to the public for viewing, along with a display room exhibiting finished works. At Dun Emer, public and private space was conflated, as industry and the buying public converged inside one woman's home.

Under Evelyn Gleeson's guidance, Dun Emer weaving and tapestry regularly won prizes and received awards at national and international exhibitions (including those of the Irish Industries Association, the Royal Dublin Society, and the HAIA). This international acclaim allowed the Guild's middle-class founders to advance an agenda of social and political activism based on fostering the self-sufficiency of women through active creative labour. For Gleeson, this activism had been nurtured during her earlier involvement in both feminist and Irish nationalist organizations. In 1881, she served as the Vice-President of the Athlone branch of the Irish Ladies' Land League – a nationalist organization that rallied support for impoverished tenant farmers.¹⁵ Then in the 1890s, after a move to the English capital, Gleeson became a member of the suffragist Pioneer Club of London, establishing in 1897 a “women's information bureau” in order to help to “raise the position of women, to open them to new avenues of influence and to provide them with wages as good as men's in the same kind of work.”¹⁶ Membership in these organizations foreshadowed her later craftwork, which brought both strands of Gleeson's activism together. A 1911 Dun Emer postcard, for example, depicts May Kerley, a Guild worker, wearing a “rational” dress made by the Dun Emer Guild with Celtic-style embroidery in the form of interlace on the collar, hem and purse.¹⁷ Here, the sense of pride in Irish culture that was evident in the design and material of every object at Dun Emer is conjoined with a feminist concern for women's health, comfort and freedom of movement, and both agendas are intertwined with yet another priority, set out in early Guild prospectuses: that of developing “new trades and industries” by fostering the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the “local talent,” i.e. working-class women.¹⁸

In considering whether the middle-class women who founded this craft Guild succeeded in their practical goal of mentoring others, it is instructive to examine the experiences of Dun Emer craftworkers during and after their time with the Guild. Take the example of May Kerley, seen in the



4 | Dun Emer postcard, ca. 1911. Guild worker May Kerley wears a “rational dress” with Celtic style embroidery, made at Dun Emer. (Photo: Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin)

rational dress of Figure 4. An award-winning weaver and, later, designer, who worked at Dun Emer, Kerley trained with the Guild and ran its stall at several exhibitions before leaving to manage the Glenbeigh Industries in County Kerry. While working at the Guild, Kerley was singled out for special mention by art critics writing in widely circulated newspapers such as the *Times*, and this pattern continued after her move to Glenbeigh. *The Studio*

included regular coverage of Glenbeigh's work, which was also frequently praised in Irish nationalist publications, including the *Irish Homestead*. The Irish paper's review of the Irish Art Industries Exhibition in Dublin (1905) highlighted the Glenbeigh Industries, explaining that "Glenbeigh, we are glad to see, is following the footsteps of Dun Emer, and the rugs exhibited by this industry are delightful."¹⁹ Such instances of home arts industries run by craftworkers from Dun Emer suggest that the Guild did achieve its goals, at least in part, and Kerley's experience confirms Evelyn Gleeson's claim, made in a Guild report of 1905, that the women weavers might "become teachers to others" and be "of material help to their families."²⁰

That Dun Emer women were "of material help to their families" seems clear: the craftswomen were initially paid wages, and as they became more experienced there were options for profit-sharing.²¹ Several instances of siblings working together at the Guild – Rosie and Margery Gallagher in the weaving department, for example – suggest that this craftwork could indeed have had a significant impact on a family's income. Certainly, Gleeson's own family benefited from her artistic training, business savvy, and teaching skills. Her nieces, Grace and Katherine McCormack, were both trained as weavers at the Guild, with Katherine eventually developing into one of the leading designers at Dun Emer, involved in running the organization with Gleeson after the Yeats sisters left in 1908 to form their own Cuala Industries, in nearby Churchtown.²² Thus the Dun Emer Guild can be read as a site of cultural formation and exchange, where meaning and purpose were constantly shifting as workers were given more authority in the design and production of the works, were paid higher wages according to merit, became involved in the daily operation of the industry, and branched off to start other artistic ventures.

Many of these strategies were designed to offer creative work to women in rural Ireland. Indeed, the home arts movement's craft guilds were generally established as a reaction to and a remedy for the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and emigration. Thus, one of the main goals of the Irish Industries Association (IIA) – which was the leading body of the home arts movement in Ireland – was to prevent rural Irish women from leaving the Irish countryside, whether for urban centres or, still further afield, for places such as Canada, which was a frequent destination for the Irish diaspora. Despite the best efforts of the Dun Emer Guild and the IIA, however, emigration remained central to the Irish experience in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, I contend that it is precisely *through* this immigrant experience that an international context for the home arts movement may be established. The concern for emigration, with its narrative of dislocation and ethnicity, in the Irish craft context leads directly to the craft revival

movement in Canada and to the incorporation of “Irishness” into the identity of Canada’s regional and national crafts.

Forging New Bonds of Empire: The Canadian Handicrafts Guild

Some of the earliest and most important exhibitions of craftwork in Canada were organized in Montreal by the Home Arts and Handicrafts Committee of the local branch of the WAAC, notably in 1900 and again in 1902. The first exhibition of artistic craftwork produced under the direction of the Committee set the tone for future displays and was ceremonially opened by Lord Strathcona at Morgan’s, a prestigious Montreal department store. Two years later, in 1902, the Montreal branch of the WAAC opened its own retail location; located downtown on Peel Street, *Our Handicraft Shop* became a prominent centre for the display and sale of Canadian craft (Fig. 5).²³ The Handicrafts Committee of the WAAC’s branch in Montreal became such a going concern that it soon split off to form its own organization, based on the familiar guild model. Thus, in 1905, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild (CHG) was founded, led by the energetic efforts of prominent Montrealers Alice Peck (1855–1943) and May Phillips (1856–1937). Before long, the Guild had also opened a depot on London’s fashionable Bond Street, where objects produced in Canada by Irish women were sold as “Canadian” craftwork to the English cultural elite.

Not surprisingly, the Canadian Guild’s colonial status was a recurring theme in press coverage both at home and abroad. Regarding the WAAC Handicrafts Committee’s inclusion in the 1904 HAIA exhibition, one English reviewer noted that this was “the first time that the English association has had an exhibit from one of the Colonies, so it will be an attractive feature for those interested in handicrafts.”²⁴ Coverage of the 1902 WAAC Montreal show by the British women’s newspaper *Queen* referred to Canada as “that important colony” and the Handicrafts Committee as “doing a splendid work in promoting the revival of these arts and making them known to the outside world.” The review ended by asking its readers: “Would not the creation of an interest in these . . . arts in England do much to encourage their revival, and furnish a new bond between the component parts of the empire?”²⁵

Historian Laura Peers contends that in many ways the empire referred to here existed materially, not simply as networks of people and politics but also of the objects they worked with, exhibited, sold, brought home, commented on, and consumed: that it was an “empire of goods” as much as of political structures.²⁶ Objects and their consumption performed and articulated identity, status and allegiance, acting as potent symbols within the complex cross-cultural realities of colonial society. This is revealed in the exhibiting



5 | Photograph showing the interior view of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild's *Our Handicraft Shop*, ca. 1934, Peel Street, Montreal. (Photo: Courtesy of the McCord Museum, Montreal)

practices of both the Canadian and the Irish guilds, in the movement among various parts of empire of colonial workers (in this case Irish women who embodied particular craft skills and traditions), and in the craft objects themselves. All were participants in a complex transnational network of connections and meanings.

One point of access to this network is through the prominent public figure Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen (Fig. 6). As the former viceregal consort to



6 | Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen, ca. 1900, President of the International Council of Women (1893–1936) and the National Council of Women, Canada (1893–1899). (Photo: Toronto Public Reference Library)

Canada, and patron of the Irish Industries Association, Lady Aberdeen's connections crossed oceans with ease.²⁷ Her mutual interest in the crafts of Ireland and Canada, brought her into correspondence with Alice Peck of the CHG (Figs. 7–8), and the two women exchanged ideas about the promotion of a national craft organization in each country. For example, one letter addressed to Peck from Aberdeen enclosed the most recent report of the IIA (1907), a special edition of the political *Irish Homestead* magazine (1897) and a book about the Home Industries Section of the Irish International Exposition of 1907 with a foreword by Lady Aberdeen herself.²⁸ The two women met in 1909 at a reception hosted by the CHG for the International Council of Women, which was meeting that year in Montreal. Here, Peck addressed Aberdeen and the other delegates by presenting a history of the Canadian Guild's activities. Referring specifically to the Guild's participation in the 1904 English HAIA exhibition, the 1907 Irish International Exposition (Dublin) and a later one in Australia, Peck explained how, "being a strongly imperialistic



7 | Alice Skelton Peck
(1855–1943), ca. 1890.
(Photo: Courtesy of the
Barbara Carter Collection
and Ellen Easton McLeod,
In Good Hands, 12)

guild, we were glad to feel that even in our humble way we might add one little link to the chain that binds the empire together.”²⁹

This network (or chain) of women also extended into Scotland. Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland (née St. Clair-Erskine) was a leading member of the Scottish Home Industries (comparable to the Irish Industries Association and HAIA), and she invited the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to contribute to her 1903 exhibition of Scottish, Welsh and Irish women’s craft at the Women’s Institute in London. Evelyn Gleeson of the Dun Emer Guild also had dealings with Millicent Sutherland. In her 1904 correspondence, Gleeson refers to a Dun Emer rug purchased by the Scottish aristocrat and also enquires, on behalf of May Kerley, about employment opportunities at her Technical Training School in Golspie – on the Sutherland estates and affiliated with the Scottish Home Industries (established 1889).³⁰

This network was structured by class and ethnic identities. Whether at Morgan’s in Montreal or on Bond Street in London, the women who could



8 | Alice Peck on her loom at her summer home in Lachute, ca. 1934. Peck was an accomplished weaver, dyer, printer, and needleworker. (Photo: Courtesy of the Barbara Carter Collection and Ellen Easton McLeod, *In Good Hands*, 23)

afford to buy handcrafted items for sale were not those who made them. Indeed, the home arts industries existed precariously on the line between collaboration and exploitation, social concern, and social control. Both the Dun Emer Guild and the CHG, for example, participated in the 1904 HAIA exhibition, where the artistic elite and wealthy connoisseurs of London frequented their displays and purchased the work made, demonstrated, and sold by rural or working-class craftspeople.³¹ In these exchanges between producers and consumers of cultural goods, taste functioned as a marker of social class. Certainly the Canadian Handicrafts Guild lost no opportunity to highlight the concern for Canadian craft demonstrated by royal and aristocratic English patrons; Queen Alexandra and Princess Louise both purchased goods through the Guild's London depot, as did Lady Grey, who was deeply interested in the development of the home industries in Canada, and the Guild regularly mentioned such prestigious connections in its

published accounts.³² Through such lofty associations, Canadian goods were also made to appeal to many middle-class consumers already well-versed in the patriotism and social consciousness advocated by the guilds. Thus social relationships were developed through the craft objects that women helped to produce, organize, display, distribute, and deploy within the cultural dynamics of colonialism. These crafted objects served to perform colonialism, to articulate this social network in tangible form, at these intersections of community, material object and people.³³

One of the objects in which narratives of class, nationhood and empire intertwine most emblematically is lace: the craft most often linked to Irish settlers in the literature, exhibition material, and press coverage of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild (as may be seen in the 1907 catalogue whose illustrations highlight the lace made by craftswomen of the Guild). The Guild collected lace made in Ireland to serve as exemplars to Canadian craftswomen, and its archives contain several photographs of the exquisite Limerick Lace owned by Canadian supporters, with a “Miss Esdaile” singled out among the collectors. Indeed, the craft’s strong national associations are frequently evident in references, such as these, to the “lovely Irish lace, made in Canada by an Irish immigrant woman,” or the “Limerick lace . . . which gives credit to the dainty fingers of the maids of the Shamrock,” or “the fine point laces from Irish settlers,” and the “cobwebby collar of Irish lace – Carrickmacross.”³⁴

That lace is the craft most often singled out is indicative of its status as a collectable and fashionable object at this time. Yet there is no little irony in the fact that an object so redolent of Irishness would also be made to signify high social standing, for much of the Irish diaspora – including that of Quebec in the nineteenth century – was brought into being by hardship and famine in Ireland. Indeed, many Irish remained impoverished once here and these were among the women the Montreal Guild sought out to offer assistance through craftwork, including lacemaking.³⁵ In her work on Irish lace, however, art historian Janice Helland explains that its history “was intimately related to privilege, wealth and social status and thus attracted consumers who desired to ‘own’ or to display their ownership of these characteristics.”³⁶ Indeed, lace was more recognisably elite than almost any other fabric, according to Helland, and attracted collectors who purchased it in much the same way that they purchased jewels or paintings. Certainly in photographs of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild’s exhibitions throughout this time, lace is usually displayed behind glass, apart from the other textiles, as art object rather than wearable item, signalling to the viewer its privileged status.

Notable lace collections mentioned in Canadian Handicrafts Guild literature help to trace the network of international connections and

associations that cohered around this particular material object. These include the collection of Mary F. Fisher (Mrs. Roswell C. Fisher), sister-in-law of Sydney Fisher, Canadian Minister of Agriculture when his Department awarded the Guild a grant to participate in the St. Louis World's Fair. Mary Fisher's impressive lace collection was loaned to the Guild and formed the majority of the work displayed in a 1907 exhibition. Fisher's sister, Dr. Octavia Grace Ritchie England, was also active in the larger Canadian community through her work in women's health and suffrage, as well as her involvement with the International Council of Women whose publication *Health of Nations* (1906) she helped to write and to which she represented Canada as a delegate at the 1914 Council meeting in Rome. Given this, it is also likely that both sisters knew Lady Aberdeen, who was president of the International Council of Women for thirty-six years. Lady Aberdeen was also a staunch promoter of both Irish and Canadian craft, and was of material support to the CHG during its participation at the 1907 Dublin International Exhibition.

These and other exchanges over lace on the part of elite collectors and the Guild highlight the social relationships established or maintained through this valuable textile.³⁷ Despite the vast social, cultural and geographic divides of oceans and international borders that separated these women, all were participants in a colonialism whose effects continued to be felt in both Ireland and Canada during the time period under consideration and which set the terms of the "dynamics of contact between distinct cultures."³⁸

One such term of shared contact – revealed through the exquisite craft objects produced by women and displayed for international consumption at large-scale events – was a transnational concern about the effects of emigration on craft production. The Irish and Canadian cultural narratives are strikingly similar here, with the worry over emigration familiar from the Irish context closely paralleled by apprehensions about rural depopulation that shaped the Canadian Guild's own mandate. A 1903 flyer of the Handicrafts Committee (frequently quoted in the press) explained:

The encouragement of an industry within the home solves in a great measure the problem of keeping the brightest and most intelligent of our young women in their own homes . . . preventing emigration to the cities and large manufacturing in the [United] States . . . Those who know country life in Canada realise the fact that money on a farm is scarce, to the women almost unknown, hence discontent among the younger members, and flight to the independence of the city . . . Now is the time to prevent our home arts – those brought in to us by our immigrants – all already on the decline, from disappearing altogether.³⁹

The parallel narratives of emigration (between countries and within them) set out in Guild rhetoric involved a complex layering of gender, class, age and ethnicity onto the reception of Canadian craft in the international settings its founders sought for the craftwork.

Increasingly, Canadian nationalism took its place amongst these factors, as the former colony sought to develop its own national identity – a project necessarily rendered complex by the settler histories of much of its population. A changing relation to the imperial centre thus underwrote the dynamics of contact established through objects and spread across networks, and this mix of interests is apparent in the coverage accorded to the Dublin exhibition by the English-Canadian press in Montreal. Predictably, reviews of the event exuded colonial deference for “the kindly interest shown in the Canadian Handicrafts exhibit” by their Excellencies Lord and Lady Aberdeen, to whom “the Guild is much indebted.”⁴⁰ The rest of the review, however, struck a slightly different and more self-interested note: “It is hoped that the interest taken in this exhibition of Canadian work abroad will help the workers here, and that Canadian home industries will take their proper place both at home and abroad.”⁴¹ That Canadian industries were worthy of such a place was a clear undercurrent in press descriptions of the Canadian Building as “a most popular place,” being “charmingly decorated with the materials made by our Canadian workers, and attract[ing] much admiring attention.” Notably the Canadian-made laces on display in the building were presented as comparing “most favourably with the laces of the Irish Home Industries” – a rather lofty claim, given the considerable reputation of Irish lace at this time.⁴²

Canadian-made Irish lace was part of a nascent and uniquely diverse Canadian national identity, together with the full range of crafts marketed by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and it is noteworthy that the Guild itself was intimately tied to some of the nation’s flagship institutions and organizations. As “Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals” were starting to be held across the country, the Guild’s objects were presented at exhibitions sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and sold at its popular hotels. The Guild was also sponsored by the Canada Steamship Lines, which distributed Canadian Handicrafts Guild pamphlets to its immigrant travellers as they entered the ports of Montreal and Quebec.⁴³

In seeking to understand the cultural biography of Canadian-made Irish lace, questions of class, colonialism and ethnicity thus coincide with those of national self-image. Canadian craft historian Sandra Flood suggests that in the late nineteenth century craft was seen as having a “unique and pivotal role in constructing a national image, in nation building and in providing a common meeting ground between the component ethnic groups” within Canada.⁴⁴ It is, therefore, critical to explore issues of ethnicity within the Canadian

craft community, in this case specifically with regard to the Irish immigrant women settling in the province of Quebec.

The ideal of a “Canadian mosaic” – a vision of a united Canada comprised of distinct cultural identities (popularised most prominently by CPR publicity agent John Murray Gibbon later in his CPR-sponsored Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals) – surfaces throughout Guild literature and display practices, including St. Louis. The American press singled out the display of Canadian craft at the Fair, commenting: “a new and very interesting feature of the Canadian Pavilion at the World’s Fair is the exhibition of handicrafts from Quebec . . . Fine point laces from . . . Irish settlers of that province are exquisite both in pattern and execution.”⁴⁵ At the Fair, these Irish settlers were expected to perform their past (via these material objects) while at the same time being asked to proclaim their allegiance to their present and future in Canada. Participation in these visible exhibitions of difference under the unifying label of Canadian craft enacted a mosaic of comfort, utterly non-threatening, where ethnicity was made manageable.⁴⁶

In this way, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild established an international reputation and presented its craftwork as a government-endorsed signifier of a unified vision of “Canadian” craft, despite the varied backgrounds of its producers (including those recently emigrated from Ireland). In this instance, any “Irishness” associated with the work by its newly-arrived makers was absorbed into the cohesive Canadian identity presented by the Guild. At the World’s Fair, St. Louis, the craftwork of women from the Irish countryside was viewed both as uniquely Canadian (in the case of emigrant women) or purely Irish (in the case of those who remained), depending on where it was displayed.

Histoires croisées: Approaches to Women’s History in Ireland and Canada

From the “Irishness” of the Dun Emer carpet illustrated in *The Studio*, by way of the St. Louis World’s Fair, to the Irish lace displayed as some of the finest examples of Canadian craft, this essay has sought to think transnationally about the impact of the home arts notion of the craft guild and workshop as a socially collaborative experiment. The “educative nationalism” of the Irish Dun Emer Guild was woven into the fabric of every item produced in this home art industry, while this same impulse is evident in the Canadian context through the lens of the mosaic.

Both the Dun Emer Guild and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild operated at the intersection of what Peers suggests are the most intimate frontiers of empire, those of the home, the family and, most significantly for my purposes, the things one made and used within those spaces. The material

objects crafted at these guilds offer evidence of a wide social network of women engaged at these frontiers (of home, family, craft object, its making and use), advocating sustainable craftwork for women in Ireland, to prevent emigration, and in Canada, to keep women actively engaged in rural communities.

That this story, within Canada, centres on activities of women in Quebec is apt. As historian Magda Fahrni has observed, an “implicit separatism” plagues Canadian historiography, wherein Quebec is often written apart from the rest of Canadian history and experience. Yet as Fahrni notes, Quebec, in its history of double European colonization and complex relations with successive metropolises, offers a lens through which to understand Canadian history in terms of a multiplicity of transnational relations.⁴⁷ Thus, by focussing on the Irish experience within Quebec as it contributed to a Canadian craft identity that was showcased to the world at international venues (the HAIA shows, world fairs, Irish expositions, among others), this essay is one attempt to avoid such separatism. In its place, I suggest that an important facet of the Canadian experience is revealed by understanding the relationships – professional, creative, and activist – among many different women *across* several borders. Foregrounding a social network of women working with other women (whether rural women, working-class women in industrial centres such as Montreal, or wealthy pillars of elite society such as Lady Aberdeen and Alice Peck) provides a basis from which to develop a transnational approach to craft history as it emerged within the context of the late-nineteenth-century home arts movement.

Thus, rather than offering multiple histories for comparison, the overlapping and parallel histories of the Dun Emer Guild and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild are presented here instead as *histoires croisées*, or for their “processes of mutual influencing, in reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions,”⁴⁸ where they form an exciting part of *one* history – that of the international home arts movement. This history is traced through the migration of ideas, of women and of exquisite craft objects along these intimate frontiers of empire. Untangling the *histoires croisées* of these networks of women committed to the craft revivals of Ireland and Canada provides a useful model for the task of writing Canadian women into a wider, more global craft history.

NOTES

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- 1 HAIA was founded in 1884 by the British social reformer Eglantyne Jebb.
- 2 These two guilds were run independently from the HAIA but regularly exhibited at its annual shows and followed the lead of the earlier English Association's model for craft revival. All three are instances of the *international* scope I am claiming for the home arts movement. For an excellent historical background to the home arts movement, see Janice HELLAND, *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries, 1880–1914: Marketing Craft, Making Fashion* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2007); and, in the Canadian context, see Ellen EASTON MCLEOD, *In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press for Carleton University, 1999).
- 3 The Canadian Guild also sent some of its craftswomen to the Fair to run the exhibit and then remain for six months to promote Canadian craft in the United States. This was a successful strategy with commissions for Guild work coming from prominent organizations including, among others, the Chicago Art Institute and the Women's Art Club of Chicago ("Of Interest to Women: Women's Industries: Canadian Exhibit at St Louis Much Admired," *Daily Witness*, 29 Dec. 1904). For more on the craft guilds at the St. Louis World's Fair, see E.C. PATERSON, "'Meet Me in St. Louis': Emigration and Craft Revival in Nineteenth-century Ireland and Canada," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* (forthcoming 2013); draft histories and archival material related to the Women's Art Association of Canada, Montreal branch, are available in the Fonds P125 at the McCord Museum Archives, Montreal, Canada. The WAAC remains active. Accessed 16 July 2013, <http://www.womensartofcanada.ca/>
- 4 "At St. Louis Fair," *Winnipeg Telegram*, 1904. Press Clipping Book 1904–1905, Canadian Handicrafts Guild Archives, Montreal, Canada, (CHGA).
- 5 *Canadian Geographical Journal* (October 1934): 202.
- 6 Canadian Handicrafts Guild Draft Letter to Queen Mary, 1911, CHGA.
- 7 "Canada At the World's Fair." Press Clipping Book 1904–1905, CHGA.
- 8 Magda FAHRNI, "Reflections on the Place of Quebec in Historical Writing on Canada," in *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History*, ed. C. Dummitt and M. Dawson (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2009), 20.
- 9 This exploration of craft history as an international network differs from much of the literature which tends to focus instead on the regionalism and/or nationalism of craft. There are two significant exhibition publications that offer an international view of the better known Arts and Crafts Movement: Karen LIVINGSTONE and Linda PARRY, eds., *International Arts and Crafts* (London: V&A Publications, 2005); and Wendy KAPLAN, ed., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World* (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004). Yet both of these exhibitions presented national manifestations of this Movement as a comparative series rather than closely attending to the interconnections developed through this Movement among those involved with the crafts in each geographical area.
- 10 The Guild was named after the Lady Emer, the wife of Irish legend Cúchulainne, famed for her skill in needlework.
- 11 Igor KOPYTOFF, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

- 12 This emphasis on the Yeats sisters over Evelyn Gleeson in writing on the Dun Emer Guild may be, in part, due to their famous brother the Irish poet W.B. Yeats's involvement as editor of the Dun Emer Press (the poet, at times, also provided some financial support to the Press). As a result, Gleeson's important feminist and nationalist influences on the Guild, along with questions of gender and inter-arts relationships, have not yet been fully addressed in the literature. Karen BROWN's *The Yeats Circle: Verbal and Visual Relations in Ireland, 1880–1939* (London: Ashgate, 2011) touches briefly on this as does my own "Crafting a National Identity: The Dun Emer Guild, 1902–1908," in *The Irish Revival Reappraised*, ed. J. Murphy and B. FitzSimon (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 106–18.
- 13 For more on the workshop as an organizational model, see Elizabeth CUMMING and Wendy KAPLAN, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).
- 14 Geraldine Plunkett Dillon Memoirs (transcribed by her granddaughter, Honor O'Brolchain, from notebooks in her possession as well as from interviews recorded in the 1980s, and deposited at the National Museum of Ireland). My thanks to Honor O'Brolchain for sharing her work with me.
- 15 Historian Margaret Ward explains that the formation of the Ladies' Land League signalled "an acceptance (albeit temporary) of women's right of entry into the public sphere. They were no longer sporadic participants in the defence of community and home, but members of a movement that included women from different class and religious backgrounds, united in a shared identity." Margaret WARD, "The Ladies' Land League and the Irish Land War 1881/1882: Defining the Relationship between Women and Nation," in *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ida Bloom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (New York: Berg, 2000), 229–43; see also Adrian N. MULLIGAN, "By a Thousand Ingenious Feminine Devices': The Ladies' Land League and the Development of Irish Nationalism," *Historical Geography* 37 (2009): 159–77. For more on women's social activism in Ireland, see Maria LUDDY, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 16 Letter to Augustine Henry, 15 June 1897. Evelyn Gleeson Papers, National Library of Ireland.
- 17 For a detailed discussion of the political and social implications of rational dress, particularly as they relate to women's suffrage in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, see Diana CRANE, "Clothing Behaviour as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 3:2 (June 1999): 241–68; and the historical AGLAIA: *The Journal of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union* (1893 on).
- 18 Draft of Guild prospectus intended for potential shareholders, Evelyn Gleeson Papers, Trinity College, Dublin.
- 19 "Irish Art Industries," *Irish Homestead* (1905).
- 20 Dun Emer Guild Report, 1905, Evelyn Gleeson Papers, Trinity College, Dublin. The report listed thirteen women working at the Guild in 1903 and nineteen women by 1905.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 For more on the history of the Guild, see PATERSON, "Crafting a National Identity," 106–18.

- 23 Minutes of Meeting, 30 Nov. 1904. Women's Art Society of Montreal Fonds, P125, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
- 24 "Home Arts and Industries" *Argus* (6 May 1905).
- 25 Maud OGILVY, "Review of the 1902 WAAC exhibition of crafts in Montreal," *Queen* (24 May 1902), 865.
- 26 Laura PEERS, "Material Culture, Identity, and Colonial Society in the Canadian Fur Trade," in *Women and Things, 1750–1950: Gendered Material Strategies*, ed. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (London: Ashgate, 2009), 55. I thank Janice Helland for drawing my attention to this work.
- 27 It is worth noting that Lady Aberdeen was viceregal consort of Canada (1893–1898) and then vicereine of Ireland (first, briefly, in 1886 and again in 1905–1915) during the time frame discussed in this essay. For more on Lady Aberdeen's work in Ireland with the Irish Industries Association, see Janice HELLAND, "The Performative Art of Court Dress," in *Women Artists and the Decorative Arts 1880–1935: The Gender of Ornament*, ed. Bridget Elliott and Janice Helland (London: Ashgate, 2002), 96–113; and her "Rural Women and Urban Extravagance in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Rural History* 13:2 (2002): 179–97. For more on Lady Aberdeen's time in Canada see Carolyn MACHARDY's essay, "Kodaking and Being Kodaked: The Guisachan Album of Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen," in this special issue.
- 28 *The Irish Homestead* (1895–1923) was a weekly journal founded by Sir Horace Plunkett as the organ for his Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Its editors included T.P. Gill, 1895–97, and George Russell, 1905–23. The journal advocated self-governance or Home Rule but not militant nationalism.
- 29 Alice Peck, Draft of address delivered at the Montreal reception of the International Council of Women, 1909, CHGA.
- 30 "Thursday: Exhibit of Canadian Women's Work," 29 Oct. 1903. Press Clipping Book 1904–1905, CHGA: "work on view is to be sent on November 1st to London, Engl. To be shown at the Women's Institute in connection with the handicrafts of the Welsh, Scotch and Irish women." Janice Helland discusses the Scottish Home Industries and Millicent Sutherland in *British and Irish Home Arts and Industries*.
- 31 At the 1904 HAIA exhibition, Dun Emer embroidery won five stars, two of which were gold (Draft of Guild prospectus intended for potential shareholders, Evelyn Gleeson Papers, Trinity College, Dublin). The Canadian Handicrafts Guild Archives (May 1904–October 1905) lists a large shipment of objects to the 1904 HAIA Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall, London, confirming the significant presence of the Guild at the show in London (CHGA, CII D1 029 1905).
- 32 "Canadian Industries in the Home," *Industrial Canada* (March 1907): 646.
- 33 PEERS, "Material Culture, Identity, and Colonial Society in the Canadian Fur Trade," 69.
- 34 "Handicraft of the Women of Canada" *Winnipeg Telegram*, 1904, and the Press Clipping Book 1904–1905, CHGA.
- 35 The history of the Irish diaspora in Quebec is unique in Canada. Layers of religious, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and class affiliations mark the complexity of the Irish experience in Quebec. Among the most significant groups of immigrants to the province, after those from France and England, the Irish in Montreal and Quebec consisted of up to ten per cent of the population in each city throughout the nineteenth century (Canada Census 1911, vol. 2, 372–74). In the Canadian social context, Irish immigrants were typically among the poorest of newcomers, confined

to jobs and neighbourhoods of low social standing (examples in Montreal include work on projects such as the Victoria Bridge and the Lachine Canal, with many unskilled Irish labourers living in areas known as Griffintown and Pointe St. Charles). This immigrant community was also ravaged by disease en route to and while awaiting entry to Canada, most notably in 1847 at the height of the Famine in Ireland when thousands of Irish died at Grosse-Île, Canada's main quarantine station from 1832 to 1937 and a required stopover for immigrants on their voyage up the St. Lawrence River to the Port of Quebec. These experiences left many Irish children orphaned, some of whom were fostered by Catholic French Canadian families (and many of these children kept their Irish surnames), further adding a layer of complexity to the Irish Canadian identity which is specific to Quebec.

By the time the CHG was promoting the craftwork of these Irish settlers in the early twentieth century, however, the Irish in Quebec had the collective will to establish North America's longest running St. Patrick's Day Parade (est. Montreal 1824) and the financial wherewithal to build St. Patrick's Basilica (1847), the mother church of the English-speaking Catholics of greater Montreal (see <http://stpatricksmtl.ca/>, accessed 16 July 2013).

For more on the history of the Irish in Quebec see Ronald RUDIN, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec, 1759–1980* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1985); Robert J. GRACE, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993); Marianna O'GALLAGHER and Rose MASSON DOMPIERRE, *Eyewitness: Grosse Isle, 1847* (Sainte-Foy: Livres Carraig Books, 1995); and Simon JOLIVET's *Le vert et le bleu: Identité québécoise et identité irlandaise au tournant du XXI^e siècle* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2011), particularly his chapter on cultural nationalism within the Irish (and, by extension, Irish Canadian) and French Canadian contexts.

- 36 Janice HELLAND, "'Caprices of Fashion': Hand Made Lace in Ireland 1883–1907," *Textile History* 39:2 (November 2008): 216.
- 37 While lace is the tie that binds these disparate people, other material objects, such as woven rugs and embroidery, created similar social relationships. A Dun Emer rug, for instance, brought Millicent Sutherland into contact with Evelyn Gleeson and this led to shared exhibitions, discussions over labour, and exchanges over opportunities for other working women.
- 38 FAHRNI, "Reflections on the Place of Quebec in Historical Writing on Canada," 16.
- 39 "Canadian Home Arts and Handicrafts," *Montreal Star*, 9 Jan. 1904.
- 40 A clipping in the 1907 press scrapbook of the CHG notes that "when Miss [Christine] Steen, who was in charge of [the CHG] section [at the Dublin International Exhibition] was obliged to return to Canada, Her Excellency arranged that Miss Paton of Cork . . . be left in charge of the Handicrafts exhibit." CHGA.
- 41 Review of Canadian Handicrafts Guild participation in the 1907 International Exposition in Dublin, Ireland (in Canadian Building) by "the Montreal press," 17 Aug. 1907. Press Clipping Book 1907, CHGA.
- 42 Reviews of 1907 International Exposition in Dublin, 17 Aug. 1907. Press Clipping Book 1907, CHGA.
- 43 James MURTON, "La 'Normandie du Nouveau Monde': la société Canada Steamship Lines, l'antimodernisme et la promotion du Québec ancien," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 55:1 (Summer 2001): 3–44.

Interestingly, a substantial lender of lace to the CHG was the Scottish-born professional Montreal photographer Alexander Henderson (1831–1913) who had been Manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway Photography Department in the 1890s and who was best known for his book *Canadian Views and Studies* (1865). Alexander Henderson Fonds, McCord Museum, Montreal.

- 44 Sandra FLOOD, *Canadian Craft and Museum Practice, 1900–1950* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2001).
- 45 *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 31 July 1904. Press Clipping Book 1904–1905, CHGA.
- 46 Stuart HENDERSON, “‘While there is Still Time . . .’: J. Murray Gibbon and the Spectacle of Difference in Three CPR Folk Festivals, 1928–1931,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 39:1 (Winter 2005): 139–74. The ideal of the mosaic, evocative yet ultimately imaginary, is described by GIBBON in his *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation*. As Henderson notes, Gibbon’s view of the “modern Canadian nation,” or mosaic, was made up of various ethnic groups, each subject to the dominant “founding races” of British and French. This representation of a pluralist Canada was built upon a stable foundation of “white Anglo-Celt (male) hegemony” (HENDERSON, 140, 152).
- 47 FAHRNI, “Reflections on the Place of Quebec in Historical Writing on Canada,” 2.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 17. For a useful analysis of the differences between comparative history and *histoire croisée*, Fahrni suggests J. KOCKA’s “Comparisons and Beyond,” *History and Theory* 42:1 (2003): 39–44.

L'art domestique et l'Empire : L'histoire croisée des femmes irlandaises et canadiennes

ELAINE C. PATERSON

Pan important et unique de l'histoire de l'art et des pratiques d'exposition de la fin du XIX^e siècle, le mouvement de l'art domestique touche la vie professionnelle des femmes de l'époque victorienne. Centralisé à la Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA) de Londres, le mouvement des arts domestiques britanniques favorisait l'artisanat comme mode parallèle de production et prônait l'idéal de la fabrication manuelle d'objets d'art dans des ateliers ruraux. Aussi, la promotion du travail à la main, la revitalisation rurale et l'innovation artistique représentaient-elles des idéaux auxquels adhéraient la Dun Emer Guild (Dublin, 1902) et la Canadian Handicrafts Guild (Montréal, 1905). Ces idéaux étaient d'ailleurs de plus en plus en vogue dans le monde, notamment dans les foires et les expositions internationales.

En 1904, à l'exposition universelle de Saint-Louis, L'Irish Dun Emer Guild et la Canadian Handicrafts Guild avaient présenté les œuvres et leurs artisans aux nombreux visiteurs internationaux que les pavillons irlandais et canadiens avaient accueillis. Lors de cette foire, la Dun Emer Guild participait à l'Exposition industrielle irlandaise, organisée par le Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction d'Irlande. Ce pavillon présentait un grand choix d'objets artisanaux produits par des associations d'entreprises et d'artisans irlandais. La Canadian Handicrafts Guild avait aussi reçu une subvention substantielle du ministère de l'Agriculture du Canada.

L'exposition de la Canadian Handicrafts Guild à Saint-Louis avait souvent reçu des critiques élogieuses de la presse. Un compte rendu faisait notamment la description de deux niches qui contenaient des armoires en chêne teint en vert, dont l'une était garnie d'une jolie dentelle irlandaise, confectionnée au Canada par la même artisane irlandaise qui avait fabriqué les volants de la robe de mariée de Sa Majesté. Une rare photographie du travail de dentelle réalisé par cette artisane a été publiée ultérieurement dans le *Canadian Geographical Journal*. On y expliquait que cette pièce de dentelle fine avait été produite par une « immigrante irlandaise » et faisait partie d'un présent offert à la Reine par la Canadian Handicrafts Guild. Les croisements de l'histoire de l'artisanat canadien et irlandais étudiés dans le présent article sont incarnés par cette dentelière anonyme – artisane citée dans la plupart des récits de

la Canadian Guild et dont la description mentionne toujours son statut d'immigrante, ses origines irlandaises, sa contribution à ces cadeaux royaux et, par extension, sa participation à ces gestes de déférence coloniale envers la métropole britannique.

Dans notre article, nous soulignons l'expérience des artisanes canado-irlandaises afin de découvrir comment les femmes de diverses affiliations politiques ou sociales, ou encore de classe ou de religion différente, ont représenté la nation (qu'elle soit irlandaise ou canadienne) au sein de ces guildes en encourageant, en réalisant et en exposant de magnifiques objets d'art. Ces femmes devaient s'identifier au nationalisme culturel, tel qu'il avait été imaginé par les fondateurs de classe moyenne de chacune des guildes et présenté dans le design et le matériau de l'objet exposé dans les foires internationales importantes, comme l'exposition universelle de Saint-Louis, dont le bâtiment canadien abritant les travaux artisanaux était, selon certains dires, « le plus prisé de tous ».

La diversité historique du Canada est manifeste dans les allusions fréquentes aux origines culturelles des pratiques artisanales promues par la Canadian Handicrafts Guild, notamment la tradition irlandaise de la dentellerie. Dans ses écrits sur l'historiographie canadienne, Magda Fahrni souligne l'importance d'examiner les « localités particulières » dans leur contexte étendu, tout en gardant à l'esprit leurs liens avec d'autres localités, leurs méthodes de structuration éventuelle et leur participation aux réseaux de communication et d'échange – emprunt, prêt et parfois, exclusion de gens, de marchandises et d'idées. C'est l'existence de ce réseau mutuellement constitué de personnes, de traditions artisanales et d'objets matériels que nous souhaitons révéler en examinant le croisement particulier de l'histoire des femmes irlandaises et canadiennes qui apparaît à travers les activités partagées d'exposition internationale de la Canadian Handicrafts Guild de Montréal, de la Dun Emer Guild de Dublin, et de l'Home Arts and Industries Association de Londres.

Dans les trois différents cadres examinés – les expositions internationales, la revitalisation de l'artisanat entraînée par le mouvement des arts domestiques et le modèle de la guilde –, les objets artisanaux ont joué un rôle dans l'établissement des relations sociales entre les femmes à l'échelle mondiale, et celles-ci ont à leur tour développé un réseau important pour la promotion de la vie créative des femmes en Irlande et au Canada. Pour étudier ce réseau social, nous commençons en Irlande et poursuivons jusqu'au Canada afin de suivre la vie professionnelle des artisanes participant à ce mouvement international.

Du tapis « typiquement irlandais » de la Dun Emer illustré dans *The Studio* (1905), grâce à l'exposition universelle de Saint-Louis, à la dentelle

irlandaise exposée comme l'un des plus beaux fleurons de l'artisanat canadien, cette dissertation cherche à réfléchir sur l'influence transnationale de la notion d'arts domestiques réalisés dans des ateliers et sur la guilde artisanale en tant qu'expérience de collaboration sociale. Si le « nationalisme éducatif » de la guilde irlandaise Dun Emer était incrusté dans chaque objet produit par cette industrie artisanale, cette même impulsion était manifeste dans le contexte canadien à travers la lentille de la mosaïque.

La Dun Emer Guild et la Canadian Handicrafts Guild ont fonctionné à la croisée de ce que l'historienne Laura Peers appelle les frontières les plus intimes de l'Empire, celles de la maison, de la famille, et plus particulièrement des objets confectionnés et utilisés dans ces espaces domestiques. Les objets matériels réalisés dans ces guildes témoignent d'un vaste réseau social de femmes engagées dans ces frontières, d'une part en Irlande, en faisant la promotion de l'artisanat durable auprès des femmes pour empêcher l'émigration, et d'autre part au Canada, en encourageant leur participation dans les collectivités rurales.

Une facette importante de l'expérience canadienne est révélée en comprenant les relations qui existent – dans la profession, la création et le militantisme – entre de nombreuses femmes différentes à *travers* plusieurs frontières. La mise en avant d'un réseau social de femmes travaillant avec d'autres femmes (qu'il s'agisse de femmes des régions rurales, d'ouvrières dans des centres industriels comme Montréal, ou de femmes riches, piliers de la haute société, comme Lady Aberdeen et Alice Peck) jette les bases de l'élaboration d'une approche transnationale de l'histoire de l'artisanat, tel qu'il apparaît dans le contexte du mouvement des arts domestiques à la fin du XIX^e siècle.

Les histoires chevauchantes et parallèles de la Dun Emer Guild et de la Canadian Handicrafts Guild sont présentées ici comme des *histoires croisées*, où elles forment une partie passionnante d'une *seule* histoire – celle du mouvement international des arts domestiques. Cette histoire relate la migration des idées, des femmes et des objets d'art le long de ces frontières intimes de l'Empire. Démêler les *histoires croisées* de ces réseaux de femmes vouées à la résurgence de l'artisanat de l'Irlande et du Canada constitue une façon utile d'inscrire les femmes canadiennes dans la vaste histoire mondiale de l'artisanat.



“And thereon lies a tale”: Canadian Women Missionary Artists in China

CATHERINE MACKENZIE

In the Toronto holdings of the Archives of the United Church of Canada can be found an arresting photographic image (Fig. 1) of a tiny woman who, though surrounded by heavy carved furniture and a march of posters along one wall, seems to dominate the room through the thin pen that firmly anchors her hand to a neatly organized, productive desktop. The function and name of the sitter – “Press artist Mrs. Kitchen” – is provided on the back of the photograph. Its location in the Foreign Missions Photograph Collection quickly leads researchers to a fuller identification. Pictured is Beatrice Irene McDowell Kitchen (1887–1947), a Canadian woman who worked as the principal artist for the Canadian (Methodist) Mission Press in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China from ca. 1922 until her death.¹

A carefully constructed image, the undated photograph is accompanied neither by the maker’s name nor by any indication of its intended use. As such, little stands in the way of allowing it to service a range of conversations about Euro-Canadian women within the Protestant missionary sphere in China in the first half of the twentieth century. With its decisive positioning of woman as producer of that which is for public rather than domestic consumption, it is tempting, certainly, to interpret the photograph as an invitation to investigate the ways in which Canadian Christianity constructed its overseas female mission workers as models for the “modernizing” of Chinese attitudes towards women. Such a venture would not be without value: the words hovering closely around Beatrice Kitchen during her lifetime reveal a mission world much taken up with, indeed troubled by, its long-standing, self-imposed mandate to rescue China’s women. One of Kitchen’s drawings, specifically of a policewoman, was used in 1929 to illustrate a section entitled “Exalts Womanhood” in a United Church of Canada publication by Rev. Leslie G. Kilborn. The text defended the missionary refusal to stop challenging traditional Chinese values, even though this left the “poor old-fashioned male . . . bewildered by seeing women in government,

Detail, Harriet MacCurdy, *Untitled*, pastel on board, ca. 1926, collection of Julien LeBourdais, Ontario. (Photo: Julien LeBourdais)



1 | *Press artist Mrs. Kitchen*, n.d., Foreign Missions Photograph Collection, United Church of Canada Archives, 1999.001P/2788. (Photo: United Church of Canada Archives)

in the professions, in industry . . . and . . . [finding himself] in court . . . because he took a concubine.”² At almost the same time, Rev. Richard O. Jolliffe, overall supervisor of the Canadian Mission Press, revealed himself to be much less certain about the subject during a speech he gave in Toronto to the Dominion Board of the Women’s Missionary Society of the United Church. As reported by *The Globe*, he was concerned with what might follow from the gains in freedom for Chinese women: “It is a precarious experiment, this giving women their freedom in any land, viewed from the standpoint of civilization . . . It has been claimed for China that no nation has been able to exist and retain its civilization except China and she has done it by keeping her women in bondage.”³

Appealing as it might be to glance but occasionally at the Toronto photograph while focusing on the conflicted gender politics of the Canadian missionary movement, more highly qualified historians have already waded into those waters.⁴ Here I will give the artifact a much more direct role, using it as a call for art historians to both search for and consider from an art historical perspective the production of women, including McDowell

Kitchen, who may still be tucked away in missionary terrain. To be sure, the photograph must still wrestle with its missionary origins, never more strongly than when the urge to read agency, indeed control, into the person of “Mrs. Kitchen” runs up against a 1937 description of her issued by Rev. Jesse H. Arnup, Secretary of the United Church of Canada Foreign Missions:

[A] demure and unobtrusive little woman works to the limit of her strength as illustrator for the Press. And thereon hangs a tale. In the days of her youth, she was an artist of girlhood dreams of great achievement in her chosen career. Then came the call to China and missionary service. Only one circumstance made [the] decision difficult; in China, with all the duties of the missionary, she saw no room for her beloved art. Finally, the choice was made and the prospect of an artistic career was given up out of loyalty to her Lord. But the Master Artist had other plans for her. The work of the West China Press has presented a greater opportunity and a wider field than ever were compassed by her girl-hood dreams . . . The Lord of beauty found a place for the talent she was willing to surrender for His sake.⁵

However, at a time when art historians brought together under the aegis of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI) are asked to think about what might be done to ensure that significant gaps do not haunt the crafting of any new history or histories of women and art in Canada, the photograph can be engaged just as usefully in another campaign.⁶ It can ground an assertion that the vigorous Canadian involvement in the global missionary movement needs to be mined closely for the presence of women artists. No matter how the commissioner and the maker of the image conceptualized a female “Press artist,” the resulting photograph points to a reality: at least one Canadian woman took artistic training and fascination for the visual into the missionary field with her. Where there is one such individual there are liable to be more, and when more in fact are found, thought needs to be given as to how these expatriates should figure in the stories about women and art in Canada. The focus here will be on mainland China, where Canadian missionaries from Protestant denominations were thick on the ground in certain provinces from the late nineteenth century through to 1959, but the Canadian share of the larger missionary globe beckons as well.

If Canadian enthusiasm over the late nineteenth-century decision by Christians to evangelize the world is not as well-known as it once was, research since the 1970s has begun to insist on its significance, attaching understandable urgency to reading its impact on native communities. China has come under scrutiny as well and not without good reason. Alvyn Austin’s

publications, most notably his *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888–1959*, as well as numerous studies of denomination-specific initiatives, have reawakened consciousness of an important era which preceded the heroics of Dr. Norman Bethune, even as it created the conditions for his acceptance in China.⁷ These studies have pressed out some indelible mental images of what once was an almost inescapable part of the Canadian experience: massive recruitment gatherings in university halls, torchlight parades through streets to send off those who had been persuaded, gruesome newspaper reports of the fate of local missionary heroes, and the like. Similarly, striking utterances – many not likely to be forgotten quickly as scholars probe the history of Canada-China relations on any number of fronts – have been excavated, with, for example, Hudson Taylor, a British missionary leader, evoking in 1888 an iconic Canadian image as he tried, successfully it turns out, to pull on Canadian hearts: “There is a great Niagara of souls passing into the dark in China. Every day, every week, every month, they are passing away! A million a month in China are dying without God.”⁸

As the twentieth century dawned, accumulations of missionaries associated with Canadian Protestant denominations began to form in a number of areas in China, hoping to staunch the perceived loss of souls. The Presbyterian Church, urged on by Chinese-Canadian converts, established small footholds in what became the South China Mission of the United Church of Canada in 1925.⁹ The northern part of Henan province attracted a large contingent of Canadian Presbyterians, brought there under the leadership of Jonathan Goforth and his wife, Rosalind, perhaps not inconsequentially the daughter of the well-known artist John Bell-Smith, sister of Frederic M. Bell-Smith and herself having trained at the Toronto School of Art before leaving for China.¹⁰ In the southern part of Henan gathered a group of Canadian Anglicans whose presence in Kaifeng is recalled quickly today when walking through the Bishop White Gallery of Chinese Temple Art at the Royal Ontario Museum.¹¹ Above all, Canadian Methodist, later United, Church activities in Sichuan province, headquartered in the capital Chengdu, took shape as a symbol of Canadian zeal for “teaching, preaching and healing.”¹² By the beginning of the 1920s, this West China Mission, overlooking Tibet and serving huge portions of the largest province in China, had some 200 missionaries “and was regarded as one of the most professional anywhere in the world.”¹³ The Methodist Church of Canada was also one of the five Protestant denominational groups (the others being from the United States and the United Kingdom) to found and operate the West China Union University in Chengdu, popularly known as Huada. Serving a population base of some 100 million people, this Christian institution benefitted from the presence of faculty with degrees from all of Canada’s major institutions. The medical and dental colleges, the latter established

by the Canadian Rev. A.W. Lindsay, were considered outstanding centres of education and research, and a recent article points to Canadian contributions to the innovative sociology program pioneered by Harold Deeks Robertson, a University of Toronto graduate.¹⁴

It is a search across this vast terrain that the Toronto photograph is being asked to solicit. The “discoveries” recounted here are intended to do little more than suggest the rewards of such travel, even if the “pencil dipped in fire to paint the condition of this people” sought by Hudson Taylor has not been and may never be found.¹⁵ A full survey of Canadian missionary involvement in China will not be quick. Major centres of Canadian activity are there as obvious stops, but since Canadian Protestant denominations were somewhat later than their American and British counterparts in establishing operations, some Canadians joined in the work of other English-language groupings and continued to do so long after national options became available. Such was the route to China of Harriet Russell MacCurdy (1883–1961), a new recruit for the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative’s consideration. Hattie, as she was often called in official sources, elected to become part of an American Presbyterian mission located in a province, Anhui, with no Canadian centre and one of the lowest per-capita missionary ratios in the country.

MacCurdy, a member of a *Blue Book* family centred around her father, Rev. Dr. James Frederick McCurdy, at times a controversial theologian and the indisputable champion of Aryan-Semitic studies at the University of Toronto, left for China in 1913.¹⁶ Signing on as an evangelical and educational worker funded by the Central Presbyterian Church of New York City under its Women’s Work program, she was stationed until 1941 in that Church’s prized overseas mission in Huaiyuan, a small walled town of about thirty thousand located 150 miles north of Nanjing.¹⁷ She taught women students in the town’s Bible school, proselytized to gatherings of women in tiny villages throughout the region and was highly enough regarded as an educator to replace the furloughed head of the Bible Teachers Training School for Women in the capital city of Nanjing from 1930–1931.¹⁸ Working alongside respected evangelical and medical missionaries, many of whom had been associated with her father’s Princeton alma mater, MacCurdy was a delegate to various important religious gatherings in China, and penned accounts of Huaiyuan missionary activities and general conditions in China for mission organizations and publications. Like so many of her peers, she was directly caught up in the changing political and military landscapes of early twentieth-century China, forced to wait out “anti-foreign” activities in 1927 in Qingdao and, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, protecting refugees who had managed to escape the horrors inflicted upon the people of Nanjing.¹⁹ Her writings were almost invariably optimistic, even when dealing

with the Japanese conflict. They were guided by the experiencing of “Christ’s reconciling love” as she listened to “the prayers of the Chinese for Japan, and of the Japanese for China,” and by the conviction that “God-control” would provide “the completion of the world’s needs.”²⁰ This refusal to accept the power of aggression may have been what attracted her to the ideas of the Oxford Group, the predecessor organization of the Moral Re-Armament revivalist movement: she attended one of its renowned house parties in England in 1934 while on furlough.²¹

Against this backdrop of sustained public performance as a missionary, it is perhaps not surprising that Harriet MacCurdy was described in a 1948 *Globe and Mail* article as a retired missionary with “a life-long hobby of painting.”²² Sadly, this characterization of her art-making masked a much more interesting MacCurdy, a woman who appears to have carefully maintained two distinct professional identities.

MacCurdy’s missionary identity was certainly of enormous and anything but accidental significance, having emerged as it did within a context in which the spiritual needs of the individual and society were never distant abstractions. Her paternal and maternal grandfathers had been Presbyterian ministers, her maternal uncle, who visited Toronto frequently, was a Presbyterian minister in Oyster Bay, Rhode Island, and enjoyed a close and very public friendship with Theodore Roosevelt, while certain cousins, either a generation at remove or immediate, had a virtual lock on Presbyterian periodical publishing in Canada.²³ When she decided in 1910 to enter the new Berlin-based Sozialen Frauenschule der Inneren Mission for a year of study, she would not have been a naïve recruit to the idea of social action.²⁴ The same must be said for her decision to take up the cause of China after she had spent several months in Jerusalem with her father, who at the time was head of the American School of Oriental Research in that city.

The only one of four MacCurdy children to take up religious work, Harriet’s interest in making art probably developed earlier than her desire to enter what could be called the “family business.”²⁵ She was associated with Mary Ella Dignam and the Women’s Art Association of Canada (WAAC) from her early teens and followed up her occasional studies at the University of Toronto with a year (1905–1906) at the Art Students League in New York City.²⁶ By the time she took up in 1909 what proved to be a temporary position as an art teacher at Toronto’s Westminster Ladies College, she had acquired an exhibition record that spanned several years, covered three Canadian cities (Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa) and was pleasantly embellished with favourable reviews. Her contribution, *A Harmony in Yellow*, to a 1901 exhibition of the WAAC was said to be “very suggestive of talent and individuality,” and the *Montreal Gazette* heaped praise on a large painting of hers that was part of the Women’s Art Exhibition held in Montreal

in November 1903: “[it] shows capital mastery of palette knife . . . and is remarkable for its wonderful atmosphere and shadow.”²⁷

In 1908, she participated in one of the Thumb-Box Exhibitions held at the W. Scott and Sons’ Galleries, Yonge Street, Toronto, exhibiting alongside several associate members of the Royal Canadian Academy and other professional artists of future consequence for Canadian art.²⁸ This successful, educated encounter with the art world went into the luggage MacCurdy took with her to Huaiyuan, and moved back and forth across oceans with her in the years to come. On her first furlough home in 1919–1920, she held a solo exhibition through the auspices of the WAAC in Toronto, and then headed south to New York City.²⁹ There she organized a solo exhibition of paintings of the “Holy Land” and China in the Touchstone Galleries – a show that was favourably reviewed in the *New York Tribune* – and showed two works with the Society of Independent Artists.³⁰ Part of her second full furlough in 1925 was spent negotiating a visit to the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia so she might study the Cezannes, a serious campaign conducted without reference to her status as a missionary. Instead she mustered the support of two prominent New York women, always identified in the press as daughters of the former Secretary of War under Grover Cleveland, but independently active in various art-related capacities.³¹

MacCurdy’s third official home leave, 1933–1934, embraced “an attractive” solo show at the WAAC in Toronto, which saw her hang paintings made in China, on her trip home through Russia, Germany and England, and during the summer months in Ontario, the latter capturing “the rock and pine beauty of the Georgian Bay.”³² The WAAC event also featured fundraising through the sale of embroidery made by students in Huaiyuan. Another border crossing led to “Pastels of Chinese and Korean Temples” at the short-lived Etcetera Galleries in New York City, an exhibition which the *New York Times* briefly acknowledged for its “appealing” views of Mount Taishan, one of the most visited pilgrimage and tourist sites in China.³³ 1941 was supposed to have been another furlough year, but the onset of war between Japan and the United States while she was back in North America prevented MacCurdy’s planned return to China. What had almost certainly been intended as her normal brief excursion into the New York art scene was converted into an exhibition, “Pastels of China,” at the Guy Mayer Gallery, the proceeds of which were to be used for educating Chinese women and for famine/flood relief.³⁴ “Vigorous work, this,” was the verdict of the important New York critic Howard Devree, while *Arts Magazine* focused on its “green pleasantries.”³⁵

This line-up of North American exhibitions might lead one to assume that MacCurdy thought of herself as a missionary in China, someone who but squeezed painting into a few spare moments she could grab, and as a

public artist when “at home.” In fact, geographic distance was not required for her to assert herself in the visual realm: the English-language press of Shanghai records the appearance of MacCurdy the artist at least twice during her years in China. She placed work in a group exhibition mounted by the city’s British Women’s Association (BWA) in 1923, with pastels that “charm[ed] through their strong use of colour and thoughtful composition.”³⁶ No fewer than one hundred objects – oils, watercolour, pastel, pencil and pen and ink – comprised a solo exhibition the BWA organized in December 1927. One press review included photographs of two of her pastels, a fairly rare occurrence, while another celebrated her “touch of brilliant colour such as is rarely to be seen in this drab town.”³⁷ Such acclaim might be dismissed as inevitable gratitude from a starving expatriate community, but to do that would be wrong. Sometimes ridiculed by their contemporaries, British and American women worked very hard to construct a lively Western art milieu in the “Paris of the East.” The Shanghai English-language critics who engaged with their efforts were demanding of local amateurs and professionally trained expatriate artists, some of whom had had work “hung on the line” at the Royal Academy.³⁸ They did not go easy on visiting artists either.

Although research on daily life in Huaiyuan and its smaller missionary outposts is thin, nothing encountered so far in missionary literature suggests that MacCurdy’s art was thought to have aided her evangelical and educational duties. The founder of the Huaiyuan mission had, early in the century, celebrated his missionaries’ “kodak pictures of their homes and the scenes about them, which are often thrown upon the screen” as a way of maintaining homebound interest, but a placement of MacCurdy’s work in the realm of public relations is not evident.³⁹ Nor, based on what can be learned through the titles of her artworks, the photographs of the few pastels that to date have been retrieved and the reviews of her accomplishments, can one presume a foregrounding of her missionary occupation in the making and the general reception of her art. Rather, her production can be associated quite happily with the creations of her secular, predominantly female peers in China. She pictured temple compounds (Fig. 2), Venetianized waterscapes (Fig. 3), popular pilgrimage sites, and landscapes of the places such as the seaside resort of Beidaihe in which individual foreigners and whole missionary communities gathered in the summers to avoid the heat. The responses to her work, whether in China or North America, satisfied what had come to be expected in secular societies of such imaging: a normalization of the “foreign” for expatriates and a taste of far-off China for those who could not visit a place of fascination.⁴⁰

Once MacCurdy was unable to return to China, she converted her art into a form of mission service. Additionally, and possibly to enhance fundraising possibilities, she dramatized the conditions of production, writing for *Who’s*



2 | Harriet MacCurdy,
Untitled, pastel on board,
ca. 1926, collection of
Julien LeBourdais, Ontario.
(Photo: Julien LeBourdais)

Who of her “evangelistic travels in China by wheelbarrow, donkey, rickshaw, ox-cart, small river boats.”⁴¹ Upon her death, what had once been described as a hobby and might later have been thought of as purely instrumental activity was simply forgotten, left out of obituaries in the *New York Times* and the *Globe and Mail*.⁴²

A rich history of Canadian art, whether general or focused on women, might very well cede a small if vibrant space to MacCurdy, a lifelong supporter of the understudied Women’s Art Association of Canada. One of many women of the early twentieth century who sought to use their professional training to perform in the public sphere, she enjoyed some



3 | Harriet MacCurdy, *Untitled*, pastel on board, ca. 1926, collection of Julien LeBourdais, Ontario. (Photo: Julien LeBourdais)

success in at least three countries and two continents, a range obviously not available to the majority. She might also warrant a footnote in discussions of the friendship circles and conversations that sustained Canadian artists at home. Her sister Isabel, an active proponent of women's suffrage and a major supporter of the WAAC, along with her brother-in-law, the lawyer Frank Erichsen-Brown, ran a Toronto home and a Georgian Bay cottage made warm for the likes of A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), Lawren Harris (1885–1970), Will Ogilvie (1901–1989), and Fred Varley (1881–1969).⁴³ Harriet spent time in those environments when not in China.

More than a corner in any history of Canadian art is likely to be required for Beatrice McDowell Kitchen. Simply put, the “unassuming little” sitter for the photograph mentioned earlier was probably Canada's most prolific image maker from the early 1920s through the mid-1940s, with vast audiences collecting around her work. If MacCurdy urges us to look in small American or British-run centres of missionary activity for Canadian “sisters of the



4 | Cecil Beaton,
*Typesetting at the Canadian
Mission Press, Chengtu,
Szechuan, China, 1944,*
Imperial War Museum, IB
2652c. (Photo: © Imperial
War Museum)

brush,” McDowell Kitchen’s existence reveals that highly productive women missionary artists can sink from view even when they lived their lives in the midst of major, highly visible overseas Canadian populations. McDowell Kitchen was not tucked away. She lived for twenty-one years in a city of half a million people until the War Against Japanese Aggression, followed by the onset of the Second World War in the Pacific, flooded it with many more people and brought it increasingly into the view of the world press.⁴⁴ Moreover she worked for an important organization. From its foundation in Chengdu in 1905, the Canadian (Methodist) Mission Press had been the only Christian press west of Hankou and in the late 1930s it stepped forward to provide shelter for a number of displaced Christian literature agencies. Cecil Beaton’s memorable 1944 image of typesetters (Fig. 4), taken the year before McDowell Kitchen left for a furlough in Canada, speaks eloquently to the stature of the Press during wartime, when it added printing for the British Ministry of Information to its agenda.⁴⁵

Unlike MacCurdy, Beatrice McDowell Kitchen had not been born into a prominent religious family. She was raised in a reasonably successful southern Ontario farming household, her father being an executive member of the

local agricultural board and her mother having been a schoolteacher prior to her marriage.⁴⁶ At about the time her parents left Ontario for a series of western Canadian locales, McDowell trained in commercial art in Toronto and Chicago, and by 1911 had begun what was described at the time in a small Ontario newspaper as a successful career as an illustrator and cartoonist in Vancouver.⁴⁷ Once her parents settled in Griffin, Saskatchewan, she is said to have worked for the catalogue division of Eaton's Department Store, probably submitting her "sketches of elegant dresses, hats and shoes" in Regina.⁴⁸

In 1918, Beatrice McDowell married John Kitchen, a newly minted, British-born Methodist minister who had earlier apprenticed in the United States as a printer. Two years later they set out to be missionaries in China, Beatrice having long passed the age of the "girlhood dreams" mentioned by Arnup. The couple and the first of what would become three daughters were supported by the Saskatchewan Conference Board of the Methodist, later United, Church of Canada, part of a contingent of twenty missionary personnel being sent from across Canada to West China that year.⁴⁹

After two years of language training in Junghsien, the Kitchens moved to Chengdu. John became the pastor of a small church and, befitting his professional training, operations manager of the Canadian (Methodist) Mission Press. A photograph taken just before the arrival of the Kitchens shows a largely Chinese staff of close to one hundred already associated with the Press, and for good reason: by 1920, 3.5 million pages of religious text were being produced every month, in a variety of languages including Tibetan, Lisu, and Hua of the "Miao Tribesmen," with work being shipped out to fourteen of China's eighteen regular provinces. Money was brought into the enterprise through a Book Room, the sale of paper and ink and the printing of books for secular organizations.⁵⁰ Under Kitchen's management, all these activities were to flourish.

Effectively non-salaried, with relatively small spousal funding having been rolled into her husband's compensation, Beatrice McDowell Kitchen quickly began to fill what became an enormous portfolio of visual work, almost always signed with her name or the initial 'K,' for the Press and its clients.⁵¹ She illustrated the new monthly Chinese-language newspaper *Christian Hope* (Fig. 5), offering both picturesque perspectives on the country and images to support such pointed endeavours as the anti-opium campaign.⁵² She supplied designs for small religious and health-related tracts distributed throughout the region, for children's booklets and for the four-to-five colour lithographic posters, prior to 1940 printed in Shanghai, used by missionaries when they presented in market towns. From 1931 on, as part of a growing emphasis on visual evangelism, she was intensely involved with the making of images for Sunday school teaching, a number of which fortunately have survived



5 | Beatrice McDowell Kitchen, cover illustration for *Christian Hope* 8:1 (1931). (Photo: author)

and are held by the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, UK (Figs. 6 and 7).⁵³ They were simple, charming drawings, made to “appeal to the young mind” and finely tuned to the social values encouraged by the missionary community. Requests for samples were received from as far away as Singapore, some were used in Shanghai and, according to one source, by 1941 tens of thousands of comparable sheets designed by McDowell Kitchen were going directly into Chinese homes each week, in addition to those being used more traditionally at Sunday School gatherings.⁵⁴

Just as the Press itself had to stretch to meet the call upon its services during wartime, McDowell Kitchen had to ramp up her activities, one suspects no mean feat for an individual whose work schedule was anything but leisurely. Included in new responsibilities was the task of providing illustrations for *The Christian Farmer*, an important Chinese-language publication on progressive farming, the headquarters of which had been forced to move from North China.⁵⁵ Her drawing pencil animated the pages of other displaced journals and newspapers.



6 | Beatrice McDowell Kitchen, *Image for Sunday School Teaching*, William Gawan Sewell Collection, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, SOAS PP MS 16, 06.04. (Photo: Courtesy of Ruth Baker)

Various forms of evangelical activity were thus given visual appeal and instructional assistance by McDowell Kitchen and the wood-block cutters and lithographers she directed. But she also contributed heavily to the community comprised of missionaries, whether the expatriate North Americans and British who had flocked to Chengdu or the missionary administrators and supporters located across the seas. She embellished the much-treasured, interdenominational *West China Missionary News* from time to time and supplied illustrations for some of the papers the missionary-scientists in Sichaun proudly published in their *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*.⁵⁶ Her work appeared in a number of books written by Canadian missionaries/mission administrators, where she was fully credited under the name Beatrice McDowell Kitchen for having provided “Art designs.” Perhaps reflecting both her busy schedule and the perceived prestige of her designs,



7 | Beatrice McDowell Kitchen, *Image for Sunday School Teaching*, William Gawan Sewell Collection, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, London, SOAS PP MS 16, 06.04. (Photo: Courtesy of Ruth Baker)

some were used rather like stock photographs. An image of a well-ordered landscape with terraced hills and peaceful farmers working in the fields was, for example, inserted into a stinging critique of Confucianism in one text and then functioned eighteen years later in a book by a different author to register “the poignant background of the human scene in West China.”⁵⁷

In the midst of all this targeted production, a place was carved out by the Mission Press and by the Methodist/United Church of Canada for McDowell Kitchen’s presence as an “artist” whose work was said to appeal both inside and outside organized faith. While still studying the Chinese language in Junghsien, and fulfilling no specific illustrative mandate, she allowed page after page of her drawings addressing such themes as physical labour in China and the activities of children to be reproduced in *The West China Missionary News*.⁵⁸ The response to these images persuaded the Press to publish them

8 | Beatrice McDowell
Kitchen, cover for *Toilers of China*, 1923. (Photo: author)



in inexpensive portfolios printed on “good drawing paper.” Thus was born *Toilers of China* in 1923 (Fig. 8). Described as a “small artistic volume,” the little book, which might also “enable us to bring home this thought [Bitter Labor] to those who sit in smug comfort in our homelands,”⁵⁹ was joined a year later by *Chinese Children: Pen and Ink Sketches from Chinese Life*, deemed to be an appropriate Christmas souvenir for those in the field and in the “homeland.”⁶⁰ Filled with images she later told the *Globe and Mail* had always been drawn from life, these books, along with her proselytizing images, resulted in her being given in 1935 the title of “the Jessie Willcox Smith of China” by a writer for the *International Journal of Religious Education*, an American publication.⁶¹ The choice as a reference point of Willcox Smith (1863–1935) – known throughout North America for her renderings of children in books and on covers for such wildly popular publications as *Good Housekeeping* – was interesting.⁶² It placed McDowell Kitchen within a framework of dignified illustrative art rather than the commercial art background from which she had come but which was never mentioned in missionary sources. It also meant that the Canadian woman’s visions of



9 | Elizabeth Otis Dunn, *Chinese Babyhood*, watercolour, as reproduced in *China Journal of Science and Arts* 4:5 (December 1926): n.p. (Photo: author)

Chinese children were seen as extensions of a “natural,” everyday North American compassion for childhood, rather than as the type of small “exotics” created by such American artist-visitors to China as Helen Hyde, Bertha Lum and Elizabeth Otis Dunn (Fig. 9).⁶³ When McDowell Kitchen died in the crash of an airplane taking her back to Chengdu, some of her more fully worked-up images of children, the kind of scenes which functioned so well to attract support for mission work, were published in a memorial booklet entitled *For Such is the Kingdom of Heaven*.⁶⁴

On both sides of the Pacific, then, Beatrice McDowell Kitchen was a known art producer, although she did not have an exhibition profile per se in Canada. In China, her reach would have been large indeed: as one of her eulogists insisted, “Her initial ‘K’ came to be known all over China,” underwriting both her mission-specific and her “artistic” visualizations.⁶⁵ Her audience in Canada would have been more restricted, although the number of people who followed what went on in missionary fields should not be underestimated. Nor should the impact of a very complimentary article about her appearing in the *Globe and Mail* of 15 June 1946, be discounted. While

discussing the picturesque details of her producing life in China, her “rare understanding” was emphasized and significant recognition for her work was claimed from “Westerners active in the field of art in China.”⁶⁶ In other words, she was granted credibility on two continents.

McDowell Kitchen’s individual practice openly invites scholarly consideration, the outlines of which are only beginning to come into view. Given an awareness of MacCurdy’s very different career, a fuller picture might recognize a particular framework for McDowell Kitchen’s production, one keeping largely intact the category of “missionary artist.” Discovered on mission terrain, MacCurdy could and did exist autonomously, albeit sporadically, outside the compound, whereas McDowell Kitchen lived, from 1920 onward, what appears to have been a comparatively sustained religious calling rendered through the visual, with what some characterized as “artistic” work being closely framed by her missionary outlook. That being said, there is much more to accomplish prior to any serious consideration of McDowell Kitchen, whether as an individual art maker or as part of a vibrant Chengdu peer group.

We can gain fleeting glimpses of members of that peer group in the pages of the *West China Missionary News*. For example, in the 1941 December issue is to be found a description of a large exhibition of reproductions of Christian art, which McDowell Kitchen and a Mrs. Dickinson helped organize to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the National Committee for Christian Religious Education, then meeting in Chengdu. It was held in the gymnasium of the West China Union University, where over two days some 2,500 people, including the pupils of the Canadian School for missionary children, hastened to see the display during daylight hours as there was no electricity. A vast array of images were hung on the walls – some brought to Chengdu by airplane – including a copy of Michelangelo’s *Creation*, examples of what was being made by the Christian students at Beijing’s Catholic Fu-Jen University, and a large number of Bible illustrations created by the British artist Harold Copping.⁶⁷ Allowed through this text, which also expressed hope for more art to look at in the future, is exposure to what eventually may prove to have been a world in which the visual arts were prized both for instruction and pleasure, in part, perhaps even in large part, because of the presence of Canadian women with serious artistic interests and accomplishments. The “Mrs. Dickinson” referred to was one of at least two other Canadian women who used their professional art training to support missionary activities in Chengdu and its environs and to tend to the aesthetic needs of an implanted community. Together with McDowell Kitchen, they constitute the core of a small band of women artists first made known to me through a generous letter from the late Dr. Betty Bridgman, raised in Sichuan herself and later a medical missionary in the Republic of Angola.⁶⁸



10 | Anna Crosse Kinney Morse, watercolour reproduced in William Reginald Morse's *The Three Crosses in the Purple Mists, An Adventure in Medical Education under the Eaves of the Roof of the World*, 1928, n.p. (Photo: author)

The eldest of the Canadian group was Anna Crosse Kinney Morse (1875–1951). A Nova Scotian graduate of the Acadia Seminary in Wolfville with advanced art training from New York City's Cooper Union, she accompanied her Nova Scotia-born husband, Dr. William Reginald Morse, to Sichuan in 1909, and almost immediately began teaching art in the girl's school attached to the small American Baptist missionary station at Siufu.⁶⁹ From 1916 until their final departure in 1937, she and her husband were located in Chengdu, where she assisted Dr. Morse in his anatomy teaching, in his administrative positions, including that of Dean of Huada's Medical College, and in organizing sessions for The West China Border Research Society he founded.⁷⁰ Three of her watercolours (Fig. 10) were inserted into his 1928 book, *The Three Crosses in the Purple Mists, An Adventure in Medical Education under the Eaves of the Roof of the World*. Her saturated yet serene picturings of the mighty Yangtze function as powerful acts of visual evangelism; they overlook the difficulties of transporting humans some 1,800 miles inland to Chengdu and enjoin the viewer to volunteer for West China service.⁷¹ Viewed as more than a mere adjunct to Dr. Morse, Anna Kinney Morse was listed in the West China Union University catalogue as an instructor in Anatomical

Drawing and also as an instructor in Art in the tiny Fine Arts program largely dominated by music.⁷² Beyond mission-related work as an image-maker and teacher, Kinney Morse organized exhibitions of her watercolours and oil paintings for the University community: an account of one, held in October 1929 at the University's museum, noted how the "discouragement resulting from the theft of her valuable collection of originals" had not lowered "the standards of the past."⁷³ When she and her husband departed from China, she donated a dozen of "her lovely pictures to hang in the Assembly Hall and Faculty Common Room in the Administration Building."⁷⁴

There was another Nova Scotian in Chengdu, Annie Alice Fuller Dickinson (1888–1978), the "Mrs. Dickinson" who had worked with Beatrice McDowell Kitchen on the anniversary exhibition. From time to time, and as publicly acknowledged, she would replace Anna Kinney Morse in the Anatomical Drawing classes at the University and in 1932, the two of them joined together with Dr. Lewis C. Walmsley, Principal of the Canadian School for Missionary Children, to give a lecture on Chinese Art.⁷⁵ These activities were supported by her credentials from the art courses offered to students of Mount Allison's Ladies College and University at the Owens Art Gallery.⁷⁶

Fuller Dickinson had arrived in Sichuan in 1913 with her husband, a spirited agricultural missionary for the Methodist Church who would become widely known throughout China and North America for introducing new crops and livestock to West China.⁷⁷ First located at Penghsien, Fuller Dickinson was Acting Mistress at the Mission Boys' School, and student work from her classes helped to shape her 1919 book, *Portfolio of Drawings with Teaching Manual*.⁷⁸ She also became a school examiner in art for the West China Christian Educational Union, judging competitions of drawings and watercolour paintings produced by students from schools throughout the areas of Sichuan where Protestant missionaries were active.⁷⁹ When she and her husband moved to Chengdu, he to take up a University position in Rural Sociology, her commitment to the emphasis on art as a necessary part of education for Chinese children continued.⁸⁰ These official obligations, along with sporadic art teaching alongside Anna Kinney Morse at the Canadian School for Missionary Children, some recorded teaching in mathematics at the University, and at least two lectures for the West China Border Research Society, did not vanquish her own desire to make and exhibit art.⁸¹ Her production was fueled by sketching trips in the countryside or in towns and villages in the region.⁸² Like her friends, McDowell Kitchen and Kinney Morse, Annie Fuller Dickinson has all but vanished from sight, at best known to a few as the individual who, on one of her sketching trips in the late 1930s, initiated the process that led to a panda, Pandora, being sent by her husband to the Bronx Zoo, the first ever received by that institution and a star in its 1939 World's Fair display.⁸³

More life yet needs to be breathed into these Sichuan Canadian women and their engagements with the visual, just as the cultural life of missionary Chengdu requires mapping out in a more three-dimensional manner. Passing references in newspapers and archives to events and activities need to be explored, even though their ephemeral nature would constitute a challenge to researchers were they to have taken place in a major Canadian city let alone many thousands of miles away. Descendants of missionaries should be interviewed, perhaps none more urgently than Dr. Robert Kilborn, grandson of one of the founders of the West China Medical College, private archives consulted, and resources available in Chengdu, where the vestiges of the West China Union University survive in Sichuan University, pored over.⁸⁴ Making such a research project enormously attractive is the opportunity to look deep into the situation of women and art in what was an especially fascinating piece of "Canadian" geography. It was a tiny microcosm of English Canada, but it was also an unusually close and unusually competitive Canadian neighbour of American and British communities, a place where no one was likely to dismiss Canada as a small force in the world. It was a space within which Canadians negotiated relations with various Chinese populations, this at a time when the record at home of such contacts was less than edifying. What can be learned from this rich, "Canadian-Sichuan" locale? How did women, both the three referred to here and others yet to be discussed, fare in terms of acknowledgment and respect for the professional contributions they made to the art-related work of their community, both within formal evangelical/educational systems and within the "cultural" sphere? Did the shared isolation and "privileged" lives of these women flatten out hierarchical social patterns that would have been applied at home? Can a particularly "Canadian" inflection be discerned in the treatment they received or in the roles they were able to carve out for themselves? Is there something to be learned from their interactions with Chinese students and, in the case of McDowell Kitchen, with Chinese employees of the Press, and from whatever exchanges, if any at all, they had with Chengdu's Chinese artists? The questions to be posed and perhaps answered do not end with these.

In "The Paradox of Gender among West China Missionary Collectors, 1920–1950," cultural anthropologist Cory Willmott recently reanimated the Chengdu missionary community in the context of its collecting of artifacts.⁸⁵ She documents the regular appearance of curio-dealers who offered their goods – often from Manchu families rendered impoverished through the 1911 overthrow of the Qing dynasty – from the verandas of missionary homes. The rich diversity of approaches to collecting, especially those to be found among Chengdu's missionary women, is unfolded, and the dynamic relationships of some of these practices to emerging Chinese discourses on nationalism and consumerism are explored, all within a sophisticated

theoretical infrastructure. Although a majority of the individuals, male and female, whose collecting is discussed were Canadian, Willmott frames her discussion within the construct of a multinational missionary community, an understandable perspective even if it has been left largely unexplained. Caution, however, needs to be exercised in extending into other parts of cultural life in Chengdu her conclusion that “gender-specific models,” based on a combination of Western social norms and the missionary-specific mentality of undervaluing the unpaid labour of missionary wives, governed how seriously women’s collecting practices were taken in the Chengdu community and by the broader museum establishment.⁸⁶ Beatrice McDowell Kitchen, Anna Kinney Morse, and Annie Fuller Dickinson, in different ways and to different degrees, appear to have very publicly escaped such wifely cages during their time in China, with “The Press Artist” having been appreciated across a very wide geography, some of her major supporters being from the highest echelons of the United Church of Canada. Perhaps they can also escape onto the pages of fresh accounts of women and art in Canada, pages which continue to break down barriers of all sorts, including reluctance or shyness about looking for Canada and its mutations out and about in the world.

NOTES

- 1 Foreign Missions Photograph Collection, Item 2788, United Church of Canada Archives (UCCA). Sitter information for the photograph is readily amplified through UCCA documents, indexed through the *General Council Archives Guide to the Holdings Related to West China Medical Missions (1800–1950)*, which the UCCA has made available online. Accessed 16 July 2013, http://www.united-church.ca/files/local/archives/on/research-guide_west-china.pdf. The Guide uses Wade-Giles transcription, whereas this article will employ Pinyin transcription throughout, with – as examples – “Chengdu” replacing “Chengtu” and “Huaiyuan” replacing “Hwai Yuen/Hwai Yuan.”
- 2 Leslie G. KILBORN, *The Colossal Conceit of Missionaries* (Toronto: The Committee on Missionary Education for the Board of Overseas Missions, United Church of Canada, 1930), 8.
- 3 “Freedom of Women Risky Experiment, Says Dr. Jolliffe,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 June 1929.
- 4 An early example of such scholarship is Rosemary R. GAGAN, *Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881–1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), but the issues it introduced have been taken up again and again in subsequent literature.
- 5 Jesse H. ARNUP, *A New Church Faces a New World* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1937), 202.
- 6 See the Call for Papers for the 2nd Conference of the Canadian Women Artists Initiative. Accessed 16 July 2013, <http://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/resources/conference-2012.php>

- 7 Alvyn J. AUSTIN, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1987). From the literature on denominational energies, an especially pertinent and well-contextualized account of work in China is provided in Neil SEMPLE, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).
- 8 Taylor's striking vision is cited in AUSTIN, *Saving China*, 6. The British-born Taylor (1832–1905) was instrumental, through his formation of the non-denominational China Inland Mission, in flooding China with English-speaking missionaries: see Alfred BROOMHALL, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*, vols. 1–7 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982–1989).
- 9 Cheung YUET-WAH, *Missionary Medicine in China: A Study of Two Canadian Protestant Missions in China before 1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).
- 10 Little scholarly work has been conducted on the Goforths: materials for such exist in the Archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.
- 11 A somewhat hagiographic account of Bishop White in China is to be found in Lewis C. WALMSLEY, *Bishop in Honan: Mission and Museum in the Life of William C. White* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
- 12 SEMPLE, *The Lord's Dominion*, 329.
- 13 Missionary literature on the location of the West China Mission made much of its adjacency to Tibet, as in ARNUP, *A New Church*, 184, who invited readers to "take the wings of your imagination and stand on the mountains of Eastern Tibet . . . near the geographical and population centre of the non-Christian world." For the reputation of the West China Mission, see Linfu DONG, *Cross Culture and Faith: The Life and Work of James Mellon Menzies* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005), 28.
- 14 The dental college founded by Dr. Lindsay survives today as the West China School of Stomatology at Sichuan University. For the Canadian contribution to the sociology program at the University, see Jeff KYONG-McCLAIN, "Making Chengdu 'The Kingdom of God as Jesus Conceived It': The Urban Work of West China Union University's Sociology Department," *Social Sciences and Missions* 23:2 (2010): 162–86.
- 15 J.C. POLLOCK, *Hudson Taylor and Maria: Pioneers in China* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 31.
- 16 In assessing the career of one of Harriet MacCurdy's nieces, Barbara MEADOWCROFT, *Gwethalyn Graham: A Liberated Woman in a Conventional Age* (Toronto: Three O'Clock Press, 2008), offers tantalizing glimpses of three generations of a Canadian family very much in need of a collective biography. Harriet was born near Leipzig, Germany, while her father – having left his instructor's position at Princeton Theological Seminary for intellectual reasons – was obtaining his doctorate. MCCURDY (a spelling which he seemed to prefer over his daughter's use of MacCurdy) received a teaching position at the University of Toronto in 1885, and became widely known for his three-volume *History, Prophecy and the Monuments* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1894–1901), which went into a second edition almost immediately after its initial publication. The social position of his family, comprised of his wife, Isabelle Russell, and their four children, is indicated in part by the recording of the women's "at homes" in issues of the *Society Blue Book of Toronto*.
- 17 A brief but very useful account of the Huaiyuan station is to be found in G. THOMPSON BROWN, *Earthen Vessels and Transcendent Power: American Presbyterians in China, 1837–1952* (Marykoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 177–78.

- 18 References to MacCurdy's work are to be found in various annual reports emerging from the American Presbyterian Church, and her own description of the evangelical activities in which she took part are to be found in Jeannie C. JENKINS, et al., *Little Glimpses of the Kiangnan Mission* (1916), 18–20.
- 19 See BROWN, *Earthen Vessels*, 275, for a brief reference to MacCurdy's role in looking out for those fleeing the Japanese.
- 20 Hattie R. MACCURDY, "The Present Situation: Breaches Healed Between Japan and China," *Chinese Recorder* (December 1937): 766–68.
- 21 The Oxford Group, sometimes called "Buchmanism" after its founder, Frank Buchman, sought to solve international problems through the force of individual spiritual renewal and would startle some with its leader's hopes that Hitler could be converted: for a recent, if somewhat limited consideration of its tenets and impact, see Anders JARLET, *The Oxford Group, Group Revivalism, and the Churches in Northern Europe, 1930–1940* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1995). The organization was also controversial for the intensity and focus on sexual issues of the confessional activities that took place at the luxurious house-party gatherings which were tracked by the international press: the session MacCurdy attended in Oxford is referred to in "Oxford Group Meets," *New York Times*, 30 June 1934.
- 22 Mona PURSER, "Find Memories of China in Work With Ceramics," *Globe and Mail*, 14 Dec. 1948. MacCurdy was mentioned in the article as the individual who introduced the writer to one of her Huaiyuan colleagues, Mabel Steele Jones, who had returned home and taken up an assistant curator's position at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- 23 Unquestionably the most prominent member of MacCurdy's extended family was Rev. Alexander Gatherer Russell: see obituary in *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 1911. That being said, her cousin once removed, Rev. Robert Haddow, was a key figure in Canadian Presbyterian circles, being editor of *The Presbyterian* from 1900–1925 and of *The United Church Record* from 1926–1931.
- 24 The Sozialen Frauenschule der Inneren Mission had been founded in Berlin by Bertha Gräfin von der Schulenburg in 1909, as part of an attempt to involve educated women in Christian social work: see Sabine HERING and Richard MUNCHEMEIER, *Geschichte der Sozialen Arbeit: eine Einführung* (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Juventa, 2007), 243.
- 25 Dr. John Thomson MacCurdy, Harriet's younger brother, became as prominent internationally as their father. He was an early researcher into the effects of psychological stress, and helped found the American Psychopathological Association. However, the bulk of his career, which focused on critical studies of psychology, was spent at Cambridge University: "Obituary Notice: John Thomson MacCurdy, 1886–1947," *British Journal of Psychology* 40:1 (September 1941): 1–4.
- 26 MacCurdy claimed to have studied art with Dignam from 1893–1904: see *The Monthly Supplement: a current biographical reference service: A current adjunct to Who's who, Who was who, Who knows, Who's who in commerce and industry (the international business who's who) and the other standard Marquis biographical reference works*, vols. 3–4 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1942–1943), 58. MacCurdy's membership in the Art Students League is listed in a brief notice in *American Art News* 4:3 (28 Oct. 1905): 2.
- 27 "Work of Lady Artists," *Toronto Globe*, 27 Mar. 1901; "Paintings on View Are Interesting," *Montreal Gazette*, 17 Nov. 1903. Her participation in the 1904 Women's

- Art Association exhibition in Ottawa is mentioned in Anson A. GARD, *The Hub and the Spokes; Or, The Capital and its Environs* (Ottawa: The Emerson Press, 1904), 105.
- 28 Held from 4–17 November, the Thumb Box hung two works by MacCurdy – *Sunrise, Queen's Park* and *The Edge of the Woods* – in a show that also offered art by the likes of Fred S. Haines (1879–1960), Robert Ford Gagen (1847–1926), Gertrude E. Spurr (1858–1941), and Clara S. Hagarty (1871–1958). The small pamphlet for the exhibition is in the Library and Archives of the National Gallery of Canada.
 - 29 An invitation to the 7 Oct. WAAC exhibition was issued under "Society News" in *Toronto World*, 4 Oct. 1919.
 - 30 For the Touchstone Galleries show see "Soldier, China and Holy Land Seen on Canvas," *New York Tribune*, 6 Jan. 1920. MacCurdy's entries for the Society of Independent Artists are documented in Clark S. MARLOR, *The Society of Independent Artists: The Exhibition Record 1917–1944* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1984), 372.
 - 31 Many thanks to Ms. Katy Rawdon, archivist and librarian at the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania, for sending me a copy of the Barnes-MacCurdy file from the Series I – Correspondence, Dates 1902–1951, of the *Correspondence of Albert C. Barnes* holdings, AR.ABC.1925.516. One of the two daughters of Daniel S. Lamont, Elizabeth K. Lamont, from whose residence MacCurdy penned her first request to the foundation, was one of a small number of sustaining members of the Metropolitan Museum and a noted supporter of many cultural initiatives.
 - 32 "Attractive Show at W.A.A. Gallery," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 17 Oct. 1933.
 - 33 Howard DEVREE, "Galleries," *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 1934.
 - 34 A copy of the small exhibition pamphlet constitutes MacCurdy's entire artist's file in the library of the Smithsonian Museum of American Art/National Portrait Gallery: many thanks to Mary Wassum, Reference Librarian, for sending a scan. Thirty-one works were included, almost all landscapes from well-known locations in China and Korea.
 - 35 "A Reviewer's Notebook," *New York Times*, 7 Dec. 1941; "Pastels of China," *Arts Magazine*, 1 Dec. 1941.
 - 36 "An Art Exhibition," *Shanghai North China Herald*, 17 Mar. 1923.
 - 37 The exhibition, which included "a number of lovely Canadian scenes," was given a brief review in the *Shanghai Sunday Times*, 1 Jan. 1928, under "Women's Club Notes," and on a subsequent page two illustrations of her work – *A Daoist Temple* and *In a Confucian Temple* – were provided. For the more enthusiastic review see "A Pleasing Exhibition at B.W.A.: Paintings of Chinese Landscapes By Miss MacCurdy," *Shanghai North China Herald*, 31 Dec. 1927. A poor reproduction of one of the works from this exhibition can be found at http://www.instappraisal.com/sites/instappraisal/files/appraisal_images/100_0562.jpg (accessed 16 July 2013).
 - 38 For insight into this neglected world, albeit focusing on British women's work, see Catherine MACKENZIE, "Securing Shanghai: British Women Artists and Their City," in *Travellers and Tourists: Interdisciplinary and Transnational Perspectives on the History of the British Abroad*, ed. Martin Farr and Xavier Guégan (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 159–75.
 - 39 See Rev. Wilton Merle SMITH's introduction to John B. Devins, *On the Way to Hwai Yuen: or The Story of a Mule Ride in China* (New York: The New York Observer, 1905), 5.
 - 40 Intersections between the changing nature of North American attitudes towards China in the first half of the twentieth century and the production and reception

of images of China have been considered ever since the publication of Harold ISAACS, *Scratches on Our Minds; American Images of China and India* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1958), a text which itself has gone into at least 24 editions. However, the study of ways in which expatriate production functioned for the displaced communities themselves is very rare. Taking the brief discussion of the function of watercolours made by women in nineteenth-century India in Sara SULERI, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75–77, as a departure point, my chapter on the expatriate British “art scene” in early twentieth-century Shanghai (see note 38) suggests that many anxieties, general and very particular at times, about distance from the metropolitan centre were addressed through the insistence that “normal” patterns of cultural life could be maintained and, indeed, rendered more important, either intact or with careful modifications, because of the British leadership they could offer to other populations.

- 41 *The Monthly Supplement*, 58.
- 42 “Harriet R. M’Curdy,” *New York Times*, 6 May 1961 and “Harriet R. McCurdy Served in China As Missionary,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 6 May 1961.
- 43 MEADOWCROFT, *Gwethalyn Graham*, offers glimpses into the households, while numerous art historical texts refer to the hospitable environment for artists maintained by the Erichsen-Browns. A humorous chalk drawing, by Arthur Lismer of Frank Erichsen-Brown and his distant cousin, entitled *The Jacksons and the Browns – Need Titles (ca. 1932–1935)* is owned by the National Gallery of Canada. Accessed 16 July 2013, <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=12082>
- 44 The expanded population in Sichuan was greeted enthusiastically by members of most Christian denominations, who saw it as a chance to impress a concentrated body of Chinese students and intellectuals with the nationalist loyalties of missionaries: see Yi-Fang WU and Frank W. PRICE, ed., *China Rediscovered Her West: A Symposium*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1942).
- 45 Beaton’s photographic activities in China were part of an assignment for the British Ministry of Information as a war photographer, the project leading to, among other things, Cecil BEATON, *Chinese Album* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1945). For references to the work the press was doing for the British Ministry of Information see John Kitchen to J.H. Arnup, Papers of the Board of Overseas Missions Associate Secretary Relating to West China (1925–1952), fonds 502, 1983.0473, box 9, file 220, United Church of Canada Board of Overseas Missions fonds 1910–1965, UCCA. The proceeds from this work were helping the press in its literature work.
- 46 Information on Beatrice McDowell’s birthplace (St. Thomas, Ontario) and her parents, William and Idella McDowell, has largely been drawn from census data accessed through Ancestry.com, a source which has also been invaluable in tracking the ocean travel of all of the women mentioned in this text.
- 47 “Tilbury,” *Comber Herald* (Ontario), 1 May 1913. Census data from 1911 indicates that she was living in that city as an “artist.” The institutions where she trained have not yet been confirmed.
- 48 Emily FOSTER, *The Banquet: My Grandma’s Memories of China* (New York: iUniverse, 2008), 7. In recording the thoughts of her grandmother, Muriel Tonge, Foster makes infrequent references to her great-grandmother, Beatrice McDowell Kitchen, and reproduces a print and sketch.

- 49 The son of a fisherman, John Kitchen, born in Porthleven, Cornwall, England, in 1894, had immigrated to the United States in 1913 and had then decided to take up religious training, which he completed in 1920 through Wesley College in Winnipeg. The decision to leave for China may have been last minute: F.C. STEPHENSON, ed., *Our West China mission: being a somewhat extensive summary by the missionaries on the field of work during the first twenty-five years of the Canadian Methodist mission in the province of Szechwan, Western China* (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church and the Young People's Forward Movement, 1920), n.p., offers photographs of most of the new missionary personnel, but notes that photographs were not yet available for the Kitchens.
- 50 Founded by the missionary, Rev. Virgil Hart, who first took Canadian Methodists into Sichuan, the Press and the details of its operations were described with pride in church publications in China: see, for example, *Our West China mission*, 412–23. The section incorporates a group photograph of staff members (419), some of whom would have been involved in printing texts in the “tribal languages” with alphabets “based on the Cree syllabic developed by James Evans for the Indians of Canada”: United Church of Canada, *Forward with China: The Story of the Missions of the United Church of Canada in China* (Toronto: The Committee on Literature, General Publicity and Missionary Education, 1928), 272.
- 51 The subject of salaries for married missionaries is discussed, rather painfully, in a 14 June 1947 letter written by John Kitchen to Rt. Rev. Jessie H. Arnup in Toronto after the death of his wife: Fonds 502, 1983.0473, box 11, file 285, UCCA. His salary was subsequently reduced by a small amount as he was now treated as a single man.
- 52 An anti-opium image from *Christian Hope*, identified as “a drawing from Mrs. Kitchen,” was borrowed for *West China Missionary News* 37:1 (January 1925): n.p. to underscore the issue’s focus on the new Anti-Opium Crusade.
- 53 The “Pictures for Sunday Schools drawn by Mrs. Kitchen in Chengdu” are from the SOAS Archives Collection of William Gawan Sewell, a missionary from the London-based Society of Friends who was in Chengdu for large periods of time from 1924–1942: PP MS 16, 06.04, SOAS Archives.
- 54 The Sunday School work is mentioned in a letter from John Kitchen to James Endicott, 27 Jan. 1932, indicating that 14,000 of these valuable coloured Lesson Helps were being used each week “in the various churches and Sunday Schools of West China” and efforts would be made to double that number: see fonds 502, 1983.0473, box 4, file 76, UCCA. See also Kenneth J. BEATON, *Serving with the Sons of Shuh: Fifty Fateful Years in West China* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, Committee on Missionary Education, 1941), 184: “For the outsiders, there is every Sunday, a single sheet printed on Chinese paper and illustrated with one of Mrs. Kitchen’s drawings. Tens of thousands of these leaflets go into *Chinese* homes every week.” In the January 1932 letter, Kitchen states that the Press had also distributed over 750,000 Gospel Tracts, many illustrated by “Mrs. Kitchen,” as part of a turn toward “Direct Evangelism.”
- 55 The increase of work for the Press is documented in a lively letter, 29 Oct. 1943, from John Kitchen to J.H. Arnup, fonds 502, 1983.0473, box 9, file 220, UCCA. Ruth URE, *The Highway of Print: A World-Wide Study of the Production and Distribution of Christian Literature* (New York: The Friendship Press, 1946), 71, comments on the importance of the *Christian Farmer* for raising both practical and spiritual concerns

- in rural areas, with a readership, based on the sharing of subscriptions, given as 750,000.
- 56 Cheng TE-K'UN, *Archaeological Studies in Szechwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 18, acknowledges the value of drawings provided for a paper published by J. Hutson Edgar, one of the missionaries who pioneered Western explorations of prehistoric sites in Sichuan.
 - 57 The image was used in KILBORN, *Colossal Conceit*, 2, and in Kenneth J. BEATON, *The Making of a Missionary* (Toronto: The Committee on Missionary Education, The United Church of Canada, 1945), 5.
 - 58 Woodcut translations of these drawings appeared regularly in the *West China Missionary News* from November 1921 through November 1924. My gratitude to Rajee Jejishergill, a Concordia MA student, for reading through the WCMN for references to art and artists in Chengdu.
 - 59 The publication of *Toilers of China* was announced in the *West China Missionary News* 25:5 (May 1923): 30.
 - 60 Ibid., 31:11 (November 1924): 43.
 - 61 Mabel NOWLIN, "Modern China," *International Journal of Religious Education* 12 (November 1935): 43.
 - 62 For a large selection of Willcox-Smith images of children see Gene MITCHELL, *The Subject Was Children: The Art of Jessie Willcox Smith* (New York: Dutton, 1979).
 - 63 Once much appreciated by North America audiences, the prints of the Americans Helen Hyde and Bertha Lum have become known again through small but lavishly illustrated publications by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Popular as well both in China and on the east coast of the United States was the production of Elizabeth Otis Dunn (1888–1956), a Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts graduate who lived with her architect husband in China from 1916–1927 and again from 1932–1937. She exhibited and sold work in Shanghai and Beijing, and during her five-year hiatus back in the United States found buyers for her watercolours of "Chinese babies": see "Eleven Paintings in AWA Show Sold," *AWA [American Woman's Association] Bulletin*, 21 Apr. 1932, 1, which documents the high level of sales of these images through the New York-based Association at one of its many Clubhouse exhibitions. For a very rare published acknowledgment of Dunn's production, see Katerina LAGASSÉ, "Cultural Housekeepers: Elizabeth Otis Dunn and American Women's Organizations in Early Twentieth Century China and America," *Concordia Undergraduate Journal of Art History* 8 (2012), one of several papers from a 2012 Concordia University undergraduate seminar on Euro-American artists in China. Accessed 16 July 2013, <http://cujah.org/past-volumes/volume-viii/essay-9-volume-8/>
 - 64 A copy of this very rare foldout of images, printed by the Canadian Mission Press in Chengdu "on whose staff Mrs. Kitchen served," is in the library of the Toronto United Church of Canada Archives facilities. My deepest gratitude goes to McDowell Kitchen's daughter, Muriel Tonge, for discussing with me the circumstances of her mother's death.
 - 65 Kenneth J. BEATON, *West of the Gorges* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1948), 133: interestingly enough, Beaton's comments were part of a two-page text entitled "The Press Artist." Beaton's acknowledgment of McDowell Kitchen across several of his publications may have been related to his interest in using different mediums to reach populations: see "Rev. Kenneth J. Beaton: Used New Media in United Church Mission Work," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 21 Oct. 1957.

- 66 "Missionary to Chinese Bible Story Illustrator," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 15 June 1946.
- 67 Jane TURNER, "Exhibition of Christian Art in Chengtu," *West China Missionary News* 43:11 (November–December 1941): 352–54.
- 68 Two letters from Dr. Bridgman were received in October and November 1999; my resistance to move into ecclesiastical terrain, to add the women she mentioned into the mix of secular women artists who spent time in China, was finally overcome by the CWAHI Call for Papers and by watching, from afar, the intellectual work of Sharon Murray, a graduate student at Concordia University who is investigating photographic representations of India created by Canadian Baptist overseas missionaries.
- 69 The fullest account I have found of Anna Kinney Morse's life is a one-paragraph obituary that appeared in the *Yearbook of the American Baptist Convention* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1952), 38–39. It does not explain how the daughter of what census data describes as a "grocer" ended up in New York for education. Sadly, I have been unable to find references to the artwork she is alleged to have made after she returned from China, first to the United States and then to Nova Scotia.
- 70 Kinney Morse organized a three-hour exhibition, held in the University's Administration Building, for the West China Border Research Society in September 1933, the exact nature of which I have yet to discover: *Journal of the West China Border Research Society* 5 (1932): n.p.
- 71 As was the case with many, though not all of his confreres, Morse was very open about the affiliation of his medical skills and his religious beliefs in a "universal brotherhood": "At our Medical School we, as true ambassadors, carry the Golden Cross of Christianity, the emblem of a religion of love, expressing a philosophy of helping others." See William Reginald MORSE, *The Three Crosses in the Purple Mists* (Shanghai: Mission Book Co., 1928), ii.
- 72 Ibid., 223 and 300, also documents Kinney Morse's part-time teaching at the University.
- 73 The exhibition is referred to in the *West China Missionary News* 31:10 (October 1929): 34.
- 74 Ibid., 35:5 (May 1934): 24.
- 75 *Journal of the West China Border Research Society* 5 (1932): n.p.
- 76 I am extremely grateful to David Mawhinney, University Archivist, Mount Allison University, for the information he uncovered concerning Annie Fuller's education. For details about her family, in which medical training was to be found in abundance, census data has been invaluable.
- 77 A long overdue assessment of Frank Dickinson's impact on agriculture in China could be well serviced by fonds 502, UCCA, which is replete with blunt letters outlining his creative projects. Together, the Dickinsons were celebrated for their international hospitality: a photograph (Fig. 11) of them entertaining "American soldiers at ease" in Chengdu can be found in the *New York Times*, 11 Mar. 1943.
- 78 The announcement of her publication, Mrs. F. DICKINSON, *Portfolio of Drawings, with Teacher's Manual* (Penghsien, 1919) was made in the *West China Missionary News* 21:2 (February 1919): 30.
- 79 Ibid. Unhappily, in his recent chapter on "Wallace of West China: Edward Wilson Wallace and the Canadian Educational Systems of China, 1906–1927," Alvyn J. AUSTIN does not discuss the importance of training in the art of drawing in the systems: see *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home*



11 | “US soldiers are warming themselves by the fire of a home in Chengtu, China [Fuller Dickinson with hand on mantle],” Associated Press photograph 430309052, used in *New York Times* of 11 March 1942. (Photo: © Associated Press)

and Abroad, ed. Alwyn J. Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 111–33. Yet the pages of the *West China Missionary News* make a clear case for its significance, with numerous reports of primary and secondary school level competitions and exhibitions.

- 80 Fuller Dickinson’s chairship of the Standing Committee on Drawing of the West China Christian Educational Union is recorded in the *West China Missionary News* 37:1 (January 1925): 44.
- 81 For her teaching at the Canadian School, see *The Canadian School – West China News* 4:2 (June 1968): 19, an amateur publication held by the Library of the UCCA in Toronto. One of her lectures for the Research Society was entitled “Some Researchers I have Known” (see *West China Missionary News* 33:4 [1931]: 43), suggesting she was not restricted to an “artistic” sphere in her public performances.
- 82 I have as yet been unable to access reproductions of sufficient quality for publication, but small digital images graciously sent to me by Dr. Robert Kilborn indicate that land and templescapes were probably the major focus of Fuller Dickinson’s work, placing her firmly in the company of MacCurdy and Kinney Morse.
- 83 For one of the accounts of Fuller Dickinson’s involvement in the acquisition of the panda, see Ramona MORRIS and Desmond MORRIS, *Men and Pandas* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 90.
- 84 Dr. Robert Kilborn is the grandson of Rev. Leslie G. Kilborn and has family connections to a large number of other Chengdu residents. His project to document artistic work from Chengdu in private Canadian missionary family collections is exciting. His concerns are inclusive of male producers, of whom Dr. Lewis C. Walmsley is the principal figure, but his knowledge of missionary life in Chengdu is of utmost value.
- 85 Cory WILLMOTT, “The Paradox of Gender among West China Missionary Collectors, 1920–1950,” *Social Sciences and Missions* 25 (2012): 129–65.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 164.

« C'est toute une histoire » : les artistes canadiennes missionnaires en Chine

CATHERINE MACKENZIE

L'ampleur de l'enthousiasme canadien pour l'évangélisation du monde vers la fin du XIX^e siècle et le début du XX^e a, depuis que des recherches sérieuses ont été entamées dans les années 1970, poussé les intellectuels à s'intéresser aux missions chinoises. De nombreux groupes protestants avaient détaché des missions importantes en Chine – notamment celle qui est devenue la Methodist West China Mission à Chengdu. Certaines de ces antennes étaient habitées par des artistes canadiennes dotées d'une formation professionnelle. Les missions américaines et britanniques s'étaient installées avant leurs contreparties canadiennes, mais une poignée d'artistes canadiennes vivaient dans leur entourage. Beatrice McDowell Kitchen (1887–1947) et Harriet Russell MacCurdy (1883–1961) ouvrent les portes de l'existence encore largement méconnue de ces femmes qui évoluaient dans le milieu des missions. Plutôt que d'examiner comment la Chrétienté canadienne a employé ces femmes à des tâches religieuses spécifiques ou les a façonnées comme modèles pour la « modernisation » des attitudes chinoises envers les femmes, notre article se concentre sur leur production artistique selon la perspective de l'histoire de l'art, soutenant leur intégration dans les histoires de l'art créé par des femmes canadiennes.

En poste de 1913 à 1941 à Huaiyuan, MacCurdy enseigne à des étudiantes de l'école biblique de la ville, faisant du prosélytisme lors de rassemblements de femmes dans de minuscules villages disséminés dans toute la région. Elle est si bien considérée comme éducatrice qu'elle remplace le directeur en congé de la Bible Teachers Training School for Women à Nanjing, de 1930 à 1931. Déléguée à divers rassemblements religieux en Chine, elle relate dans ses écrits les activités des missionnaires de Huaiyuan et les conditions générales de vie en Chine. Parallèlement à ses activités missionnaires, MacCurdy est aussi une artiste. Elle a d'ailleurs été associée à Mary Ella Dignam et à la Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) depuis son adolescence. Elle poursuit occasionnellement ses études à l'Université de Toronto et passe une année à l'Art Students League de New York (1905–1906). En 1909, elle accepte un poste de professeure d'art au Westminster Ladies College de Toronto, poste qui va s'avérer temporaire. Elle jouit alors d'un dossier d'expositions

qui s'étend sur plusieurs années, couvre trois villes canadiennes (Toronto, Montréal et Ottawa) et est agréablement étayé de critiques favorables. Au cours de ses congés ultérieurs de Chine au Canada, elle continue à exposer à la fois au Canada et aux États-Unis.

On pourrait supposer que MacCurdy se considère surtout comme une missionnaire qui fait de la peinture à temps perdu, comme loisir, mais ce n'est guère le cas ; elle conserve deux identités professionnelles. En plus de ces expositions en Amérique du Nord, elle participe à des expositions en groupe avec la Shanghai British Women's Association, et fait une exposition en solo qui présente plus d'une centaine d'œuvres à Shanghai en 1927. Elle illustre des temples, des canaux à la vénitienne, des sites de pèlerinage populaires et des paysages. En Chine comme en Amérique du Nord, la réponse à son œuvre a été conforme à ce à quoi il fallait s'attendre dans les sociétés séculières : une normalisation de ce qui est « étranger » pour les expatriés et un engouement pour cette lointaine Chine, pour ceux qui ne pouvaient pas visiter ce lieu de fascination.

McDowell Kitchen a probablement été la créatrice d'images la plus prolifique du début des années 1920 au milieu des années 1940, attirant de nombreux admirateurs. Formée en art commercial à Toronto et à Chicago, elle entame vers 1911 ce qui a été décrit comme une brillante carrière en tant qu'illustratrice et caricaturiste à Vancouver. En 1918, elle épouse John Kitchen et peu après, tous deux partent comme missionnaires en Chine où ils contribuent à la presse de la Mission (méthodiste) canadienne de Chengdu. Vers 1920, la presse publie chaque mois 3,5 millions de pages de textes religieux. Beatrice McDowell Kitchen commence vite à créer un énorme portfolio d'œuvres visuelles, presque toujours signées de son nom ou de l'initiale « K » pour la presse et ses clients. Elle illustre le nouveau mensuel en langue chinoise *Christian Hope*, offrant à la fois des perspectives picturales sur le pays et des images à l'appui d'activités pointues comme la campagne contre l'opium. Elle produit des dessins pour des petits tracts sur la religion ou la santé distribués dans toute la région, pour des livrets d'enfants et pour des affiches lithographiques en quatre ou cinq couleurs, imprimées à Shanghai avant 1940 et utilisées par les missionnaires quand ils faisaient leur présentation dans les marchés. Dès 1931, l'évangélisme mettant de plus en plus l'accent sur le visuel, elle s'attèle sans relâche à créer des images pour l'enseignement à l'école du dimanche. Heureusement, un grand nombre de ces images ont survécu. C'étaient des dessins simples, charmants, créés pour « plaire à l'esprit des jeunes » et parfaitement au diapason des valeurs sociales encouragées par les missionnaires.

McDowell Kitchen produit aussi des illustrations pour *The Christian Farmer*, importante publication en chinois sur la ferme progressiste, pour

le journal interconfessionnel *West China Missionary News*, ainsi que pour le *Journal of the West China Border Research Society*. Ses œuvres paraissent également dans un nombre de livres écrits par des missionnaires canadiens et certains de ses dessins ont plutôt été utilisés comme images de photothèque. En 1923, une collection de ses dessins est publiée sous le titre de *Toilers of China*, et un an après, d'autres dessins sont rassemblés dans *Chinese Children: Pen and Ink Sketches from Chinese Life*. Après sa mort, une petite brochure, *For Such is the Kingdom of Heaven*, est publiée à titre commémoratif. À cette époque, c'est une artiste reconnue en Chine, et même si elle n'a jamais exposé au Canada, son œuvre est connue d'un grand nombre de Canadiens qui suivent les activités des missionnaires.

Contrairement à MacCurdy, MacDowell Kitchen n'est pas la seule femme artiste canadienne dans son lieu de mission, mais elle est presque certainement la créatrice la plus prolifique de tout ce groupe de femmes qui comprend notamment Anna Crosse Kinney Morse (1875–1951). Diplômée de l'Acadia Seminary à Wolfville en Nouvelle-Écosse, Beatrice McDowell reçoit une formation poussée en art du New York City's Cooper Union. Elle vit à Chengdu de 1916 à 1937, où elle aide son mari, professeur d'anatomie, dans ses tâches administratives et dans l'organisation des séances de la West China Border Research Society, qu'il a fondée. Trois de ses pastels figurent dans son livre de 1928, *The Three Crosses in the Purple Mists*. Elle enseigne aussi le dessin anatomique et d'autres arts à la West China Union University.

Bon nombre de femmes artistes missionnaires canadiennes restent à découvrir et à étudier. Ainsi, de nombreuses pistes demeurent encore inexploitées. Considérant Chengdu comme une importante « enclave canadienne » dans la Chine profonde, nous devons intensifier la recherche pour tirer au clair si les femmes étaient réellement reconnues et respectées pour leurs contributions professionnelles au travail artistique de leur communauté. L'isolement partagé et la vie « privilégiée » de ces femmes ont-ils aplani les modèles sociaux hiérarchiques qui se seraient appliqués dans leur patrie? Peut-on discerner une inflexion particulièrement « canadienne » dans le traitement qu'elles ont reçu ou dans le rôle qu'elles se sont donné? Y a-t-il quelques leçons à tirer de leurs interactions avec les élèves de Chine et dans le cas de McDowell Kitchen, avec les employés de la presse, et de quelques échanges – si échanges il y a eu – qu'elles auraient eues avec les artistes chinois de Chengdu? Les questions à poser et auxquelles il faudra peut-être répondre ne s'arrêtent pas là. Ces questions pourraient se répercuter sur les pages abordant de nouveaux récits de femmes dans les arts au Canada, pages qui continuent de défoncer des barrières de toutes sortes, notamment la répugnance ou la gêne à examiner le Canada et ses mutations partout dans le monde.

Since 2000, JANICE ANDERSON has worked as the Concordia University Faculty of Fine Arts Visual Resources curator in the Digital Image and Slide Collection. She is an affiliate associate professor in the Art History Department and has taught a variety of courses at Concordia, including *Feminism and Art History* and a graduate seminar in pedagogy for the Department of Teaching and Learning Services. In collaboration with Melinda Reinhart, Fine Arts Librarian, Concordia University, and Kristina Huneault, Anderson co-founded the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (<http://cwahi.concordia.ca>). She is the co-editor, with Kristina Huneault, of *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970*, and, together with Brian Foss, curated *Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid* for the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2000.

SAMANTHA BURTON is currently a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Art History at the University of Southern California. She recently completed her PhD at McGill University, where her dissertation, “Canadian Girls in London: Negotiating Home and Away in the British World at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” won the Faculty of Arts award for best dissertation in the humanities and the Canadian Studies Network national dissertation prize. Her forthcoming publications include an essay about Emily Carr’s “London Student Sojourn,” an illustrated book that humourously chronicles the artist’s experiences in a London boarding house.

ANITHE DE CARVALHO détient un doctorat en Histoire de l’art. Ses recherches portent sur l’étatisation et l’institutionnalisation de l’art *underground* québécois à l’ère de la démocratie culturelle (1967–1977). Elle a publié un essai sur l’artiste Maurice Demers aux Éditions Lux en 2009. Chargée de cours à l’Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, de Carvalho poursuit également ses recherches au Post-doctorat en Sociologie à l’Université Laval sur le thème de la démocratisation de la culture et les programmes de l’organisme Culture pour tous.

KRISTINA HUNEULT holds a Concordia University Research Chair in Art History and, together with Janice Anderson, is the co-editor of *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970* (2012) and a co-founder of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI). This collaborative, Concordia-based project promotes research on a wide range of historical Canadian women artists through conferences, workshops, and publications, and supports this research through a Documentation Centre and the development of online research tools. The Initiative’s third national conference is currently being organized and will take place at Queen’s

University in May 2015. Dr. Huneault's recent and forthcoming publications address aspects of subjectivity in art by women, as well as the historiography of women and art in Canada.

CAROLYN MACHARDY is associate professor and Program Chair of Art History and Visual Culture in the Department of Critical Studies at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus. Her publications include articles on the Canadian artists Clarence Gagnon, Donald Shaw MacLaughlan, and Tom Thomson, and an epistolary history exploring social and religious strife in the village of Braemar, Scotland, between 1800 and 1809. Her research in recent years has focused on the interior of British Columbia, particularly the Okanagan Valley, and she has published journal and exhibition catalogue essays on the art and artists of this region.

CATHERINE MACKENZIE is a professor in the Department of Art History at Concordia University. Trained as an architectural historian and active over the years in a variety of administrative posts within the university, she has turned her attention more recently to the study of North American and British women artists living and working in China before the declaration of the People's Republic of China. This work has led to conference presentations in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, as well as articles in *RACAR* and *JCAH* and a chapter, "Securing Shanghai: British Women Artists and 'Their' City," in *The British Abroad Since the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (2013). Her other research activities centre on Nazi art-looting – with her 2006 exhibition, *Auktion 392: Reclaiming the Galerie Stern*, having travelled in Great Britain, the United States and Israel – and on German-Jewish collectors in Weimar Germany. She is currently completing a manuscript on the collecting practices of Dr. Ismar Littmann (1878–1934).

ERIN MORTON is an associate professor in the Department of History at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, Canada. Her research broadly examines categories and experiences of art and culture as being determined by and determining liberal capitalist modernity. She has published widely on historical and contemporary visual and material culture in Canada and the United States in such collections as *Global Indigenous Media* (Duke University Press, 2008) and journals such as *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, and *Utopian Studies*. Her co-edited volume (with Lynda Jessup and Kirsty Robertson), *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, is forthcoming from McGill-Queen's University Press. She is currently working on a single-authored book entitled *Historical Presenting: The Place of Folk Art in Late Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*.

KIRK NIERGARTH is an assistant professor in the Department of Humanities at Mount Royal University in Calgary. His essays on Canadian art in the 1930s and 1940s have appeared in the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Acadiensis*, *Labour/Le Travail* and in the edited collections *Dynamics and Trajectories: Canada and North America* (Fernwood, 2012) and *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012). His monograph on New Brunswick artists, 1930–1950, is under contract with University of Toronto Press. He is currently working on a study of Canadians who visited the Soviet Union in the interwar period.

ANDREW NURSE is associate professor of Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University. His current research explores the historical sociology of modern art and culture in Canada. He has previously written essay-length studies of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the art critic Walter Abell, and the role of museums as cultural archives. His other publications include the edited collections (with Raymond Blake) *Beyond National Dreams: Essays on Canadian Nationalism, Citizenship, and Identity* (2009) and (with Lynda Jessup and Gordon Smith) *Around and About Barbeau: Modeling Twentieth-Century Culture* (2008), while other work has appeared in *Acadiensis*, *Scientia Canadensis*, and *Ethnohistory*.

ELAINE C. PATERSON is associate professor of craft and decorative art history in the Department of Art History, Concordia University. Her current research concerns women's cultural philanthropy in early twentieth-century British, Irish, and Canadian craft guilds. Her writing and teaching are focused on the relationships between material culture and feminist theory, with an emphasis on the decorative arts and craft history. Some of her publications include "Crafting a National Identity" in *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (2004); "Decoration and Desire in the Watts Chapel" in *Gender and History* (2005); "Gender and Canadian Ceramics: Women's Networks" in *On the Table: 100 Years of Functional Ceramics in Canada* (2006); "'Meet Me in St. Louis': Emigration and Craft Revival in Nineteenth-century Ireland and Canada," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* (forthcoming 2014); She was co-editor of a special issue of *Cahiers métiers d'art – Craft Journal* on Craft and Social Development (Spring 2012) and the book project "*Sloppy Craft*": *Post-Disciplinarity and Craft* (BERG/Bloomsbury, forthcoming 2014).

PATRICIA SHEPPARD is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History at Concordia University and a recipient of the Bourses d'études Hydro-Québec de l'Université Concordia. The research presented here is the result of work completed during her master's degree. She is continuing her study of personal albums compiled by women in Canada during the nineteenth century with her doctoral research.

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ANNALES D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART CANADIEN
Université Concordia
1455, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest, EV 3.725
Montréal (Québec) H3G 1M8
jcah@concordia.ca
<http://jcah-ahac.concordia.ca/fr>

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Martha Langford, Editor-in-chief
JOURNAL OF CANADIAN ART HISTORY
1455 de Maisonneuve West, EV 3.725
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1M8
jcah@concordia.ca
<http://jcah-ahac.concordia.ca>