BETWEEN THE LINES:

INTERARTISTIC MODERNISM IN CANADA, 1930-1960

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers the first comprehensive examination of the diverse interactions and collaborations among Canadian modernist poets and artists, as well as the aesthetic, thematic, and idiomatic relationships between their poems and works of art. The project incorporates archival and historical research to demonstrate the interartistic nature of modernist poetry in Canada between 1930 and 1960. By establishing that paintings, sculptures, and book designs and illustrations by Canadian artists who knew and worked closely with Canadian modernist poets informed and affirmed the content and aesthetics of the poetry, the dissertation argues for a consideration of the social dimension of literary modernism in Canada. Chapter One investigates the personal relationship between the poet Dorothy Livesay and the artist Emily Carr and reveals the aesthetic and thematic convergences of their paintings and poems as they relate to landscape and affect. Chapter Two deals with the Montreal little magazines of the 1940s as interartistic sites of collaboration among artists and poets and argues that the artists' paintings provided models of human agency for the poets. Chapter Three considers the small press movement and gallery space of the 1950s as similar sites of interartistic collaboration and contact; it suggests that this contact inspired Canadian modernist poets to translate the aesthetic and thematic tensions of Canadian art into their poems. Chapter Four concerns both the poetry and visual art of P.K. Page-Irwin and argues that the poet addressed an ongoing aesthetic conflict in her poetry through the visual arts. Where the first chapter examines the relationship between a single poet and a single artist, the second and third chapters analyze the dynamics of groups of artists and poets working closely together on little magazines and

on small press publications and encountering each others' work within the space of a gallery. The final chapter considers the work of a poet who is also a visual artist. This framework reveals the diversity of interartistic relationships that flourished throughout the rise of modernism in Canada.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse de doctorat offre le premier examen approfondi des diverses interactions et collaborations parmi les poètes et les artistes modernes du Canada et les relations aesthétiques, thématiques, et idiomatiques entre leurs poèmes et leurs oeuvres d'art. Le projet prend en compte la recherche historique et archiviste pour démontrer la nature interartistique de la poésie moderniste au Canada entre 1930 et 1960. En démontrant que les peintures, sculptures, et conceptions et illustrations de livres par les artistes Canadiens qui connaissaient et travaillaient de près avec les poètes modernistes du Canada ont informé et affirmé les sujets et l'aesthetique de la poésie, cette thèse de doctorat soutient que la dimension sociale de la litérature moderniste au Canada soit considérée. Chapître un enquête sur la relation personnelle entre la poète Dorothy Livesay et la peintre Emily Carr et révèle les convergences aesthétiques et thématiques de leurs peintures et poèmes comme ils se rapportent au paysagisme et aux émotions. Chapître deux traite sur le sujet des petites revues de Montréal dans les années 1940 comme étant des sites interartistiques de collaboration parmi des artistes et des poètes et soutient que les peintures par ces artistes fournissaient des modèles de l'agence humaine pour les poètes. Chapître trois considère le mouvement de petites maisons d'édition et l'espace des galeries d'art dans les années 1950 comme étant de semblables sites interartistiques de collaboration et contact; il suggère que ce contact a inspiré les poètes modernistes du Canada à traduire les tensions aesthétiques et thématiques d'art Canadien vers leurs poèmes. Chapître quatre concerne et la poésie et l'art visuel de P.K. Page-Irwin et soutient que la poète abordait un conflit aesthétique continuel dans sa poésie à travers les arts visuels. Où

le premier chapître examine la relation entre une seule poète et une seule artiste, le deuxième et le troisième chapîtres analysent les dynamiques des groupes d'artistes et poètes travaillant ensembles sur les petites revues et les publications de petites maisons d'édition et qui devenaient exposés aux oeuvres des uns et des autres dans l'espace de la galerie d'art. Le dernier chapître considère l'ouvrage littéraire et artistique d'une seule poète qui est aussi une artiste visuelle. Ce cadre révèle la diversité des relations interartistiques fleurrissant durant la hausse du modernisme au Canada.

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available to me, but also offered detailed information about these paintings, biographical information about the artist, and insight into her interest in Sufism. He also arranged a meeting with Page at her home in 2009, where I was able to speak candidly with the artist about her artwork and view her paintings and those of other artists she admired—James Wilson Morrice, Jori Smith, Portinari—hanging on her walls.

Sincere thanks to Aileen Collins and Stanley Rozynski, who both graciously hosted me at their homes to discuss their work with *CIV/n*, share their knowledge about Montreal poets and artists they knew and worked with, and show me original paintings and drawings by these artists. Thank you, also, to Max Layton, who shared with me details about his mother's art and information about her life in Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s.

Other people offered guidance and assistance with the research and writing of this project. Miranda Hickman gave me useful advice and insight on sources related to material modernism. Dean Irvine shared a catalogue of a CAS exhibition that includes an introduction by Patrick Anderson. Sandra Djwa graciously provided me with excerpts from a draft of her unpublished biography on P.K. Page and her general knowledge about Page's interest in the visual arts and relationships with artists, such as Jori Smith. Nathalie Cooke read an early draft of Chapter Two and provided some helpful direction. Jeff Weingarten read drafts of a few of the chapters and offered his keen advice and assistance as an editor. Joel Deshaye pointed out a few sources on poet-artist relationships in Canada. Emily Ballantyne shared her MA thesis and discussed P.K. Irwin's artwork with me. I am grateful for each of their generosity, advice, and our wonderful conversations.

couver Art Gallery, who generously offered provenance information related to paintings by Emily Carr.

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Introduction

CONTEXTUALIZING THE RISE OF INTERARTISTIC MODERNISM IN

CANADA

The actual expression of colour can be achieved simultaneously by several forms of art, each art playing its separate part, and producing a whole which exceeds the richness and force of any expression attainable by one art alone. The immense possibilities of depth and strength to be gained by combination or by discord between the various arts can be easily realized.

—Wassily Kandinsky, from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

And in the gallery before the colored [*sic*] square
and in the hall in the surrounding sound
and here with the lamplight on the patterned page
the pillars crumble and the walls fall.

—Peter Miller, "Samson of the Arts," in *Meditation at Noon*

In 1957, Canadian poet Earle Birney published an article in *Canadian Art* lamenting that "[p]oets and painters are much more remote from each other on this continent than they ought to be" ("Poets and Painters" 76). He stated that "whether we speak of illustration, where the artist plays second fiddle, or of medieval or bibliophilic embellishment for its own sake, or of books jointly conceived—we speak of something that does not exist in relation to Canadian poetry" (78). Painting and poetry would not "reach full maturity" in Canada, Birney argued, unless our artists and poets sought "that ancient and honorable union between the two arts within the covers of the same book" (78). He prescribed a "voluntary, even spontaneous working-together of independent artists and their poetic contemporaries. . ." (78). Assertive and convincing, Birney's comments in *Canadian Art*,

Canada's largest art magazine at the time, create the impression that artists and poets in North America had been working entirely independent of one another throughout the modern era. Were Birney's claims accurate? Were the "sister arts" truly as estranged prior to the 1960s in North America, in Canada, as he made them out to be?

Certainly, the communion between verbal and visual media before 1957 in Canada was not as emphatic or explicit as it became in the 1960s. In the latter decade, image and text interactions were profuse in Canadian literary and visual culture: bp Nichol introduced Canadians to his "borderblur" aesthetics,[1] and bill bissett popularized visual and concrete poetry; visual artists, such as Greg Curnoe, meanwhile, experimented with the combination of image and text in their paintings; and James Reaney launched his little magazine *Alphabet* in 1960, followed by his Alphabet Press, which also published collaborations between painters and poets (Reaney's publication with Jack Chambers, *The Dance of Death at London* [1963],[2] is exemplary). By 1967, Vancouver's "Intermedia Society" appeared, which affirmed a radical interartistic culture was ascendant in Canada. The expansion of interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration between visual artists and poets in the 1960s, however, was not as explosive or sudden as Birney's comments would imply; it owes much to the proliferation of cooperative, symbiotic, coactive relationships between artists and poets throughout the modernist period

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[1] A term Nichol used to describe his poetry, which blurs the boundaries between "poetry, novels, short fiction, children's books, musical scores, comic book art, collage/assemblage and computer texts," among other media (Wershler-Henry and Emerson 332).

[2] Reaney learned typesetting and acquired a printing press to create *Alphabet* and Alphabet Press because "it was the only way to get out a little mag that looked right and didn't cost the moon." Reaney notes, furthermore, that "Paul Arthur's *Here and Now,*" which I discuss on pages 18-21 of this introduction, was ". . . the force behind the idea of it looking right" (qtd. in Francis, "The Little Presses" 58).

that preceded it.

This study is the first to investigate and examine the abundant and diverse interactions and collaborations between poets and artists, as well as the aesthetic, thematic, and idiomatic relationships among their poems and paintings, throughout the rise of modernism in Canada. There have been a number of interdisciplinary studies of Canadian painting and literature from the early twentieth century to the present, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the paintings of the Group of Seven and the poetry of early modernists. In her article "'A New Soil and a Sharp Sun': The Landscape of a Modern Canadian Poetry," for example, Sandra Djwa compares the Group of Seven's iconic landscape paintings with landscape poems by the poets of the 1920s, including A.J.M. Smith, E.J. Pratt, W.W. E Ross, and F.R. Scott. She argues that the artists and poets fused a "distinctly Canadian landscape and imported modernist techniques" to create a national modernism (3). D.M.R. Bentley confirms the influence of the Group of Seven's landscape paintings on Scott and Smith's poetics: "[b]efore the Second World War, Scott, like Smith, saw the North partly through the works of the Group of Seven and their associates as a pristine and all but uninhabited repository of a fresh, vivid, and manifestly Canadian natural beauty" ("New Styles" 27). Alexandra M. Roza's M.A. thesis, "Towards a Modern Canadian Art, 1910-1936: The Group of Seven, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott," examines the "cross-fertilization of the arts in Canada in the 1920s" and suggests that both the Group of Seven and Smith and Scott worked towards the modernization of Canadian culture through their paintings, poems, and critical essays. In "Moonlight and Morning: Women's Early Contribution to Canadian Modernism," Wanda Campbell

turns her attention to a lesser-known, "transitional" modernist poet of the 1920s, Katherine Hale, and compares her vision of a world that is "less gentle and less humane" in her poem "Going North" to the stark, Northern landscapes of the Group of Seven (90-91). Evidently, comparisons of the Group of Seven's landscape paintings and Canadian landscape poetry of the 1920s has been a fairly common endeavour.

Critical studies that investigate the relationship between painting and poetry, or image and text, in works by Canadian poets after 1960 are, likewise, numerous: for example, Lorraine York's *The Other Side of Dailiness* (1988), Caroline Bayard's *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec* (1989), Jack David's essay "Visual Poetry in Canada: Birney, bissett, and bp" (1977), and Laurie Ricou's "Visual / Textual Intersections" (2007)—a list that is by no means exhaustive. Giovanni Cianci rightly remarks, however, that "exchanges between the arts. . . were typical precisely of modernism," and "the dialogue between literature and the plastic and visual arts has never been so varied and intense" as in the modernist period beginning just before World War I and ending sometime between 1960 and 1970 (451).[3] Surprisingly, the interartistic aspect of "Anglo-American modernism," Cianci notes, has been neglected by critics (451); the same can be said of Canadian modernism.

Interartistic criticism of the period that saw the height of modernist activity in Canada, 1930-1960, is virtually non-existent. Almost exclusive critical atten-

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[3] Among a number of factors contributing to this neglect, Cianci identifies "the rise of a critical methodology genetically addressed to exploring only the linguistic dimension of texts. . . ," that is the rise of New Criticism and formalism (452), as one of the main reasons why the visual aspects of modernist literature have received so little attention.

tion to the common national themes of early twentieth-century Canadian poetry and the paintings of the Group of Seven, fascinating as it has been, has made us less attentive to the equally compelling instances of aesthetic and thematic affinities between poetry and painting and the interartistic collaborations between poets and artists in the mid-century. John Cook's *The Influence of Painting on Five Canadian Authors* (1996) is the only book-length interartistic analysis of the nation's literature. Of the five authors he considers, only two might be classified as modernists: Alice Munro and Hugh Hood. Cook's author-centric study, however, considers only "Ontario fiction after 1965" (iv). While numerous critics of Canadian literature and poetry have made passing remarks (often in a footnote or parenthetical statement) on the personal relationships between artists and poets of the modernist era, as well as modernist poets' interest in the visual arts, there has yet to be a study of this kind that makes the relationships and the visual art not marginal but central to our understanding of Canadian modernist poetry. If, as Sherrill Grace suggests, "[m]odernism was essentially interartistic and international: the artists often lived and worked together, exchanged views, experimented in various media, shared influences and discussed their common goals" (5), a consideration of these interartistic relationships seems essential to our understanding of Canadian modernism. The work of artists who knew, worked closely with, or were themselves Canadian modernist poets, I argue, both informed and affirmed the images, idioms,[4] tropes, and aesthetics of Canadian modernist poetry between 1930 and

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[4] An idiom is "a characteristic mode of expression" or a distinctive convention used in music, writing, or performance (Phillips 237). An idiom is different from a style: it is a common form of expression, with a particular vocabulary and syntax (content and form), used or employed by more than just a single artist, poet, or musician. An artist or poet, therefore, can have a "signature style" but not a "signature idiom."

1960.

Literary-historical, art-historical, and biographical studies, along with formal, intertextual analyses of paintings, sculptures, and poems are all central to my methodology. Such an approach will seem peculiar, perhaps even illogical, to those who believe intertextual and influence studies to be antithetical. Recent scholarship by Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, Margarete Landwehr, and Susan Stanford Friedman reveals, however, that a reconciliation between the two terms is common among both literary critics and theorists—even those who (ironically) have worked to erect distinct boundaries between them. Friedman has shown, for example, that a number of paradoxes characterize the concept of intertextuality, not the least of which is the 'birth' of the term itself: in 1966, Julia Kristeva first introduced the word

> under the guise of bringing Mikhail Bakhtin to the attention of theorists in
> France. . . Feminist critics might readily recognize the gender inflection of
> Kristeva's self-authorizing strategy, one she uses often: to propose her
> own theories, she presents a 'reading' of some (male) precursor or fellow
> writer, a re-reading in which her attribution of ideas to a male master
> screens the introduction of her own ideas. This 'misreading,' to invoke
> Harold Bloom's term, does not eliminate the other, but rather borrows his
> authority from the position of disciple. Intertextuality was paradoxically
> born under the guise of influence. (147)[5]

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[5] Friedman also notes that Kristeva's redefinition of "intertextuality" in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) may "be read as a desire for orthodoxy, for the purity of an idea. Her allusion to influence as a 'study of sources' is a metonymic 'mis-reading' (in Bloomian terms) of the methodology in influence studies. . . ." and may be "a symptom of the desire to control the dissemination of intertextuality, to exert *influence* on the future use of an idea she authored" (153).

Friedman notes, furthermore, that "the discourse of intertextuality was already implicit in the study of literary influences as a methodology," which often engages in the analysis of "the process of adaptation, assimilation, revision, and transformation" of texts (155). It is, therefore, quite difficult to assert a clear distinction between influence and intertextuality, as both approaches to the study of literature have been interconnected to some degree since their conception.

Harold Bloom's infamous *The Anxiety of Influence* exemplifies the overlap of influence and intertextuality in practice. As Jonathan Culler, and Clayton and Rothstein have shown, Bloom invokes both influence and intertextuality in his book, and, consequently, he "has sometimes been characterized as a theorist of the latter, despite the 'influence' in his title" (Clayton and Rothstein 9). Clayton and Rothstein remark, quite rightly, that Bloom "sounds very much like a theorist of intertextuality" when he states such things as "[i]nfluence, as I conceive it, means that there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts" (qtd. in Clayton and Rothstein 9). Although his emphasis on the subject, his insistence on the poetic will, and his focus on major poets ultimately put his argument at odds with poststructuralist conceptions of intertextuality (Clayton and Rothstein 9-10), Bloom's discussion of influence still incorporates many of the analytical strategies and theoretical notions characteristic of intertextual study.

Bloom's mixing of intertextuality and influence, nevertheless, is not generally cited as a weakness of his work;[6] a few critics even see it as suggestive of both the limitations of strict, intertextual orthodoxy and of the criteria needed for

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[6] Perhaps the most serious weakness of Bloom's study, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have argued, along with Claire Knowles, is its "masculinist approach to the study of poetic tradition in a period" (Knowles 5).

a new and pragmatic model of intertextual study. Jonathan Culler, for example,

suggests that while Bloom's criticism is

> ultimately a genetic theory rather than a theory of the conditions of signi-
> fication, it nevertheless illustrates the dangers that beset the notion of in-
> tertextuality: it is a difficult concept to use because of the vast and unde-
> fined discursive space it designates, but when one narrows it so as to make
> it more usable one either falls into source study of a traditional and positi-
> vistic kind. . . or else ends by naming particular texts as the pre-texts on
> grounds of interpretive convenience. (109)

Culler succinctly identifies the problem with Bloom's approach to influence and

intertextuality: to be a useful method of criticism, intertextual study must define a

'discursive space,' or the method risks juxtaposing *any* two artists or artworks

based solely on the critic's interests, which can result in interartistic analyses that

seem (or are) arbitrary and contrived. Because it involves a consideration of per-

sonal and professional relationships between artists and poets and the definitive

social and historical junctures among themselves and their works, the assertion of

influence is one way of delineating limits or guidelines for discussion; but it is

only effective if the author avoids traditional source study and the definitive es-

tablishment of dyadic textual relationships—precisely what Bloom, unfortunately,

sets out to do. Landwehr credits Culler with having suggested a useful "spectrum"

in his assessment of Bloom's work, "ranging from the anonymous, infinite inter-

textuality of Barthes to the finite, dyadic intertextuality of Bloom" (4). This spec-

trum, according to Landwehr, "provides one pragmatic and flexible framework

for discussing these two opposing, but (apparently) not mutually exclusive views"
(8-9).

Culler's identification of a methodological imbrication of influence and
intertextuality has spawned a reconsideration of the terms and a strong critical
argument that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Friedman argues,
for example, that "the critic needs a flexible concept of intertextuality that ex-
amines the clashing and blending of texts from the biographical, literary, and cul-
tural records" (166). The point of adopting either influence or intertextuality as a
methodology, after all, is to gain insight into the aesthetics or content and mean-
ing of a work of literature and art; if literary critics attempt to isolate one approach
from the other, are they not limiting the potential for discovery?

My project generally involves intertextual study: I analyze, compare, and
contrast various individual works of art with individual poems to gain insight into
the content, aesthetics, and general trends of both the art and poetry. I will, how-
ever, define a particular "discursive space" for these intertextual analyses—
locating them within a definitive historical period and national tradition—through
biographical, literary-historical, and art-historical study. I will not limit, moreo-
ver, my understanding of influence to dyadic relationships between artists and
texts, nor will I focus exclusively on major poets. This blending of influence and
intertextuality, as Landwehr and others have shown in the special issue of *College
Literature* on "Literature and the Visual Arts: Questions of Influence and Intertex-
tuality," is a pragmatic approach to the study of interarts relations because inter-
textual study ignores the "sharply defined boundaries among disciplines" (Land-
wehr 5); meanwhile, a consideration of influence is "serviceable" to advancing

our knowledge about or comprehension of a work of art or poem, "particularly

when the influence of a previous work or artist is obvious and / or verifiable"

(Landwehr 5). I will verify whenever possible the influence of artworks and artists

on the poetry and poets, and vice versa, through a consideration of archival docu-

ments, such as correspondence, personal journals, and exhibition catalogues, in

addition to the essays, articles, and reviews the poets and artists wrote and pub-

lished in newspapers and periodicals. In this way, I will look for the expression of

a poetic will affirming an influence that can recommend an interartistic analysis.

     The decision to focus on the period between 1930 and 1960 is not arbi-

trary, for this is generally understood to be the period of modernism's ascendancy

in Canada. While both literary and artistic modernism *began* in Canada before the

Great Depression, 1930 marks the beginning of a simultaneous rise of both artistic

and literary modernism as preeminent cultural formations in this country. It is true

that individual painters, such as James Wilson Morrice, David Milne, and Alfred

Pellan experimented with Nabis and Post-Impressionist aesthetics in the early

decades of the twentieth century, and the Group of Seven introduced Canada to

modernist landscape painting that drew on Scandinavian Symbolist aesthetics and

borrowed the bright colours of the Fauves painters as early as the First World

War. While the Group's influence grew throughout the 1920s, however, their

modernism existed in a strange and paradoxical tension with their antimodern[7]

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[7] Lynda Jessup suggests that the Group established a "fiction of the authentic Canadian painter as a premodern man seeking, in the imagined premodern environment of the Canadian wilderness, the physical and emotional intensity identified with authentic experience" (132). The profundity of their modernism, consequently, has been thrown into question. Roald Nasgaard argues that while "[d]uring the 1920s they may have constituted the avant garde. . . gradually their rhetoric became parochial, turned self-protective and self-propagating, and for a long time stood as a bulwark against modernist incursions" (*Abstraction* 19).

nationalism. The modernist aesthetics of Morrice, Milne, and Pellan, meanwhile, were by no means unequivocally embraced by artists and the public during the decade. In the 1920s, Roald Nasgaard suggests, there were only three major artists who seriously promoted and experimented with abstraction: Bertram Brooker, Kathleen Munn, and Lawren Harris (19).[8] Although modernist aesthetics emerged in Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century, a widespread awareness of its existence and serious discussion and debate about its purpose or possibilities did not develop until the 1930s.

Ironically, it was opposition to the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape paintings that pushed modernism into the spotlight during the 1930s and encouraged experimentation, exploration, and acceptance of its various styles and modes in the visual arts. Controversy arose in the late 1920s over a perceived "favouritism" on the part of the National Gallery of Canada towards the Group of Seven (Hill 21); by the early 1930s, the controversy exploded in a flurry of letters of protest from Academicians (opposed to the Group's modernist aesthetics) and public petitions criticizing the Gallery's partisanship that were published in the press (Hill 23). "It was against this backdrop," writes Charles Hill, "that the Canadian Group of Painters [CGP] was formed" (23). Created in 1933, the CGP was a "society of the so-called modern painters" in Canada meant to make themselves "felt as a country-wide influence in terms of the creative spirit" (Harris, qtd. in Hill 23); since the CGP was headed by Lawren Harris and included most of the

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[8] Even among these three artists, uncertainty and inconsistency in the face of modernist aesthetics prevailed. Nasgaard notes, for example, that Brooker, whose 1927 exhibition featured some of the earliest examples of abstract art in this country, received little "understanding and support" for his work "even from Harris. . . ," who had been "an enthusiastic if finally ambivalent proselytizer for modernism" (*Abstraction* 27).

Group of Seven as members, however, it "was evident the new group would fol-

low a nationalistic path, a direction not accepted by all the new members" (23)

and publicly derided by a number of modernist non-members, such as Bertram

Brooker and Charles Comfort. Critical debates were waged in the periodicals and

newspapers both for and against the Group of Seven's and the CGP's nationalist

modernism. One of the most consistent and forceful voices against the CGP aes-

thetics was that of John Lyman. As early as 1931, Lyman wrote a letter to the *Ca-

nadian Forum* disparaging as misguided Canadian painting's "extreme interest in

landscape for its sentimental geography" (qtd. in Hill 125). From 1936-40, Lyman

wrote a monthly art column in *The Montrealer* in which he developed this critique

further and promoted the classical principles of European modernist art. In addi-

tion to the frequent ateliers he organized in the early 1930s, Lyman formed the

Eastern Group of Painters in 1938, which included such modernist painters as Eric

Goldberg, Goodridge Roberts, Philip Surrey, Jack Humphrey, Alexandre Berco-

vitch, and Jori Smith; with the support of the group's members, these artists expe-

rimented with abstraction, Expressionism, and Cubism, among other European

modernist innovations. We will meet Lyman again in Chapter Two, in which I

discuss his role in uniting visual artists and poets through his weekly *salons*. It

was the controversy and opposition to the Group of Seven and CGP nationalist

landscape paintings, however, that initiated the period of modernist experimenta-

tion and expansion in Canadian art that would continue until the 1960s.

 Modernist poetry, like modernist visual art, emerged in Canada during the

First World War, but it did not immediately become a prominent creative move-

ment. According to Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski's seminal study *The*

Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, Arthur Stringer's 1914 collection *Open Water* was one of the earliest examples of modernist free verse in Canada (3). By the 1920s, a number of individual poets, for example Dorothy Livesay, E.J. Pratt, Raymond Knister, W.W.E. Ross, and Louise Morey Bowman, among others, experimented with free verse and other modernist forms, such as imagism. These individual, pioneering experiments were published in personal collections, but also began to appear in periodicals, such as the *Canadian Forum* (1920-2000). In 1925 modernist poetry found its first collective expression with the "Montreal Group" of poets from McGill University, which included F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Leon Edel (who were later joined by A.M. Klein and Leo Kennedy). The "Montreal Group" exerted considerable influence on the development of modernism in Canada in later decades; their poetics, however, was neither mainstream nor obviously ascendant in the 1920s (as F.R. Scott's well-known satirical poem "The Canadian Authors Meet," first published in the *McGill Fortnightly Review* in 1927, suggests).[9] It was not until the subsequent decade that modernism became a widespread interest and concern of Canadian poets and readers and critics of Canadian poetry.

According to W.J. Keith, "until the 1930s, Canada saw little of the artistic challenge and achievement of the modernist movement that had transformed literary attitudes in other parts of the English-speaking world" (58). The economic

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[9] In the poem, Scott laments the Canadian authors' continued interest in landscape poetry of the "Carman, Lampman, Roberts, Campbell, Scott" variety: Confederation poetry of a by-gone era. His final stanza is the modernist call to "Make it New" that invokes the country's current national anthem: "O Canada, O Canada, O can / A day go by without new authors springing / To paint the native maple and to plan / More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing?" Written at the height of the Group of Seven's popularity in the 1920s, Scott's choice of "paint" instead of "write" might allude to the similar obsession with landscape rampant in the visual arts.

situation of the Depression caused many magazines and presses to fold, which all but forced writers to unite in order to find a way to circulate their work. Group-funded little magazines and pamphlets, among the few opportunities for poets to see their work in print, appeared thanks to a rise of leftist culture in the 1930s that fostered "a lively community of fellow sympathizers organized around a politics of opposition. . ." (Rifkind 4). Leftist periodicals provided a space and place for debating the value of, or outright contesting, the aesthetics of modernist poetry and the theory of art for art's sake; the little magazines also enabled experimenta-tion and the development of alternatives to the "cosmopolitan" modernism written by Scott, Smith, and Klein, for example. At the same time, these three poets be-came major voices in Canadian poetry during this decade. With the publication of Scott's modernist anthology *New Provinces* in 1936, R.E. Rashley suggests that "the new movement had become sufficiently self-conscious and successful" (3). Rashley's comment is somewhat exaggerated—*New Provinces* "sold less than a hundred copies in the first year of publication" (Keith, "How New was *New Prov-inces*"). Nevertheless, literary historians, Keith notes, generally regard the publi-cation as "a turning-point—a signpost towards a new poetic era." Zailig Pollock affirms, moreover, that during the thirties "the position of the modernists seem[ed] much more assured" in this country ("Marginal Notes"). As in the visual arts, an atmosphere of opposition (whether on the part of anti-modernists, Marx-ists, traditionalists, or others) to an emergent modernist aesthetic helped inspire greater interest in and discussions about modernist poetry in the 1930s and expe-rimentation with modernism's aesthetic possibilities that continued until the 1960s.

The period of 1930-1960, moreover, marks a period of unique collaborative and discursive activity between poets and visual artists in Canada. The little magazines and small press publications of this era are significant documents attesting to the interartistic nature of Canadian modernist cultural activity. As Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman argue, modernist magazines

> provided a cultural space where. . . challenging new modes of literature and visual art could appear side by side with other, less extreme modernist modes of expression, and where artists, impresarios, critics, and philosophers could address one another directly, with a segment of the public listening in on those conversations about what kind of visual, verbal, and musical works were best suited for the modern world. (74)

Small press collections and chapbooks also provided a smaller, more intimate space in which poets and artists could continue their engagements with both visual and literary modernism. A consideration of the content and materiality of these publications reveals significant information about the various interartistic networks and relationships between artists and poets that developed in Canada and the kinds of modernist styles, idioms, and aesthetics that interested them, beginning in the 1930s.

The rise of socialism in that decade fostered a uniquely collaborative atmosphere out of economic and social necessity. According to Rifkind, the leftist writers of the 1930s (both before the Popular Front era, but more markedly during it) "joined forces with other Canadian leftists, but also with an international community of socialist writers, artists, and intellectuals, so that friends seemed to be everywhere and hope appeared close to fulfilment" (4). The Progressive Arts

Clubs (PACs) that sprang up across the country during this decade are representative of the interartistic interests of Canada's leftist communities. Although they were divided into sections for writers, artists, and those interested in the theatre (Arnason, "Introduction"), the larger group provided a community of like-minded individuals with whom to debate and collaborate on various projects. The poets' interactions with artists exposed them to the concerns of modernist art and informed them of the work of other Canadian artists and of local exhibitions and shows. This kind of exposure likely contributed to PAC member Dorothy Livesay's fascination with the work of B.C. painter Emily Carr, whose artwork was greatly admired by PAC artist and Livesay's friend Jack Shadbolt, a relationship that I discuss in Chapter One. The PAC little magazines were also collaborative projects between artists and poets: the first publication, *Masses* (1932-4), included "linocut prints for cover art and cartoons," as well as literary content (Irvine, *Editing* 33). *New Frontier* (1936-7), which received financial support and contributions from the PACs as well as from "intellectuals and artists of broad political persuasion" (Irvine, *Editing* 56), was explicit about the interartistic intentions of the group: the first editorial states that the magazine's purpose is to "acquaint the Canadian public with the work of those writers *and* artists who are expressing a positive reaction to the social scene" (my italics, Arnason, "Introduction"). Through their various affiliations, collaborations, and publications with local artists, Canadian poets gained exposure to the innovations and directions of modernist Canadian art.

Following the rise of the Popular Front in 1936, the start of the Spanish Civil War that year, and the start of the Second World War in 1939, new collabor-

ative environments formed in Canada: concern over the acceptance of an emergent modernist culture and the role it would play in fighting Fascism and Nazism grew co-extensively out of, and united, poetry circles and the visual arts communities, particularly in Montreal—Canada's largest metropolis at the time. The artist John Lyman identified the need within the arts community for a larger, more inclusive organization that would "incorporate progressive artists of divergent trends to further the cause of modern art" (Hill 131). In January of 1939, he formed the Contemporary Arts Society (CAS) in Montreal, which included all of the members of the Eastern Group of Painters and many others (Varley 10). The CAS was meant to be a more diverse and broad association of modernist artists, which is why the Eastern Group of Painters—"an association based on simple compatibility and respect for one another's work" (Varley 12)—did not disband following the formation of the new society. The fact that it was one of the first Anglophone artistic groups that made a concerted effort to "reach the French artistic community" (Varley 12) reflects the diversity and scope the CAS envisioned for its membership. Although Lyman initially conceived of the group as a society of artists and art collectors working to lobby against "the influence of academics in the art schools, galleries, and other societies" (Varley 12), it eventually included doctors, lawyers, and Montreal poets as members. The artists and poets would meet in public and in private to debate the value of various modernist aesthetics: the poets, I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, either reported on or continued these conversations in their little magazines, such as *Preview*.

　　As the decade progressed, the visual arts and artists became increasingly important to little-magazine design and content. Two little magazines of the

1940s—*Northern Review* (which became the *Northern Review of Writing and the Arts in Canada*) and *here and now: A Canadian Quarterly Magazine of Literature and Art*—pushed the boundaries of the little magazine's aesthetics and interartistic status in a number of ways. *Northern Review*, which I discuss in relation to its forebears, *Preview* and *First Statement*, in Chapter Two, was the more modest example: the layout, design, and typography of the publication were simple and fairly traditional; it included, however, large reproductions of paintings by contemporary Canadian artists.[10] This approach to the inclusion of visual arts content was cost-effective for the budget-strapped little magazine: although there was the occasional expense of having plates made, *Northern Review* profiled mainly young, up-and-coming artists (many of them CAS members) who were more than willing to have their work reproduced, and Sutherland was able to obtain plate reproductions of works by more popular Canadian artists from *Canadian Art* and print these on his own small press (Sutherland, Letter to Lorne Pierce 108).

The short-lived *here and now*, which arrived at the end of the forties (1947-9), was the more impressive model of an interartistic little magazine: the editors, Catherine Harmon and Paul Arthur, set out specifically to "produce a magazine in which close attention was given to design, illustration, and typography" (Whiteman, "*Here and Now*"). The magazine's first editorial (December 1947) charged that "[t]o be completely indifferent to the production of a book or

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[10] In a letter to poet and critic Ralph Gustafson in 1945, *Northern Review*'s editor, John Sutherland, expressed his interest in introducing an "Art Section, with an occasional article on Canadian painting and reproductions from the younger painters" in the August issue of his earlier publication, *First Statement* (24). With the amalgamation of *First Statement* and *Preview* in 1945, however, the August issue of *First Statement* was dropped, and Sutherland's "Art Section" debuted in the first issue of *Northern Review* with reproductions of paintings by Goodridge Roberts and an article on the artist written by Patrick Anderson.

periodical (that is to say its format, type, and paper)," which Harmon and Arthur suggest—rightly or wrongly—had been the case in Canada up until that point, "is as great a sin as to be completely indifferent to the design of one's house. . ." (7). Arthur, a graphic designer, was the primary advocate for greater attention to the material aspects of little-magazine and book publication: his essay "In Silk and Scarlet Walks Many a Harlot" in the third issue of *here and now* (January 1949) exposed the embarrassing state of book publishing in Canada, where "[t]he aver- age printer has a grand repertory of three typefaces for machine composition" (18). He called for a more contemporary aesthetics for the nation's literary publi- cations. Arthur was largely responsible for the visual presentation of *here and now*, which quickly became the focus of critical appraisal. Poets, such as Earle Birney, Ralph Gustafson, and Alan Crawley, hailed *here and now* for its "hand- som[e]" presentation far exceeding other little magazines in the country (White- man, "*Here and Now*").

As Whiteman notes, however, "[o]ne need only look at *Here and Now* to see how expensive it must have been to print. . ." ("*Here and Now*"). The maga- zine designated an official Art Editor and published a section devoted to visual art in each issue. The Art section generally included between eight and ten photo- graphic reproductions of paintings and sculptures by an established visual artist, including Canadian modernists such as Alfred Pellan and David Milne, as well as Canadian sculptor E.B. Cox. Visual arts content in the magazine, however, was not restricted to this section, nor to Canadian artists: full-page reproductions of etchings by Joan Miró and sketches by Jean Cocteau also make an appearance. Although the editors sold copies of the magazine at a hefty $75 each (Whiteman,

"*Here and Now*"),[11] the costs of printing for a little magazine featuring cutting-edge typographical design and multiple reproductions of works by established Canadian and international artists could not have been affordable for long. *here and now* was defunct after only four issues (before the fifties had begun)—its production quality too ambitious for a little-magazine venture.

Arthur's articles and commentaries on book design published in *here and now* were reflective of the new opportunities for magazine and book design in Canada at the end of the 1940s. Whatever progress had been made in this aspect of book production during the 1920s was halted by the Great Depression: Randall Speller notes that during the 1930s, "[i]llustration declined in part as a result of cost. Books of the period were often decorated with standard pictorial and typographic ornaments taken from stock, while publishers recycled decade-old illustrations" (379). It was only following the war that the economic situation improved enough for publishers to acquire good paper, book cloths, and the ability to create varied type-faces (Speller 382). By 1947, design and illustration of poetry collections in Canada finally began to satisfy a long-deferred desire for a more modern aesthetic that had been neglected only out of necessity. Arthur and Harmon's first editorial, coincidentally, appeared the same month that E.J. Pratt—who included "A Greeting" in the magazine's inaugural issue—published his *Behind the Log* with Macmillan of Canada (Pitt 380): illustrated by Grant Macdonald (whose drawings and dust jacket are strikingly modernist), it was one of the

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[11] Whiteman notes that "[i]n a letter of December 18, 1949 to Ralph Gustafson, John Sutherland quoted Robert Weaver as saying that an issue of [*h*]*ere and* [*n*]*ow* cost slightly more than $1,700.00 to produce" (n3). The astronomical production costs of *here and now* help explain the equally exorbitant price of each issue.

most impressive collections of modernist poetry in terms of design ever to appear in Canada (Fig. 1.). It is *definitely* not coincidental, however, that Arthur's essay "In Silk and Scarlet Walks Many a Harlot" (1949) appeared following the introduction of McClelland & Stewart's Indian File Series in 1948, which featured books adorned in abstract designs adapted from "Northwest Coast and Plains indigenous motifs" created by none other than Arthur himself (Antoncic). According to Debra Antoncic, "[f]our separate designs were created and these were repeated, using different colours, for the entire series," which ran from 1948-58 (see Fig. 2 for example). Arthur's influence on *here and now*, along with his book designs for McClelland & Stewart Press, encouraged, but also reflected, greater interartistic collaboration in Canada's little magazine and poetry publications at the end of the 1940s.

Fig. 1. Grant Macdonald's dust jacket of E.J. Pratt's *Behind the Log*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1947 (photograph by the author)

Fig. 2. Paul Arthur's cover design for Roy Daniells's *Deeper Into the Forest*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1948 (photograph by the author)

Little magazines and small presses of the fifties continued to pay greater atten-

tion to the design and illustration of their publications. The editors and managers were more determined, however, to strike a balance between their meager budgets and the material presentation of the poetry. Toronto's *Contact* and Montreal's *CIV/n* solved this financial dilemma by hiring family and friends, or acquaintances, who were up-and-coming artists as the "graphic designers" or "Art Directors" of the little magazines. They engaged these artists to produce original and hand-made designs, which were more cost-effective than having plates made for reproductions of famous paintings. When the editors and members of these little magazines started Contact Press in 1952, it was a logical decision to have these artists also design the press's poetry collections.

The visual artists who designed and illustrated Contact books and the little magazines of the decade ushered in a new standard for book design in Canada. The publications were unequivocally modernist and abstract in appearance. Unlike Paul Arthur's designs for the Indian File Series, moreover, most of their designs and illustrations related to and engaged directly with the poetry in terms of content and aesthetics—a phenomenon I discuss extensively in Chapter Three. Jerome McGann has identified the significance of the small press book design to modernist poetry: "[f]rom Yeats and Pound to Stein and Williams and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, fine-printing work, the small press, and the decorated book fashioned the bibliographical face of the modernist world" (7). In Canada, Sutherland and other Contact Press artists—such as Colin Haworth, whose abstract, sfumato drawings adorned the covers and illustrated the poems of R.G. Everson's 1958 collection *A Lattice for Momos* (Fig. 3 and 4), and Peter Daglish, whose abstract patterns and etchings decorated the pages of George Ellenbogen's

Winds of Unreason in 1957 (Fig. 5 and 6)—created a particularly modernist "bibliographical environment" for poetic texts (McGann 8): an environment that became part of the "bibliographic code" of these works (Bornstein 1). The reciprocity of designs, illustrations, and poems in these small press collections was perhaps an unintended effect of having the poet's close friend, spouse, or relative design the book. As I demonstrated in my Master's thesis on the artist Betty Sutherland, many of these artists were members of the little magazines' editorial boards and vetted submissions to the publications. They were familiar with the poetry and often worked closely with the poet to develop their designs and illustrations for the publications. As Peter Miller's poem "Samson of the Arts" suggests (in my epigraph), the small press book of the 1950s became a new, intermedial site where text and image interacted to form a "patterned page" with the potential to dissolve the "pillars" and "walls" that divide the arts and engender interartistic unity (allegorized by the figure of Samson holding his "brush, bow and pen").
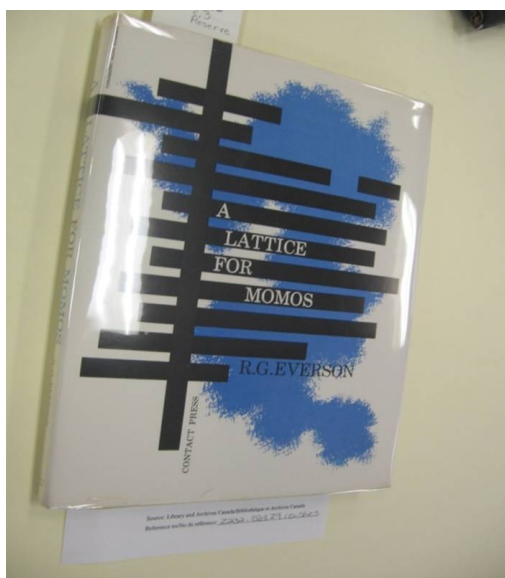
Fig. 3. Colin Haworth's dust jacket of R.G. Everson's *A Lattice for Momos.* Toronto: Contact Press, 1958 (photograph by the author)
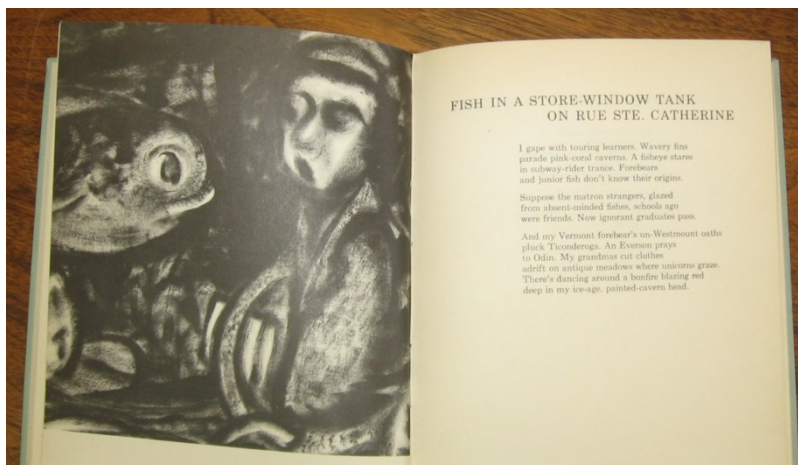
Fig. 4. Colin Haworth's illustration of R.G. Everson's poem "Fish in a Store Window Tank on Rue Ste. Catherine." In *A Lattice for Momos.* Toronto: Contact Press, 1958. 15 (photograph by the author)
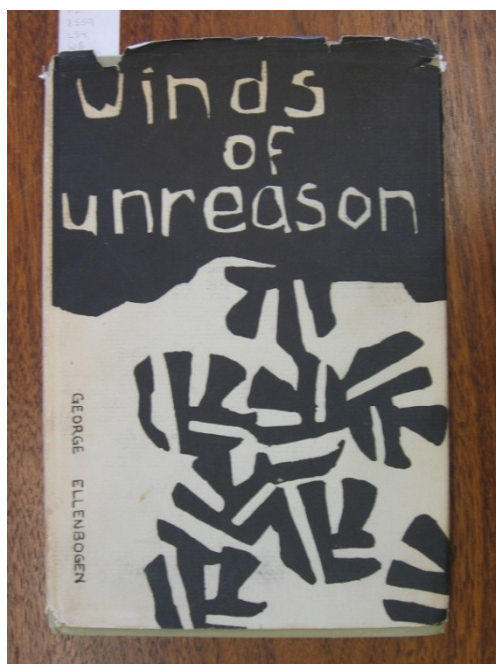
Fig. 5. Peter Daglish's dust jacket of George Ellenbogen's *Winds of Unreason*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1957 (photograph by the author)
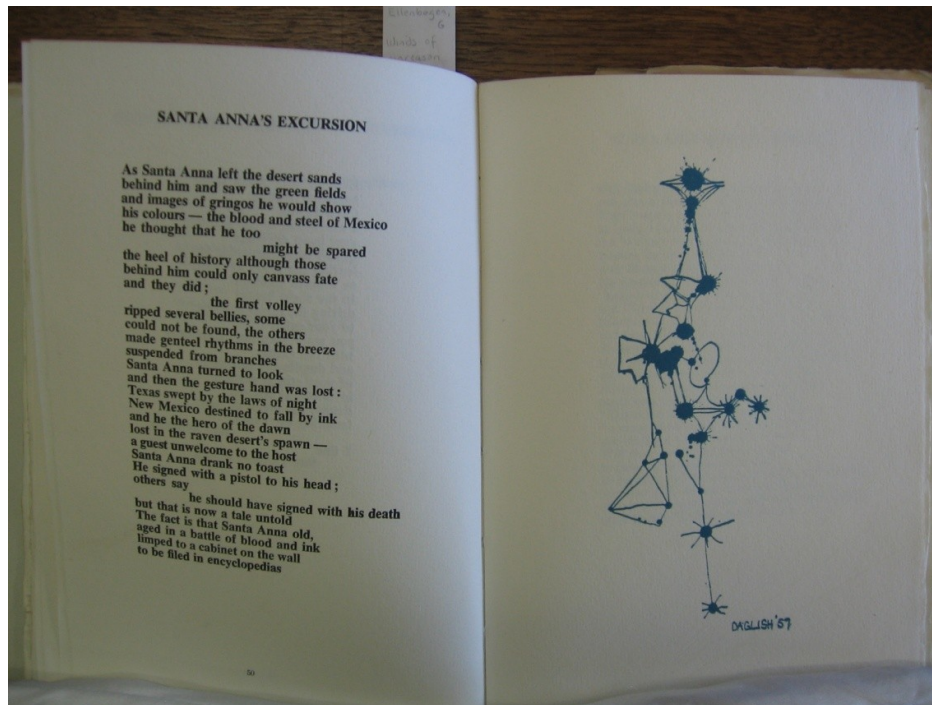
Fig. 6. Peter Daglish's illustration of George Ellenbogen's "Santa Anna's Excursion" in *Winds of Unreason.* Toronto: Contact Press, 1957. 50 (photograph by the author)

It was during the 1950s, as well, that Toronto's Greenwich Gallery became an intermedial locus of painting and poetry when owner Avrom Isaacs opened his doors to the modernist poets and hosted the Contact Poetry Readings. The readings introduced poets from across Canada to new and daringly abstract paintings by Toronto artists, such as Michael Snow and Graham Coughtry, who exhibited at the Greenwich Gallery (known as the Isaacs Gallery as of 1959): the exposure of poets to Toronto painting, I argue in Chapter Three, had an impact on the aesthetics of late 1950s modernist poetics. The relationships between artists and poets that would develop from this "place of meeting,"[12] moreover, resulted in significant interartistic collaborations in the decade that followed. The interartistic sites

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[12] *A Place of Meeting* (1962) is the title of Souster's book of poems designed and illustrated by Michael Snow.

and spaces of the 1950s—such as the little magazines, the small press publications, and the Greenwich Gallery—necessitated and facilitated collaboration between artists and poets that had a lasting impact on Canadian poetry.

From the little magazines and PACs of the 1930s to the small press publications and poetry readings of the 1950s, the period between 1930 and 1960 involved a flurry of discursive and collaborative activity between poets and artists. By 1960, funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (founded in 1957) ignited a proliferation of interartistic projects across the country. Increased funding, along with the development of postmodernist poetry, engendered greater interartistic collaboration among artists and poets. Evidently, Birney's claims about the estrangement between artists and poets in Canada before 1957 are inaccurate: in fact, there was a considerable expansion of interartistic collaboration in the little magazines and small press publications throughout the rise of modernism in Canada. The personal relationships between modernist artists and poets and the convergences of their poems and paintings—whether discursively in personal correspondence, in the pages of little magazines, on the covers of small press publications, or in the space of the gallery—have much to tell us about the formation of modernist culture in Canada between 1930 and 1960.

Although I have chosen to focus on the period between 1930 and 1960, my discussion of modernism will not be restricted entirely to these dates. In Chapter Four, for example, I analyze and compare poems and works of art by P.K. Page-Irwin that she created as late as the mid-1970s. I consider these later works, however, as related to a modernist aesthetic conflict between geometric and biomorphic abstraction that the poet consistently addressed throughout the modernist pe-

riod via the visual arts. Wherever possible, I will consider poems, documents, or

works of visual art created before 1930 or after 1960 if they can illuminate the

aesthetic, thematic, or idiomatic aspects of Canadian modernist poetry and art dur-

ing the rise of modernism in this country.

In addition to the literary and art-historical study, this dissertation will

compare and contrast through formal and thematic analysis the paintings and

poems by authors and poets who knew or worked with one another, or (as is the

case with Page-Irwin) were themselves artist-poets. I am well aware of the ongo-

ing debates over the legitimacy of such interarts comparisons. Ulrich Weisstein

proclaimed in 1982 that "[t]he mutual illumination of the arts in general, and the

study of literature in its relation to the plastic arts in particular, is a discipline in its

fledgling years that has not found its proper bearings and lacks a sound methodo-

logical foundation and a solid terminological framework" ("Literature and the

Visual Arts" 257). Since Weisstein made this statement, some progress has been

made, but interartistic criticism remains undertheorized; attempts to do so often

arise from skepticism about studying the relationship between the verbal and the

visual. These theoretical works are not unlike G.E. Lessing's pioneer study *Lao-

koön* (1836), in which the author was critical of the concept of "the sister arts"—

the close relationship between painting and poetry.[13] René Wellek, James D. Mer-

riman, and Weisstein are similarly dubious of the study of "parallels" between the

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[13] In *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, Lessing argued that painting and poetry are distinct because poetry is experienced over time and painting is experienced in space. He essentially objected to Horace's declaration in the *Ars Poetica*, "*ut pictura poesis*": "as is painting, so is poetry." Lessing's reservations about the similarity between painting and poetry were echoed in the following century by Irving Babbitt: in *The New Laocoön* (1910), Babbitt wrote critically of a confusion of the arts in the romantic period and picked up where Lessing left off in his attempt to establish firm boundaries between painting and poetry.

fine arts and literature. They believe that such studies mistakenly search for super-ficial analogues or a *Zeitgeist* connecting two fundamentally disparate kinds of artistic creation (Wellek 129; Merriman 154; Weisstein, "Literature and the Visu-al Arts" 260-9), and they call for a more rigorous methodology for interartistic comparison.[14]

A glaring exception to the general expressions of skepticism that characte-rized discussions about interartistic comparison throughout the early and mid-twentieth century is Joseph Frank's famous essay "Spatial Form in Modern Lite-rature" (1945). Ironically, Frank takes Lessing's *Laocoön* as the basis of his ar-gument that a parallel of aesthetic form does, in fact, exist between modernist vis-ual and literary arts. According to Frank, Lessing offered "a new conception of esthetic form" when he declared that people experience literature over time, while they experience painting in space ("Part I" 224). Through various examples of fiction and poetry by writers such as Djuna Barnes, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ezra Pound, Frank argued that modernist literature also "mov[es] in the direction of spatial form" because it refuses to be read chronologically ("Part I" 225). Frank concluded that "the significance of spatial form" in modernist poetry and fiction was "the exact complement in literature, on the plane of esthetic form, to the de-velopments that have taken place in the plastic arts" ("Part III" 651). Unlike Less-ing and his heirs, Frank accepted the possibility of the *ut pictura poesis* concept and the idea that aesthetic parallels between the arts can exist. He also suggested that a parallel of aesthetic form, one in which the spatial quality of a work of art

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[14] See Merriman (154), Wellek (129), Weisstein (267-9).

or poetry is emphasized, was particular to modernist literature and poetry.

In his seminal study *Iconology* (1986), W.J.T. Mitchell addressed the general skepticism over verbal-visual comparison by challenging both Lessing's and Frank's arguments. Mitchell argued that "Frank's claim that 'spatial form' is a central feature of literary modernism never questions the normative force of Lessing's distinction [between the temporal and spatial arts]" (96). He also notes that Frank equates "space" with "atemporality" in modernist literature and does not adequately define or characterize the phenomenon he identifies in modernist poetry and fiction as "spatial" (96). Lessing himself, according to Mitchell, conceded that a clear distinction between the temporal and spatial arts falls apart when we consider the representation of bodies in both art forms: "[p]ainting expresses temporal action indirectly, by means of bodies; poetry represents bodily forms indirectly, by means of actions" (Mitchell 101). Although Mitchell's new distinction between painting and poetry based on bodily depiction is not convincingly accurate—the *blazon*, for example, is a poetic form that Jonathan Sawday suggests partitions "a specifically female corpse" that is certainly not active (191)—his argument that Lessing's generic distinctions between literature and painting have more to do with ideology than any intrinsic quality of each art form is more persuasive.[15]

To convince skeptics of the value of interartistic comparison, Mitchell focuses on an element commonly discussed in both literary and art criticism: the

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[15] Mitchell demonstrates that Lessing's time-space division and rhetoric reveal "the most fundamental ideological basis for his laws of genre, namely, the laws of gender" (*Iconology* 109). Through an analysis of Lessing's language of oppositions, Mitchell shows that Lessing describes "[p]aintings, like women, [as] ideally silent, beautiful creatures designed for the gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry" (*Iconology* 110).

image. He introduces a special category of "verbal" images—including "meta-phors" or "descriptions" (10)—in his "genealogy" of images (*Iconology* 9-10). Mitchell notes "literary scholars'" long-standing suspicion of verbal images be-cause they "seem to be images only in some doubtful, metaphoric sense" and therefore must be different from stable, material pictures (13). He convincingly argues, however, that "images 'proper' are not stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense" either (13-4). In so doing, Mitchell ushered in a new era of interartistic studies inspired by his rapprochement of the verbal and the visual.

Paradoxically, although subsequent collections of essays and articles citing Mitchell were rarely critical of interartistic study, most have sought (perhaps in response to Wellek, Merriman, and Weisstein's requests) a more "scientific" ap-proach that would combat the "arbitrariness" of the comparative method (Mitchell *Picture* 89). Ulla-Britta Laggeroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling's *Interart Poe-tics* (1997), for example, includes a number of essays examining questions of im-age-text relations through a poststructuralist, deconstructive, or semiotic lens (Haskell; Webster; Rozik; Florence; Sonnesson). Eli Rozik's contribution to the collection, for example, attempts to deconstruct the theory of verbal metaphor and establish a "deep structure" common to both verbal and visual metaphor. Sonnes-son's essay investigates verbal discourse and visual semiosis as they relate to nar-rativity. These post-structuralist approaches to interartistic study, however, are often encumbered by the primary goal of finding a scientific theoretical approach to interartistic study and, consequently, reveal little about actual relationships be-tween the arts or how the critic might pursue them.

Both Wendy Steiner and Troy Thomas, conversely, embrace the interart

analogy as a valuable approach to interartistic study. Steiner admits that the discussion of a "likeness between painting and literature" is a "metaphor about resemblance itself and . . . about the resemblance between reality and the systems man has developed to represent it" (1); it is precisely this concern about reality and representation, however, that makes analogy "of supreme importance" to the study of modernism (xii). "By claiming that a poem is like a modern painting," writes Steiner, "one is no longer stressing their mirroring function but their paradoxical status as signs of reality and as things in their own right" (xii). Thomas, meanwhile, attends to criticism of the comparative interartistic method by usefully distinguishing between parallels and analogy. He effectively quells anxieties (such as those of Wellek and Merriman) about establishing parallels between art and literature by noting, quite rightly, that "equivalent or parallel structural features are almost impossible to find, because terms of comparison. . . have to be interpreted differently when they are applied to each art" (18). The *only* possible interpretive strategy for interartistic comparisons, he concludes, must be analogy, "because the starting point is dissimilar things, that is, different arts" (27). Thomas declares analogy to be a valid grounding of interartistic comparison when combined with historical contextualization, which often "makes salient some aspect of the works being compared that formerly remained hidden" (28). Steiner's study, for example, reveals a structural affinity between William Carlos Williams's Brueghel series and Brueghel's paintings, a "nonsense" contradiction between text and illustration in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and an ideological relationship between cubism and concrete poetry. Daniel Schwarz's *Reconfiguring Modernism* (1997), meanwhile, examines through analogy the various

concepts, experiments, and forms of modernist art that inspired the fiction and poetry of Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, T.S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens.[16]

Charles Altieri's *Painterly Abstraction in Modernist American Poetry*, on the other hand, offers a comparative study of abstraction in European painting and American poetry that sidesteps the use of analogy altogether. Not looking for analogous forms or structures in visual and literary art, Altieri discusses the ways in which abstraction—a quality common to (but manifested differently in) both modernist poetry and painting—activates spiritual, psychological, and mental energies that affect audiences, whether viewers or readers. He argues that American poets thought abstraction capable of producing "exemplary attitudes that an audience might project into extraartistic contexts" (7).[17] His approach is significant, as he demonstrates that new experiments in the visual arts had an "impact" on modernist poets and that "a critical language based on visual work" can make a "contribution" to our understanding of their poetry (13).

My own methodology of comparative method close reading combined

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[16] There are, however, problems with both studies: Schwarz does not offer adequate theorization of his methodology, which results in a chaotic presentation of his findings (from the constructivist abstraction of British novelists to a discussion of the intertextuality of painting); and Steiner teeters on the edge of asserting a *Zeitgeist* when she hypothesizes—"as a heuristic exercise" (177)— that cubism "is the master current of our age in painting and literature and . . . criticism itself" (177). While I do not contest the possibility that a *Zeitgeist* may have existed, the existence of one cannot be verified; moreover, it is unlikely that "cubism," a very specific modernist movement among many forceful modernist movements, such as Surrealism, Vorticism, and Futurism, was the "master current" of the "age." I suspect, moreover, that Steiner equates Cubism with geometric abstraction. While Steiner's and Schwarz's uses of analogy are effective in bringing to light numerous modernist idioms in British and American literature, a more careful combination of theorization with practice of the painting-literature analogy is needed.

[17] Altieri's phrase is quite vague, but I interpret "exemplary attitudes" to mean a disposition, mental state, imaginative energy, or behaviour that is either worthy of imitation and/or that serves as a warning, an example for the viewer or reader to apply to, translate into, or emulate in their own lives.

with archival research draws on Thomas's theories of analogy and Altieri's exemplary practice of interartistic comparison. In Chapter One, for example, I consider the affective aspects of Emily Carr's paintings and Dorothy Livesay's poetry that establish "exemplary attitudes" their readers or viewers might apply to "extra-artistic contexts" (Altieri 7). In Chapter Two, I examine the abstract work of Montreal painters and poets as "models of agency" for their viewers and readers (Altieri 4). Literary-historical, art-historical, and archival research will combat some of the "arbitrariness" Mitchell finds symptomatic of interartistic study by delimiting the discursive boundaries of intertextuality (*Picture* 89); it will help locate important biographical and creative connections between artists and poets and prompt an understanding of the formal, social, and historical relationships among their works. Archival research will permit me to historicize usefully following Thomas's and Altieri's methods, which consider artworks and poems as documents of their socio-historical moment. In this sense, I will look to the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of interartistic activity as part of my analysis.

As Altieri suggests, abstraction is a modernist "innovation" that arose simultaneously in the visual arts and poetry. Although the effects of abstraction in the two disciplines can be similar, the characteristics and techniques of abstraction in the visual arts and poetry are—due to the nature of each discipline—obviously quite different. According to Harold Osborne, "[b]oth in philosophical and in everyday language 'to abstract' means to withdraw or separate, particularly to withdraw attention from something or from some aspect of a thing" (25). This is consistent with the Latin etymology of the word: *abs + tractus*, where *abs* means

"away from" and *tractus* is the past participle of the verb *trahere*, meaning "to draw." In art-historical discussions, critics and scholars employ the terms "abstract" or "abstraction" to describe certain kinds of visual art that do not mimic reality, especially modern visual art of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also early Islamic art and native art from Africa, Australia, and North America.

The word "abstraction" was famously used in Wilhelm Worringer's ground-breaking dissertation *Abstraction and Empathy* (1907), which inspired countless twentieth-century artists. In it, Worringer argued that there were two main categories of art: the art of abstraction and the art of empathy. For Worringer, "abstract" art was typical of cultures that experienced "great inner unrest inspired . . . by the phenomena of the outside world" (15). Flatness, crystalline and geometric forms, and the idea of the inorganic characterize abstract art; on the other hand, the idea of the organic, curvilinear form, and beauty characterize the art of empathy. Artists strove to create empathetic art, argued Worringer, "because the feeling for the beauty of the organic form that is true to life had been aroused and because the artist desired to give satisfaction to this feeling, which dominated the absolute artistic volition" (28). It was not that this art of empathy was necessarily naturalistic or a realistic depiction of the world—although this frequently was the case; the point, for Worringer, was that the artist's volition was to recreate the happiness of organic life in painting (28).

Worringer argued that the art of abstraction, by contrast, reflects the artists' lack of confidence in the appearance of the outer world, its obscurity and irregularity. This artist was also attempting to recreate happiness in his or her work,

only "the greatest possibility of happiness to the man disquieted by the obscurity and entanglement of phenomena," according to Worringer, was not organic form but rather "geometrical regularity" (20). Worringer's definition of "abstract art" was highly influential upon artists and art critics of the early twentieth century. Over time, however, it proved to be too narrow a definition of abstraction: his binary did not account for art that was neither naturalistic nor "empathetic," but that was neither geometrical nor crystalline in its appearance either. By the 1930s, art historians and critics, such as Geoffrey Grigson and Alfred Barr, acknowledged a new strain of "organic" or "biomorphic" modernist abstraction that had emerged since the publication of Worringer's famous essay: this new category of abstraction, which I discuss in Chapter Two in the work of *Preview* and *Northern Review* poets and in Chapter Four in relation to poems and paintings by P.K. Page-Irwin, included visual art that was primarily curvilinear in form, that dealt with organic content and themes, and that was unequivocally modernist.

In addition to these categorizations of modernist abstraction, Osborne identifies two popular uses of the term "abstract" in visual-arts discourse throughout the twentieth century. The first, Osborne suggests, "is on all fours with the uses of 'abstract' in other contexts" (25): it refers to art that purports to be a representation of an object or scene, but that is not "naturalistic" (25). This kind of art would include a variety of modernist movements and schools, such as Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism. The second use of the term refers to art that does not "transmit, or purport to transmit, information about anything in the world apart from [itself]" (26): what is commonly referred to as "non-representational" or "non-iconic" art. Some paintings by Mondrian, the Abstract Expressionists, and

the Colour Field Painters are examples of this kind of abstract art. The second meaning of "abstract," claims Osborne, "has little or nothing in common with the former usage and is, linguistically, far more arbitrary" (25).

Although I agree that the term "abstract" is appropriately applied to the two different kinds of art that Osborne mentions, I do not concur that the two categories of art are entirely distinct. It is far more useful and accurate, I believe, for us to consider these instances of abstract art as somewhere on a "continuum between predominant representation and predominant abstraction," as Nasgaard recommends (*Abstract Painting* 11). This continuum can be seen as consistent with Anna Moszynska's historical explanation of abstract art:

> Some abstract art is 'abstracted' from nature; its starting point is the 'real' world. The artist selects a form and then simplifies it until the image bears only stylized similarities to the original, or is changed almost entirely beyond recognition. . . . It was not until the early years of the twentieth century, however, that an abstract art with no apparent connection to the external world began to emerge. This new 'non-representational' mode provided a thorough-going challenge to the depictive tradition. (7)

Moszynska, like Osborne, identifies different kinds of abstract art, but she is less absolute in dichotomizing them: she locates a "starting point" for the first kind of abstraction—the "real world" or representation—and sees this art moving or "drawing" away from reality to various degrees. This artistic orientation towards abstraction is consistent with Altieri's definition of "constructivist abstraction": "the deliberate foregrounding of the syntactic activity of a work of art (either non-iconically or in conjunction with representational content)" (57). By *foregroun-*

ding syntactic activity,[18] the artist places emphasis not on representation but on the creation of an "allegorical space in which the formal properties take on extra-formal content" (57). Neither Moszynska nor Altieri, however, clearly envisions the possibility of movement in the opposite direction. Could not artists who create works with no apparent connection to the external world equally begin at a point of "non-representation" and move towards reality? The scale I propose would allow for movement between iconicity or representation and non-iconicity or abstraction, in both directions.[19] Such bilateral movement will help explain why some automatist art or instances of "lyrical" abstraction bear traces of representational figures and forms despite the artists' claims that they began the work without reference to external reality or any intentions of representation.

I have been discussing abstraction primarily as it relates to the visual arts, but the sliding scale of abstraction can also apply to poetry. What is abstract poetry and what makes it different from abstract art? According to Stephen Scobie, "[l]anguage is inherently referential. As a medium, it resists abstraction much more strongly than painting did: the difference is not simply one of degree, but of kind" (80). There is certainly validity to Scobie's distinction: words, unlike visual

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[18] I understand "syntactic activity" to mean the arrangement or structuring of words in a sentence through which the author demonstrates their relationship or connection to one another. The author may organize the arrangement of words based on grammatical rules or standards; he or she may also, as will become evident when I discuss Surrealist poetry in Chapter Two, shirk these rules and conventions altogether.

[19] The idea of bilateral movement along the continuum of abstract art, although never articulated, is hinted at by Nasgaard when he notes that "at the extreme abstract end of the continuum. . . the problem is a little different, because, somewhere along the line, we cross a threshold where it is more useful to talk of the work being constructed rather than abstracted" (*Abstract* 11). Nasgaard's point is significant; it only poses a problem if we see artworks as fixed on the continuum, as if they only move in one or another direction. Although an artist likely either "abstracts" or "constructs" a work of art, Nasgaard's use of the third person plural "we" suggests that the viewer may interpret a work of art as moving between abstraction and construction. He offers Guido Molinari's paintings as exemplary of artwork that, for a viewer, may appear at once abstracted and constructed (*Abstract* 11).

images, are essentially referential devices, as *most* relate to material objects or

subjects in the world. On the other hand, words might be thought of as inherently

abstract, as most do not themselves embody or reflect that which they reference.

An Adamic language that is both "universal" and "transparent" simply does not

exist (Pishwa 33): any language is to some degree an arbitrary semiotic system.

The debate over the abstract status of language aside, poetic language can be used

to create the effect of abstraction—an impression of distancing or alienation from

representation. I will consider poetry to be abstract if the language, syntax, form,

metre, rhythm, or visual presentation of the poem contributes in some way to the

ambiguity, obscurity, and / or deferral of a reader's understanding of the poem or,

as Scobie suggests, to the circumvention or subversion of "the inherent referen-

tiality of language" (80). I will also distinguish, as Scobie does, between abstract

poetry and abstract thought or "abstract ideas" (77). When Pound said "[g]o in

fear of abstractions," he was not advising against abstract poetry but against the

vocabulary of abstract thought: such words as "beauty" and "truth" or "loneli-

ness," "happiness," and "sadness" that refer to intangible feelings or ideas. These

words do not constitute abstract poetry itself but can certainly contribute, and not

always happily, to the abstraction of a poem.

There are numerous ways in which a poem can be abstract, and one can

also consider the abstraction of a poem on a continuum similar to the one related

to painting. Instead of "predominant representation" at one end of the continuum,

however, we might speak of "predominant referentiality": a point at which what

the poem communicates is clear, unobstructed, and easily grasped by the reader.

William Wordsworth's lyrical ballads, such as "We Are Seven," Edgar Allan

Poe's "Annabel Lee," or Robert Frost's "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep" are good examples of poems with "predominant referentiality." The narrative and lyric modes of these poems present a clear story or scene with a progression that is easy to comprehend. Although these poems may include abstract ideas, such as "love," or "truth," and require complex interpretation, these do not obscure the general reference the poem makes to reality. At the extreme opposite end of the continuum, we have poems that are "predominantly abstract," that subvert or deny any kind of referentiality. Many dada and lettrist poems of the early twentieth century—such as the famous poem "fmsbwt" by Raoul Hausman, which Jean-Jacques Thomas and Steven Winspur describe as "a punctual sequencing of letters in which all semantic markers are excluded" (47)—exemplify the extreme case of non-referential poetry. Some sound poems, such as Christian Bök's "Motorized Razors" (part of his long poem "The Cyborg Opera," a work-in-progress), come close to the extreme end of this pole of abstraction because the meaning of the poem is obscured through the foregrounding of sounds. These are just a few examples of poems that approach either end of the continuum.

Canadian modernist poems from 1930 to 1960, for the most part, can be found somewhere in between referentiality and abstraction. The poets of these works employ a variety of techniques to circumvent, obscure, or defer their readers' understanding. These techniques, meant to engage, energize, and challenge readers' perceptions, include such actions as altering the standard word order (subject, verb, object) of a phrase; using ambiguous pronouns (such as *we*, *they*, *us*, *them*, *their*, and *it*) as the subject of a poem without specific reference to whom they apply; shifting between pronouns as the subject of the poem; employ-

ing a single initial pronoun for a lengthy chain of parallel clauses; including an abundance of prepositions that connect multiple nouns; using unexpected or awkward punctuation, or not using punctuation that would be expected; creating enjambed lines that defer or frustrate meaning; adding unexpected spaces between words, which can delay understanding or carry added or alternate meanings themselves; using the space of the page to imply affect or obscure signification; creating dissonance by foregrounding metrical stresses or sounds (through alliteration, consonance, assonance, and anaphora) that can distract the reader from interpreting the poem; including sudden, ungrounded allusions that may create meaning only for a particular and informed reader while confusing most others; and introducing neologisms or including rare and out-dated vocabulary. Other techniques or effects of an abstract poem might include parataxis, swift juxtapositions of unrelated images, mixed metaphors, or a surplus of imagery. Many of these techniques, among others, will be present to varying degrees in the poems I discuss; none of the poems, however, are located at the extreme end of "non-iconicity" or total abstraction on a continuum of abstraction.

One technique of abstraction that Canadian poets and artists used in common is the strange or unrealistic use of colour—the idea of a blue tree, for example, is jarring for a viewer or reader since it does not exist in reality. That colour could be used non-representationally was an artistic belief renewed in the early twentieth century and carried through modernism particularly by two important figures: Henri Matisse and Wassily Kandinsky. They had an immediate impact on Fauvist and Expressionist artists and continued to influence artists later in the century, such as Canadian artists Carr, Sutherland, Rozynski, Ghitta Caiser-

man Roth, Henry Mayerovitch, and Louise Scott. As the leader of *Les Fauves*,

Matisse developed a theory of the autonomy of colour and employed it in his own

works: colour was not a secondary aspect of painting, something to be applied to a

canvas according to an established tradition or in order to represent reality. Colour

was an expressive element, according to Matisse, and offered artists freedom from

the confines of artistic convention. As early as 1905, he "began using colour free-

ly to add expressive radiance and vibratory movement to his pictures" (Leuthold

74). While living in France, Kandinsky attended many of *Les Fauves'* and Ma-

tisse's exhibitions and was influenced by their use of colour (Stratton vii). He be-

gan to develop his own theories on colour, which he published in 1911 in his

famous treatise *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

Adrian Glew affirms that Kandinsky's essay "is acknowledged as one of

the most influential art texts of the first decades of the twentieth century," and its

impact reached well beyond those years. In it, Kandinsky wrote of the contrapun-

tal possibilities of colour, of the expressive power that could be generated through

colour relationships. He acknowledged "two great divisions of colo[u]r": warm

and cold colours, and light and dark colours. With the first division, Kandinsky

asserted that there is a "horizontal movement" to these colours (such as yellow

and blue respectively), with "warm colours approaching the spectator, the cold

ones retreating from him" (36). The second division or antithetical pair, white

(light) and black (dark), also displays a "peculiar movement to and from the spec-

tator, but in a more rigid form" (36). Many Expressionist artists limited their pa-

lettes to black and white tones because the intensity of the contrast implied greater

movement and dynamic energy. Kandinsky also describes a second pair of divi-

sions of colour: "the complementary colours"—red and green, and orange and violet. These pairs of colours and tones represent "the two great possibilities of silence—death and birth" (41). Many visual artists subscribed to Kandinsky's thought that the push and pull, the movement between colour complements, between life and death, engendered a powerful expressive force in a work of art.

Kandinsky's theory of colour also had a significant impact on modernist poetry. Edward Brandabur notes that it was in fact Ezra Pound who first "assigned" an important role to Kandinsky in "the very parentage of Vorticism" (93): in *Blast*, he claimed Kandinsky was "'the mother' of the movement" and Picasso was its father (93). According to Brandabur, however, of the two painters only Kandinsky had written a "verbal statement" on modernism by the time Pound's article appeared in *Blast*. It is well known that Canadian modernist poets, especially those of the 1950s—such as Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, and Irving Layton—were inspired by Pound and *Blast*, as is evident from their involvement in the little magazine *CIV/n*. The publication was named after "one of Pound's laconic sayings" (Dudek, ed. 103), and its design and poetry, which I discuss in Chapter Three, emulated the aesthetics of *Blast.* The visual artists and *CIV/n* members Betty Sutherland and Stanley Rozynsky, however, also applied Kandinsky's aesthetics and colour theories in paintings and sculptures: it will be impossible to determine whether *CIV/n* poets engaged with Kandinsky's theory solely via Pound or whether they saw and acknowledged his theories also as applied by artist friends. Regardless of the source, the poets clearly experimented with Kandinsky's colour concepts, which are represented in paintings and book designs by their friends and spouses.

Since, as Ken Norris asserts, modernism was "a highly formalistic move-ment" (Norris 2), I regularly attend to and compare the formal properties of both paintings and poems by Canadian modernists in the pages that follow. In addition to frequent consideration of pronouns, enjambment, parataxis, prepositions, rhyme, consonance, and asyndeton, this study occasionally involves the scansion of free verse poems—a controversial practice that many critics, such as H.T. Kir-by-Smith, Charles O. Hartman, and John Steven Childs, have derided for its "in-consistencies and absurdities" (Kirby-Smith 27). Other critics, such as Alan Hold-er, contest the "traditional concept of metre" and the practice of scansion alto-gether (103). In fact, a considerable number of recent critics, including Holder, have focused on "rethinking" the concept of metre, especially in the case of free or contemporary verse, and on offering new methods—not always convincing—of analyzing free verse (Hartman; Fulton; Berry, "Free Verse Spectrum").

Admittedly, prosodic scansion, especially foot scansion, is an artificial pa-radigm based on metre, which, Hartman has asserted, is also "an abstraction" (22); but scansion's contrivance does not necessarily preclude its usefulness to understanding poetry, even free verse, which is "without metre" (Adams 150). Charles O. Hartman admits that "[f]ree verse, like all verse, is prosodically or-dered and not aimless" (24). Alison Fulton adds that just because the rhythmic lineation of a free verse poem will not be consistent does not mean one should "give[. . .] up the search and regard[. . .] the poem as a formless mass of words" (186). Annie Finch has shown in *The Ghost of Metre* that modernist poets unders-tood conventional prosody and that vestiges of traditional metrical forms often seeped—whether willingly or unwillingly—into their poems: Kirby-Smith, in

fact, suggests that "certain kinds of free verse partially preserve scansions from the tradition they are departing from" (xii). Although free verse may not be regular or measured as is traditional verse, it often foregrounds patterns of syllabic accents, or "cadences" (regular or irregular) that can be analyzed through traditional scansion. The scansion of some poems that follow, particularly those by poets who have written about the importance of rhythm—such as Louis Dudek and Dorothy Livesay—reveals an expressive element to the verse often engendering affective or aesthetic effects similar to those seen in the paintings. At times, however, a line of free verse may be so irregular, despite the rest of the poem's fairly consistent rhythm and cadences, that it becomes difficult to say where the foot boundaries of the metre would fall: for that reason, in a number of poems, I have left a line of verse unscanned to underscore the inconsistency of its rhythm.

Although this study examines the period between 1930 and 1960, it is only loosely chronological: the four chapters that follow are grouped into three paradigms of interartistic activity, each of which focuses on a particular decade, but—as is the case with the first and last chapter in particular—these chapters often look across the period as a whole to gather evidence and analyze the scope of interartistic relations during the rise of modernism in Canada. The first paradigm is the creative relationship between a poet and an artist, which I examine in Chapter One on the friendship between Dorothy Livesay and Emily Carr: the chapter deals with Livesay's transitional period and posits Carr as an influential figure on Livesay's development of a poetics of affective landscape during the 1930s and 1940s. The second paradigm, through which I consider the relationship between artists and poets working in groups, grounds both Chapters Two and Three: Chapter

Two presents the little magazines of the 1940s as documents of interartistic activity and modernist networks and demonstrates the thematic, idiomatic, and aesthetic convergences between the visual art created by members of the Contemporary Arts Society and poets affiliated with *Preview* and *Northern Review*; Chapter Three extends the group paradigm to an analysis of both the little magazines and small press publications of the 1950s as interartistic documents, in which modernist poets attempted to translate and emulate in their poems the aesthetic tensions they observed in Canadian abstract modernist painting, drawing, and sculpture. Chapter Four addresses the final paradigm of analysis: the work of the artist-poet, through which I consider the painting and poetry of P.K. Page, who later refashioned herself as the artist P.K. Irwin. The chapter examines the ways in which Page both invoked and practised visual art in order to address and work through the aesthetic, thematic, and idiomatic conflicts and crises of her poetry. Together, these chapters aspire to respond to Dean Irvine's call in his article "Editing Canadian Modernism" to "participate in the recovery of a socialized narrative of Canadian modernism" (78) by shedding light on the many social interactions between modernist poets and artists in Canada.

Chapter One:

"NOT NATURE ALONE, BUT NATURE'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAN"[20]

EMILY CARR'S AND DOROTHY LIVESAY'S LANDSCAPES OF AFFECT

I. Introduction: Encountering Emily Carr

In her well-known poem "The Three Emilys" (*Collected Poems* 202), Dorothy

Livesay expressed what she has elsewhere called some "envy" of the freedom and

strength exhibited by three female literary and visual artists ("Carr and Livesay"

147): Emily Brontë, Emily Dickinson, and Emily Carr. In the poem's second

stanza, the poet-persona admires these women's artistic relationships with land

and their ability to "wander lonely" and "catch / The inner magic of a heath— / A

lake their palette, any tree / Their brush could be." It is somewhat peculiar that

Livesay—a poet who never tried her hand at visual art—primarily appreciates the

painterly qualities of the landscapes these Emilys depict, despite the fact that only

one Emily was a painter. Her description of these landscapes, however, reflects

her interest in the genre and belief in the relevance of the visual arts to poetry; it

also points to the fact that the "basis" of the poem was Livesay's own "brief expe-

rience with the body and spirit of Emily [Carr]"—the only Emily from her poem

that she met personally (Livesay, "Carr and Livesay" 137).

Although literary critics have acknowledged Livesay's admiration for

Emily Carr in "The Three Emilys," they have not adequately noted the biographi-

cal dimension of Livesay's poem. As her comment suggests, the poem is

grounded in the poet's personal encounter and friendship with the painter. She had

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[20] From an unpublished review written by Livesay of Emily Carr's "Indian Sketches."

met Carr "on a visit with [her] father, J.F.B. Livesay, to 316 Beckley Avenue in

Victoria" (Livesay, "Carr and Livesay" 144). According to Carr, the meeting oc-

curred in November of 1938. Livesay's father was an art enthusiast, and his friend

Alan Plaunt (the curator of the National Gallery of Canada at that time) asked him

to see Carr's work while he was on a business trip west. J.F.B. Livesay invited

Dorothy—who had already written a "speel" [*sic*] on Carr's paintings after seeing

Carr's solo exhibition in Vancouver that fall—along for the visit to Carr's studio

(Carr, "78 [Carr to Cheney]" 137).[21] Once there, the pair viewed a number of

"forest sketches in oils, on brown manila paper" (Livesay, "Carr and Livesay"

144). A few years later, on 4 March 1941, Dorothy Livesay wrote Carr recalling

their meeting in 1938 and asking for approval to write Carr's biography—an idea

thought up by the late Eric Brown of the National Gallery of Canada and sup-

ported by "a group of anonymous Ottawa people" who volunteered to fund the

project (Macnair). In a kind but frank reply, Carr stated: "Thank you for your in-

terest but let me die first" (Letter to Dorothy Macnair). In this letter Carr also re-

called their meeting in 1938 and the favourable review that Livesay had written

about her painting, which "did not annoy [her] as most do." She even ended her

letter with an invitation: "If you are ever in Victoria I would like to see you."

They did meet again: around 1941, when the artist was "bedridden, wrapped up in

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[21] Livesay estimates that the meeting occurred in the "Spring of 1938" ("Carr and Livesay" 144); however, in a letter from Carr to the artist Nan Cheney postmarked November 21, 1938, Carr writes, "[t]his A.M. I had a visit from Mr. Livesey [*sic*], Head of Can. United Press and his daughter Mrs. McNair [*sic*] seems she had written a speel after seeing the Ex in Van & sent it to a Montreal paper" ("78 [Carr to Cheney]" 137). The "Ex" in "Van" that Livesay saw was Carr's solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery from 12-23 October. Although the exhibition was also shown at the University of British Columbia from 1-4 November 1938, an excerpt of Livesay's review of the exhibition is dated "October 29" (MacNair), before the U.B.C. show opened. Doreen Walker also explains that "[a]n unidentified clipping (typescript) in U.B.C.L, Cheney Papers, box 2, file 17, is headed 'Excerpt from a Montreal Paper,' and is a review by 'D.K.L. Macnair' of Carr's painting. The source of the item has not been located" (139n2).

her grey mantle" at her home where the two spoke of writing and painting (Livesay, "Carr and Livesay" 146). According to Doreen Walker, Carr and Livesay (along with mutual artist-friend, Nan Cheney) remained "good friend[s]" until Carr's death in 1945 (138n2).

Livesay's first meeting and friendship with Carr directly inspired, according to the poet, "The Three Emilys": however, the impact of this personal encounter on Livesay's verse is evident beyond the singular, poetic expression. Following their first meeting, Livesay wrote a number of reviews of Carr's exhibitions and paintings, often commenting on Carr's modernist treatment of landscape. The language Livesay used to describe the emotional intensity of Carr's paintings in these reviews, as we shall see, was also repeated in the articles and essays she wrote about Canadian poetry. It is possible, moreover, to connect Livesay's personal relationship with Carr's art to her own development of a poetics of affective landscape in the late 1930s and 1940s.

A number of literary critics have noted a significant transformation in Livesay's poetics beginning in the mid-1930s and extending into the 1940s: although the characteristics of this poetic shift differ from critic to critic, all seem to affirm that the poet was attempting to merge her earlier, lyric poetry of *Green Pitcher* (1928) and *Signpost* (1932) with her more political, social poetry of the 1930s. Esther Sánchez-Pardo, for example, relates Livesay's poetic transformation to a "search for a poetry that would be accessible and appealing to ordinary Canadians. Not a political poetry in the narrow sense but a verse which linked a 'social concern' and a 'commitment to change' to a 'search for roots'. . ." (174). Dean Irvine, meanwhile, suggests that during most of the 1930s, Livesay was

"preoccupied. . . with a leftist critique of aestheticism and decadent—that is, in her terms, non-progressive—modernist poetry" ("Editorial Postscript" 70), which she felt was a reflection of the indulgences of bourgeois society. Beginning around 1934, however, she began to "merge" her earlier lyric voice—which she had abandoned due to the aesthetic decadence with which she associated it—with her more recent "political" one to establish a "documentary" poetics ("Editorial Postscript" 253).[22] Diana M. A. Relke argues that Livesay's "poetry of the 1930s and 1940s is in many ways a reformulation of her original vision [of woman as "mediator" between nature and culture] in socialist terms" (*Greenwor(l)ds* 160). In general, literary critics agree that by the mid-1930s Livesay returned to a lyric mode that she had abandoned in the early 1930s for a social poetics: she attempted to fuse or reconcile the two modes because she felt the latter was not connecting with, or "appealing" to, "ordinary Canadians" (Sánchez-Pardo 174).

Closer historical and literary scrutiny of this transitional period of Livesay's poetics, beginning around 1936 and lasting until the publication of *Poems for People* in 1947,[23] reveals that Emily Carr played an affirming role in the new direction of Livesay's poetry. As Sánchez-Pardo and Irvine have suggested, in the

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[22] Although a reportage style informed Livesay's social poems—for example, see "Broadcast from Berlin" (*Archive* 42-3), "Queen City" (*CP* 80-5), and "In Green Solariums" (*CP* 72-5)—it was not until the mid-1930s that the poet began to develop her documentary poetics. According to Michael Thurston, in North America, the depression set off an "explosion" of the social documentary genre (59), which is "a distinctive brand of reportage that sought" both to "increase our knowledge of public facts" (Thurston 60) and "sharpen it with feeling'" (Stott 20). Livesay's description of the genre in her famous essay "The Documentary Poem" (1969) is consistent with Thurston's definition: she argued that the documentary poem is "based on topical data held together by descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements" (269).

[23] The timeframe is based on earliest publication date of poems. Irvine identifies a "transitional period" in Livesay's poetics bookended by the publication of *Day and Night* in 1944 and *Poems for People* in 1947 (*Editing* 117). More than half of the poems in *Day and Night*, however, were first published in the 1930s—such as "Seven Poems, "The Outrider," "Lorca," "Prelude for Spring," and the titular "Day and Night" (first published in 1936).

period up to and following her meeting with Carr in 1938, Livesay was increa-

singly aware of the inefficacy of her political activism and of her political poetry.

In the mid-1930s, the poet began to develop a new way of writing political poetry

that explores nature, landscape, and the histories of people—especially margina-

lized people—and their relationships with the places in which they live and work.

Much of this new writing evinces Carr-like images and attitudes to the ways in

which landscape can be represented as an archive of affects or can inspire affec-

tive responses to political or social injustices. In particular, Livesay experiments

with the intensification of affect within the landscape (or in landscape elements,

such as trees and plants) through darkness and movement—two aspects of Carr's

paintings that Livesay explicitly discussed and admired in her reviews of Carr's

work. Although Carr was not the igniting spark that set Livesay off in this new

direction for her poetry, the artist served as an inspiring figure to the poet: Live-

say's interest in and study of Carr's paintings helped to consolidate her movement

away from party-political poetry and towards "poems for people" by uniting her

lyricism and social poetics through new depictions of landscape.

II. Carr's and Livesay's Affective Modernism

In their critical discussions and reviews of art and poetry of the 1930s and

1940s, both Livesay and Carr insisted on the importance of emotion and affect to

painterly and literary expression in Canada. Livesay's belief in an emotional or

affective poetics throughout the period of the rise of modernism in Canada is par-

ticularly striking: literary modernists, although they accepted feelings as integral

to poetry, were typically suspicious of emotions and vehemently anti-

sentimental.[24] In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), T.S. Eliot insisted

that poetry "is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is

not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (156). Eliot

suggests, of course, that "only those who have personality and emotions know

what it means to want to escape from these things" (156), and his doctrine does

not exactly call for a complete rejection of emotion but rather a movement to-

wards impersonality. Michael H. Whitworth, however, notes that "[t]he idea of

poetry as expression—and particularly the idea of poetry as a 'spontaneous over-

flow' of feeling—is challenged in several respects in Pound's 'Imagisme' (1912)

and 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' (1912)" (8). Nevertheless, some literary scho-

lars have attributed the rise of Canadian modernism (in part) to Livesay's first col-

lections of poetry,[25] in which the emotional and personal dimensions of her lyric-

ism cannot be entirely severed from her attempts at imagism.[26] Although she

veered away from the lyrical in her social and political poetry of the 1930s, she

began to reintroduce its emotional properties as early as 1936 and continued to do

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[24] Keith M. Opdahl explains that T.S. Eliot distinguished between "emotion," which is "personal, or the expression of individual needs," and "feeling," which is "the impersonal, rising above the individual" (81). For a discussion of the sentimental in modernism, and modernist critics' "discrediting" of the "sentimental history" of modernism, see Suzanne Clarke's *Sentimental Modernism* (1991).

[25] Both David Arnason and Brian Trehearne suggest that Livesay's *Green Pitcher* (1928) and *Signpost* (1932) helped initiate Canadian modernism (Arnason, "Dorothy Livesay" 6; Trehearne, *Aestheticism* 252).

[26] We might assume that Livesay's imagist poems more closely resemble the Amy Lowell "strain of Imagism. . . that tended towards the pretty and the delicate" than the Poundian strain that rejected "sentimentalism" and "tried for more muscle and sinew" (Trehearne, *Aestheticism* 35); her apprenticeship poems, however, display elements of both schools. In "Fireweed" from *Green Pitcher*, Livesay combines the delicate and the industrial: "Flower of rocky land / Growing in engine-smoke, / Scattered beside the curling rails, / Rooted in soot: // Untamed and prodigal / Flower of flame, / You are forever / Seed of my life" (*CP* 10). In "Monition" from *Signpost*, the poet praises the "soft silken rush of a car over wet pavements" that arouses in her "Fear—surging—pounding" (*CP* 26). The poet's imagism cannot be easily categorized as either Lowellian or Poundian, a critical binary that oversimplifies the diversity and variety of imagist verse in the first place. Livesay's imagism, however, may be qualified as explicitly sensual and emotional, as her direct references to "Fear" and repetitive invocations of pain in these poems suggest.

so into the 1940s, a "decade of largely impersonal poetics" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 45). The poet attempted to strike a balance between impersonality and emotion through the portrayal of collective affects; her poetry of the mid-to-late thirties and early forties, nevertheless, largely defies literary modernists' suspicion of the emotions.

Modernist visual art and its critics, by contrast, were much more tolerant—one might even say celebratory—of emotions than their literary counterparts. Henri Matisse, for example, once stated that the reason he painted was "to translate my emotions, the feelings and the reactions of my sensibility through colour and drawing, which neither the most perfect camera, even in color, nor the cinema can do" (145). For Matisse, the emotional dimension of a work of art is what defines its modernism and sets it apart from realism. Pablo Picasso, whom J.B. Bullen calls a "logician" compared to his more expressive colleague Matisse (367), found emotion to be the single most important component of his compositions. He proclaimed the crucial role of the emotions in his art in a "Conversation" with Christian Zervos published in *Cahiers d'Art* in 1935: "I want to get to the stage where nobody can tell how a picture of mine is done. What's the point of that? Simply that I want nothing but emotion to be given off by it" (270). Bloomsbury art critic Clive Bell, meanwhile, wrote in 1914 of the importance of personal emotions to aesthetics: "[t]he starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art" (107). Perhaps the greatest champion of emotion in modernist visual art was Wassily Kandinsky. In his essay "Painting as Pure Art" (1913), he wrote that "[t]he work of art consists of two elements: the inner

and the outer. The inner element, taken by itself, is the emotion in the soul of the artist. This emotion is capable of calling forth what is, essentially, a corresponding emotion in the soul of the observer" (349). For Kandinsky, the work of art connects to both the artist's and observer's emotions through "feelings," which he called "the bridge from the nonmaterial to the material (in the case of the artist) and from the material to the nonmaterial (in the case of the observer)" (349). Personal and emotional expression, it would seem from these discussions, was essential to modernist visual artists.

Carr was greatly impressed by these artists, particularly Matisse and Kandinsky, and she drew on their theories of emotion in art to paint the B.C. landscape and its native cultures. Perhaps because literary modernism explicitly subordinated emotion, Livesay turned to Carr's modernist art for an alternative modernism that would engage affects. Her interest in the emotional and affective aspects of Carr's paintings is clearly evident in her reviews of the artist's work, which I will discuss shortly. First, however, a clarification of the terms "emotion" and "affect" is necessary.

The psychologist Sylvan Tomkins first introduced affect as a theoretical concept in his four-volume study *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* in 1962. Tomkins describes affect as "the primary innate motivating mechanism. . . . Without its amplification, nothing else matters, and with its amplification, anything can matter" (*Exploring Affect* 86-7). Tomkins scholar Donald Nathanson explains that Tomkins identified nine "innate affects" throughout his four volumes: two positive affects—interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy; four negative affects—distress-anguish, anger-rage, fear-terror, and shame-humiliation; one "neutral re-

set button for the affect system"—surprise-startle; and two "auxiliary affects"—dissmell and disgust (xiii). According to Nathanson, these nine affects are "inborn protocols that when triggered encourage us to spring into action" (xiii).

Recent critics generally agree that the term "affect" includes, as a "subset" (Russ 7), emotion (Norman 20) and mood (Parrott 4; Rosenberg); each term, however, has its own distinct characteristics and meaning.[27] Most critics agree that moods and "emotions are expressions of affect" (Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic 148) or "affective states" (Rosenberg; Schutz and Lanehart 71; Forgas 12-15). The latter term comes from Erika L. Rosenberg's schematization of affect, which—although somewhat narrow—has proven a useful tool in conceptualizing the relationship between the three terms and has been cited in many recent studies of affect (for example, Paul A. Schutz and Richard Pekrun's *Emotion in Education*, and David Yun Dai and Robert J. Sternberg's *Motivation, Emotion, and Cognition*). According to Rosenberg, affect consists of two categories: affective traits and affective states. Affective traits are "stable predispositions toward certain types of emotional responding. They constitute enduring aspects of our personalities" (249). Affective states, meanwhile, can be divided into two categories: emotions and moods (250). Affect, emotion, and mood, although distinct experiences, are interconnected, according to Rosenberg.

Where Rosenberg's affect schema falters is in its explanation of the term "affect" itself: many recent critics have suggested that affects are not simply indi-

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[27] Tomkins's concept of affect has spawned numerous theoretical discussions and studies since the 1970s. As Tomkins never clearly defined the relationship between "affects" and "emotions," however, some slippage and confusion between the terms has seeped into subsequent criticism. Brian Massumi identifies the basis of the confusion: "[a]ffect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion" ("Autonomy" 88). More recent criticism, however, has attempted to distinguish between affect, emotion, mood, and feeling / sensation.

vidual "traits" or entirely subjective experiences, which Rosenberg implies. Most

critics agree that emotions and moods are always subjective experiences; howev-

er, there is disagreement about whether or not affects can also be intersubjective

or asubjective. The dispute reflects a theoretical division of affect into the Tom-

kins line of psychological affect—which views affect as subjective experience—

and the "Spinozan-Deleuzian" line of affect theory, developed by Brian Massumi

in the 1990s, that views affect as "an asubjective force" (Gibbs 251).[28] Affect is

perhaps best understood as potentially subjective, intersubjective, presubjective,

or post-personal:[29] however, it is not likely, *pace* Massumi, asubjective.[30] Never-

theless, Massumi makes a helpful suggestion that we "[r]eserve the term 'emo-

tion' for the personalized content, and *affect* for the continuation" or for that

which exceeds or extends beyond the personal into the public realm (*Parables*

217).

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[28] Massumi defines affect as "intensity" in *Parables for the Virtual* (27). Although his equation of affect and intensity is based suggestively on Tomkins's idea that affect is the "primary innate motivating mechanism" that is amplified through feeling and sensation (*Exploring Affect* 86-7), Massumi openly rejects the "received psychological categories" on which Tomkins based much of his theory (27). Although he is not entirely clear about which "psychological categories" he denies (27), it is evident in the first few pages of his book that Massumi conceives of the subject quite differently from Tomkins and rejects "ideological accounts of subject formation [that] emphasize systemic structurings" (2). It is perhaps Massumi's new conceptualization of the subject—which allows for an "incipient subjectivity" (14)—that leads him to describe affect as something that can exist outside or beyond subjectivity.

[29] Recent theorists argue that affect can extend beyond or outside of entirely subjective experience. In their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg describe affect as intersubjective or interstitial, and they offer as an example its "capacity for extending both into and out of. . . the incorporeal (events, atmospheres, feeling-tones)" (2). For example, the experience of a traumatic event may engender individual affective states, but these may also be shared by multiple subjects. Steven Shaviro, drawing on Massumi's discussions of affect, describes it as "asubjective" or "presubjective" (3); Massumi also calls it "postpersonal" (217). Neither Shaviro nor Massumi offers a clear example of each type of affect, but traumatic experience might exemplify "presubjective" or "postpersonal" affect, as trauma—and the fear-terror associated with it—can be inherited by subsequent generations who never experienced first-hand the initial traumatic event.

[30] Along with Jonathan Flatley, I find Massumi's suggestion (and Shaviro's reiteration of it) that affect is "asubjective" both unhelpful and difficult to accept (Flatley 202n 22): if, as Tomkins defined it, affect is the "primary innate motivating mechanism" (*Exploring Affect* 86-7), it must be, at some level, experienced by a subject.

Affect, mood, and emotion, however, have distinct relationships to an aim or target and vary in durability. Emotions are targeted—i.e. aroused by a specific stimulus and directed towards a specific person, thing, or entity—while moods are not (Cropanzano, Stein, Nadisic 148). Like moods, affects can be without an aim or stimulus (Kring 339). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick even suggests that affects can be "autotelic" (19)—an end in themselves. Moods and emotions are also time-limited: they have an absolute expiry date (Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic 148; Phelps 234). As Russell Cropanzano, Jordan H. Stein, and Thierry Nadisic explain, "emotions are experienced as a flash flood that sweeps over us but that is quickly gone," whereas moods are "relatively enduring and of generally low intensity" (148). Both emotions and moods eventually come to an end; affects, on the other hand, are not constrained or limited by time (Ten Houten 7). Since affects include both moods and emotions, they can be either fleeting or enduring and vary in intensity, and as they can be passed on to subsequent generations, they do not necessarily terminate.

Feelings and sensations are also related to the affective system. Warren A. Shibles explains that "[a]ccording to the cognitive-emotive theory, feelings and sensations are not emotions, but closer to being physical reactions, sensations and bodily states" (*Emotion in Aesthetics* 190).[31] Feelings and sensations are very similar and the words are frequently used interchangeably. Most affect theorists agree, however, that feelings are mediated by thought—and are therefore classifi-

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[31] Tessa Brennan points out that "'feelings,' etymologically, refers to the proprioceptive capacities of any living organism. . ." (5). The root of the word is West Germanic in origin, and it corresponds to the Old High German word *fuolen*, which means "to handle, grope," which reflects the physical experience associated with the word.

able as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 66).[32] The Deleuzian line of affect theorists generally, and I believe helpfully, distinguish sensation from feeling as experiences not yet mediated by thought.[33]

Although Rosenberg does not include feelings and sensations in her schema, both play a significant role in triggering affective states. According to Ben Highmore, there are "cross-modal networks" in the human brain "that register links between perception, affect, the senses, and emotions" (120).[34] The direct link between sensation, feeling, and affect is what leads Gilles Deleuze to assert that "material impressions" that reach us "through our senses" are more "profound" than those that "intelligence grasps directly in the open light of day" (*Proust and Signs* 96). The senses both stimulate and amplify or intensify emotions, moods, and affects, which can function as "catalyst[s] for critical inquiry or deep thought" (Bennet 7). For Carr and Livesay, sensations and feelings embodied in art represented a path to the artist's and poet's own emotions and the affects of readers and audiences that could inspire a genuine reaction to and potential action against social injustices, such as poverty, racism, and sexism. For Live-

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[32] It is not clear from their critical prose whether literary modernists, such as Eliot, acknowledged or considered the physical or sensory dimension of feelings: as noted in footnote 24, page 51, Opdahl suggests that Eliot describes feelings as "impersonal," which suggests Eliot did not consider "feelings" as a particular sensory experience. By way of more clearly distinguishing between feelings and emotions, and because Carr clearly identified feelings with physical experience, I will treat feelings as physical states or experiences.

[33] In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), Deleuze characterizes sensation as independent of thought: he locates sensation "in the body" and argues that it acts "directly onto the nervous system" (26). In his essay "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," Daniel W. Smith further explains Deleuze's theory by suggesting that sensation is "an invisible pulsation that is more nervous than cerebral" (45).

[34] When we touch something hot, for example, we first experience the sensation of heat; if the object is hot enough to burn, we may experience pain, which is an unpleasant feeling. The feeling of pain, in turn, may affect our mood or inspire emotions: we might become grumpy or angry, for instance. If the burn were severe enough to scar us physically or emotionally, it may inspire an affect—such as anger-rage, or fear-terror—that lingers for years and that could possibly be passed on to our children as a phobia or anxiety. Feelings and sensations, therefore, give rise to emotions and affects.

say and Carr, landscape served as an ideal genre through which to access or explore sensations, feelings, and (by extension) moods, emotions, and affects that might pose a challenge to oppressive or inequitable institutions, organizations, and ideologies.

The affective configuration of landscape was an essential quality of Carr's paintings of the 1930s, which Sharyn Udall suggests treat "the natural world as an extension of the self. . ." and work "to synthesize visual fact with [the artist's] emotional responses to [her] subjects" (80). Carr found a "prototype" for these emotionally charged landscapes in Japanese painting. In her public address from 1935, "Something Plus in a Work of Art," Carr writes of a principle of Japanese painting known as *Sei Do*:

> It means the transfusion into the work of the *felt nature* of the things to be painted by the artist. Whatever the subject to be translated, whether river, mountain, bird, flower, fish or animal, the artist at the moment of painting it must *feel* its very nature which, by the magic of his art, he transfers into his work to remain forever, affecting all who see it with the same sensations he experienced when executing it. (86)

Carr greatly admired the *Sei Do* approach to landscape painting, and she found an equivalent in the early artwork of West Coast native artists, who "relied on their own five senses . . . to draw from nature direct. They saw, heard, smelled, felt, tasted her" (86). Carr believed that, since native artists experienced the essence of the landscape they depicted in their artworks, they had a "felt knowledge" of their content that brings "something plus" to their works of art (87).

Elsewhere, Carr openly admired a similar affective configuration of land-

scape in the work of Parisian artists, such as Henri Matisse and Georges Seurat, who worked just blocks from where Carr was staying when she went to France in 1910-11. As Gerta Moray reveals, the painter wrote admiringly of the European modernists in an article for Vancouver's *Province* in 1912 and commended their project of "seeking the bigger things in nature. . . ." and portraying "space and feeling. . . by bold use of line and color and an indifference to detail" (qtd. in Moray 48). Carr's discussions of European modernism and native artworks suggest that she believed the power of their landscape paintings came not from a simple reproduction of the *felt nature* of place, but rather from communicating the feelings associated with place and "affecting" the viewer through aesthetic design and composition.

In her reviews of Carr's paintings written in the late 1930s and early 1940s, it is precisely the affective qualities of Carr's own landscapes that Livesay admires. In an unpublished and undated review of Carr's "Indian Sketches"[35]— stories that were later collected in *Klee Wyck* (1941)—the poet expresses her reverence for Carr's style of painting, which she describes as "free, vigorous, honest— more impressionistic than abstract—always boldly seeking the essential character of a place, a tree form, or an atmospheric mood. . . . Not nature alone, but nature's relationship to man, is her problem, still expressed in landscapes" ("Review of Emily Carr's *Indian Sketches*"). Livesay commends Carr's ability to communicate the "essential character of a place" through landscape. Moreover, the poet admires Carr's ability to capture an "atmospheric mood," something that—like the *Sei Do,*

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[35] N.d. Located in Dorothy Livesay's Papers at Queen's University. The incomplete typescript is in box 4a, which is dated 9 March 1945 (along with a letter from Carr to Dorothy Macnair). The typescript is, therefore, likely from the early to mid-1940s.

native, and modernist artists Carr writes about—Carr herself would have sensed and *felt* while painting the landscape. Overall, Livesay characterizes Carr's project as investigating and representing the relationship between people and places: a project that comes very close to her own documentary poetics.

Livesay also admires the affective qualities of Carr's modernist landscape paintings in a review of an exhibition published in the *Vancouver Daily Province* on 6 January 1940. The review is a narrative account of a conversation between two gallery visitors viewing Emily Carr's work at the exhibition: one visitor is disapproving of Carr's modernist aesthetic, while the other—Livesay herself— defends and explains it to both the visitor and reader. The skeptical visitor, looking at one of Carr's landscape paintings, admits, "[m]aybe I'm missing something, but I like pictures by the great masters, that you can stand up close to and see every detail of." Livesay responds by noting that the project of mimetic representation is not the concern of the modernist artist, especially not Carr:

> "That's just what the modern painters want to avoid. They are not concerned with giving you a coloured photograph, a carefully painted, carefully detailed picture. They wish to express what they feel about nature. Emily Carr's very titles, for instance, suggest that she is giving you a mood to experience 'Chill day in June'; 'Light Swooping Through'; 'Juice of Life'; 'Sunshine and Tumult.' If you do not react to that mood it is as if you were at a symphony concert and found that you could not follow the composer's thought. The fault would be yours, not his: it would mean you had not developed your musical knowledge." ("Rhythm of Nature")

Livesay admires Carr's ability to "express" what she "feel[s] about nature"—

language very similar to Carr's discussion of the transfusion of the *felt nature* of things into the artworks of *Sei Do* artists. Moreover, Livesay argues that Carr's paintings offer a "mood" or "experience" to the viewer instead of a realistic representation of nature. Her suggestion that it is the visitor's (or viewer's) responsibility to "develop" his or her visual knowledge in order to "react" to that mood may be somewhat elitist (a comment seemingly out of character for such a socially conscious and egalitarian poet, as it disregards issues of class, race, and gendered access to knowledge); nevertheless, Livesay's comment explains the significance of the viewer's own experience in relation to the affective potential of the painting. Later in the review, the visitor, increasingly attentive to (although not entirely convinced of) Livesay's argument, remarks,"[y]ees [*sic*]. It's true that when you don't get up close and see the daubs of paint, but stand off and look, these pictures are very real, make you feel what this country is like." The comment effectively summarizes both published and unpublished reviews that reveal Livesay's admiration of Carr's ability to expose and translate, through landscape, the historical / cultural dimension of a place, as well as its powerful affective character.

The critical viewer's statement about the paintings' ability to "make you feel what this country is like," moreover, is nearly identical to the poet's approbation, a few years later (1944), in her review of A.J.M. Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry*, of the "native" poet's ability to put "the *feel* of the country and its people into their words" ("This Canadian Poetry" 21). Sánchez-Pardo suggests that, "for an influential poet and critic like A.J.M. Smith, modernist poetry was associated with stereotypically masculine qualities valuing intellect over emotion" (168). Although, as W.J. Keith notes, Smith spoke of a "fusion of thought and feeling"

elsewhere (92), in his introduction to the *Book of Canadian Poetry* that Livesay reviewed, he did appear to value intellect over emotion. Smith, following the directives of Eliot's impersonal poetics, certainly devalued the "native" strain of Canadian modernist poetry (including some of Livesay's verse) because of its expression of emotion, which he found too close to "romantic cliché" and lacking the "intelligence" of the "new" (29), cosmopolitan modernist poetry (31). Livesay, conversely, valued emotion and, in her review of Smith's book, called on younger poets to "be unafraid of emotion. (The fear of sentimentality has killed many)" ("This Canadian Poetry" 21). Similar to her earlier commendation of Carr's ability to communicate the "essential character of a place" ("Review of Emily Carr's *Indian Sketches*"), Livesay praises the native poet's ability to convey the "feel" of a place *and* its people. The emotional role of the poet she discusses is very close, moreover, to Carr's view that the modern artist should work to convey "space and feeling" through landscape (qtd. in Moray 48).

  The nearly identical rhetoric of Livesay's review of Carr's painting and her review of Smith's book suggests that Carr's paintings illustrated and affirmed a direction for Livesay's poetry that she had begun to develop prior to their meeting and was publicly articulating following their encounter—that direction is one that includes a consideration of feeling, emotion, mood, and affect as links between people and places. This affective approach to poetry was not embraced by literary modernists, which is perhaps why Livesay found Carr's modernist landscapes a compelling example of a modernist affective art. Landscape, a space that becomes a place through human interaction, proved a convenient realm and genre through which to access emotions and affects.

III. "The autumn trees / And falling leaves / Shiver with shock":[36]
Landscape as Archive of Affects in Carr's Paintings and Livesay's Poems

In an oft-cited line from the poem "Anything Goes" (1983), Livesay suggests that "A poem is an archive of our times" (*Archive* 245). As an archive, the poem "Above all /. . .records speech," and its overarching purpose should be to "cry out / against war." Livesay's choice of words here is significant: the purpose of the *poem* is to "record speech," creating a document of oft-marginalized voices; but the purpose of this *documentation* is affective—it is meant to "cry out" against violence and injustice, a subversive act that can have a profound impact on its audience. As Silvan Tomkins argues, "the free expression of innate affect is extremely contagious and. . . all societies, in varying degrees, exercise substantial control over the unfettered expression of affect, and particularly over the free expression of the cry of affect" (*Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* 93). For Livesay, the poem—as an archive—is both a document of and a vehicle for affective expression that challenges social and political injustice and that can be "contagious," spurring the reader to deep thought or critical inquiry.

The documents of the poetic archive can be varied; Livesay suggests in "Anything Goes" that a poem "can be many things / in miniature." She lists, for example, "a short story   about people / a photograph / a surreal landscape / and perhaps / an instant of ecstasy" as possible documents of the poetic archive. Livesay's last two examples are readily recognizable as landscape and affect. A comparison of early and later poems of the 1930s will reveal that Livesay began to experiment with landscape's potential to document affective histories of people

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[36] From Livesay's poem "Abracadabra" in *Poems for People* (1947: 11).

and places just prior to her meeting with Carr in 1938. Although she started to develop a poetics of affective landscape before meeting Carr, Livesay's engagements with Carr's paintings helped to affirm the significance of landscape as an accessible archive of the emotional experiences of inhabitants—whether human, plant, or animal—of a particular place. Carr's landscapes proved exemplary for Livesay of the ways in which colours, rhythms, and images can intensify the sensory and felt experiences of place to expose both past and present social, environmental, and political injustices.

Livesay sees the poem as an "archive of our times"; a number of theorists have also argued for the archival properties of landscape, both as a physical space and as an artistic genre. In an essay entitled "The Edges of the Earth: Critical Regionalism as an Aesthetics of the Singular" (2005), Warwick Mules argues that "[a]n archive is not restricted to the storage of documents (libraries, museums), but exists everywhere as the residual documentation of past events, still present as images and structures traced across the landscape." Here, Mules refers to the actual landscape as archive, an idea similarly taken up by William Joseph Turkel in his article "Every Place is an Archive" (2006) and his book *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (2007), in which Turkel explores "the ways in which usable pasts are drawn from the material substance of a particular place, typically under conditions of conflict" (*Archive of Place* xxiv). Emily Apter suggests that "[t]he landscape as archive of human history and memory is an old idea" in the visual arts (28), but it is an idea that continues to resonate in contemporary studies of landscape and landscape painting.

Recently, Shuli Barzilai has extended the metaphor of "landscape as arc-

hive" to a comparative study of the work of Margaret Atwood and Emily Carr.

Barzilai argues that many of Carr's paintings constitute "a protest in paint against

the spiritual and social ravages that a proselytizing civilization has wrought. . . ."

and represent "the range of material damage inflicted on the environment by self-

serving economic and sectarian interests" (267). While her focus is strictly on the

way landscape functions as a kind of archive of physical artifacts in Carr's paint-

ings—documenting the complex and layered material history of the inhabitants

of a particular place—Barzilai concludes her discussion by questioning whether it

is "empathy" and "rage," or rather the tension between these "conflicting affects,"

that "infuse" Carr's landscapes with their "indubitable power" (267).[37] She does

not, however, offer a definitive answer to this question, as the affective potential

of Carr's paintings, although mentioned, falls beyond the purview of her essay.

The relationship between landscape and affect, however, is integral to the

archival function of Carr's paintings, to their ability not only to document histori-

cal injustices, but also to translate the emotional experience of these injustices to

viewers and inspire resistance to the hegemonic institutions responsible for them.

Her paintings, I suggest, resemble contemporary trauma-related art, which, Jill

Bennet argues, "endeavour[s] to find a communicable language of sensation and

affect with which to register something of the experience of traumatic memory"

(2). Many of Carr's paintings, similarly, evoke sensations and affects through a

variety of painterly elements integral to their modernism, as Johanne Lamoureux

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[37] In asking these questions, Barzilai refers to the particular example of Carr's *Vanquished* (1931), which I discuss in detail below.

has noted.[38] The affective dynamic of Carr's paintings recalls, in particular, the emotional histories of people and place via the landscape genre.

In Carr's paintings completed after her meeting with the Group of Seven, landscape typically documents or embodies emotional experiences of place and translates affects to viewers through a variety of sensory triggers.[39] In her painting *Vanquished* (Fig. 7)—which Barzilai has already identified as a painting with an "archival" function—the landscape of Skedans Bay becomes a repository of the pain and suffering of the Haida Gwaii nations. According to Barzilai,

> what Carr has chosen to record [in *Vanquished*] is the dismal but still pic-
> turesque site of Skedans Bay with its series of small boxes atop unstable
> poles. These boxes contain the skeletal remains of chieftains and other
> consequential clan members. . . . She shows remains that soon will no
> longer remain. (266)

Although Barzilai remarks that Carr's painting "broods" and "laments" while it "salvages" (266), she does not consider the ways in which these affects, along with the artefacts and fossils of the inhabitants of Skedans Bay, are also archived in the landscape. To understand the archived affects of the painting, we should consider the colours, images, and rhythms the artist employs to activate our senses

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[38] Lamoureux discusses Carr's "modernity of affect" in her essay in the catalogue of a recent Carr exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada: *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon.* According to Lamoureux, "Carr's aspiration was to make paintings that would have the same power, the same force, as the things they sought to represent," and her ". . . attention to the functional aspect [of First Nations totem poles] was increasingly overridden by an interest in the *affective dimensions* she originally tied to the poles as she appropriated them" (48).

[39] See, for example, *Queen Charlotte Islands Totem* (watercolour, 1928, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.), in which the colouration and vertical form of the foregrounded totem are mirrored in the trees and grasses of the landscape; *Indian Church* (oil on canvas, 1929, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON), in which the forest that nearly engulfs the central church reiterates its architectural quality; and *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (oil on canvas, [1935], Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.), in which the lonely, tall fir trees stand as witnesses to the environmental ravaging that has taken place.

of vision, touch, and hearing.

Fig. 7. Emily Carr's *Vanquished*, 1930, oil on canvas, 92.0 x 129.0 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C., Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.6 (image courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery)

The predominant "mood" of *Vanquished,* as Barzilai suggests, is "somber" (260), and Carr marks the landscape visually with images that inspire feelings of pain and anguish. The dark purple and dull brown hues that surround the central plane of green arouse a sense of uneasiness and confinement as they close in on the greenery as well as the viewer. The stormy skies hovering above the landscape both recall and motivate in the viewer the rage and anger presumably experienced by the Haida of Skedans Bay, whose population had been "decimated over and over" by smallpox, influenza, and tuberculosis contracted from colonists (Gill 26), and whose culture was attacked by Canada's Potlatch law (1884-1951).[40] The

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[40] The Potlatch Law was enacted in 1884 as part of Canada's Indian Act, and it "criminalized both participation in and the encouragement of two Northwest Coast ceremonies[:] the Potlatch and the Tamanawas" (Racette 58). The law was repealed in 1951, when the Indian Act was revised.

sharp blades of light or rain that radiate from the clouds recall the violence en-

dured by the Haida nation, whose land and culture were continually under attack

by colonists penetrating the landscape. Meanwhile, both the amputated and

uprooted trees in the foreground appeal to the viewer's sense of touch and, as

Barzilai notes, "reiterate[. . .] the affective and political dimensions of her indi-

genous motifs" (260). The deep scar centred on the tallest mountain in the back-

ground[41] testifies to the pain and suffering endured by the inhabitants of Skedans

and catalogues the sensed and affective history of the Haida nation in the land-

scape. *Vanquished* may "mourn," as Moray suggests (58), a "lost" people and cul-

ture; but one cannot deny the verdant and hopeful growth Carr also depicts in the

painting.[42] Nevertheless, Carr's depiction of the storm is ambiguous: it is unclear

whether the clouds are coming or going. The dense clouds may promote a sense

of unease in the viewer, who is prompted to hear a threatening rumble of thunder.

The painting's appeal to the viewer's senses of hearing, vision, and touch mobi-

lizes affective responses, such as distress-anguish or anger and rage, against the

colonial institutions that continued to threaten the rights of the Haida Nation for

years.[43]

      Like Carr's *Vanquished,* landscapes in literature and poetry can similarly

---

[41] In an earlier edition of *Klee Wyck*, Carr describes the mountains of Skedans as "uncouth cone-like hills, their heads bonneted in lowering clouds. The clumsy hills were heavily treed save where deep bare scars ran down their sides" (qtd. in Shadbolt 77). Besides her personification of the mountains in this passage, Carr notably refers to their bare surfaces as "scars."

[42] Carr discusses the significance of this lush landscape explicitly in *Klee Wyck* when she recalls her visit to the abandoned site of Skedans in 1928 that formed the basis of *Vanquished*: "the earth was so full of vitality that every seed which blew across her surface germinated and burst. The growing things jumbled themselves together into a dense thicket; so tensely earnest were things about growing in Skedans that everything linked with everything else, hurrying to grow to the limit of its own capacity; weeds and weaklings alike throve in the rich moistness" (49-50).

[43] Even as late as April 2011, the Haida nation was fighting for the right to control the use of the Haida Gwaii land (Mickelburgh).

activate memories and emotions associated with a place over time: Mark Roskill

suggests "that the visualizing capacities of the reader are channeled and made

alert to emotive overtones along similar lines" in landscape poetry (4). In Live-

say's landscape poems, the poet appeals to the reader's "visualizing capacities,"

as well as his or her auditory, olfactory, gustatory and somatosensory or tactile

capacities, through images, colours, and textures that stimulate affective responses

to the setting. These landscape poems are quite distinct from Livesay's early na-

ture poetry, to which Relke has given considerable attention: she argues that in the

poet's "apprenticeship period—the years in which she published *Green Pitcher*

(1928) and *Signpost* (1932). . . . Livesay creates a special role for the woman

poet" that is

> not limited to the articulation of female experience but expanded to in-
>
> clude the task of mediating the conflict between culture and nature. In her
>
> role as poet-mediator, Livesay articulates an alternative to the patriarchal
>
> world view and its principle of opposition between male consciousness
>
> and the world which man dominates and perceives as 'other.' (*Green-
>
> wor(l)ds* 143)

Whereas in her apprenticeship poetry, as Relke has demonstrated, Livesay por-

trayed culture and nature in "conflict" (143)[44]—and the female poet as mediator

between them—in her Popular Front poetics of the mid-to-late 1930s, Livesay

arguably *begins* to depict culture and nature as inextricably intertwined. Conse-

quently, Livesay refocused her interest in "nature" as an interest in landscape: the

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[44] Relke offers as examples of apprenticeship poems in which Livesay mediates the relationship
between culture and nature "Haunted House" (30) and "The Difference" (19), both in *Signpost*.

space of nature that serves as a "milieu of meaningful cultural practices and values" (Wylie 5).[45]

In many of Livesay's poems, landscape fulfills a mnemonic or archival function similar to that seen in Carr's *Vanquished*.[46] One of Livesay's earliest poems to establish a sense of pathos for the historical events of a place is "Spain," a previously unpublished poem that was recently collected in Irvine's *Archive of Our Times* (1998). Written in September of 1938, just months prior to Livesay's meeting with Carr, "Spain" is quite blatant in its use of the rowan tree as a document of the anger, rage, and courage expressed by the citizens of that country during the Spanish Civil War:

> The Rowan berries bunched in red grape clusters
>
> Beckon like wine to birds who winter with us;
>
> See how the tree has clenched her ripening fruit
>
> As though a thousand fists were offering
>
> Their tangible testimony to withstand
>
> All winter's bullying blasts.

---

[45] Vestiges of the culture-nature divide, as well as the lyricism of Livesay's apprenticeship poetics, nevertheless persist in poems of the late 1930s, as we shall see. My argument is not that Livesay wholly abandoned one style of writing for another, but that she *began* to work on developing an affective landscape poetics during the late 1930s that was dramatically different from, but that incorporated elements of, her apprenticeship poetics and her socialist-political poetics.

[46] Although it is not known whether Livesay ever saw Carr's *Vanquished*—the painting was not included in the VAG exhibition she attended in 1938—the painting was likely in Carr's studio when Livesay met her that year. Ian Thom, Senior Curator at the VAG, indicates that the painting was in Carr's possession at the time of their meeting. Carr then gave the painting to the Emily Carr Trust Collection—a group of paintings managed by Lawren Harris, among others, that were held in trust for the citizens of B.C. in the 1940s. *Vanquished* was accessioned to the VAG beginning in 1942 as part of the Trust: however, Thom explains, "[t]he hostilities of the Second World War were a concern to Harris and others who cared about Carr's work and, shortly after the works were numbered, the vast majority of them were sent to Toronto to the Art Gallery of Toronto (now AGO) for safe-keeping. The fear was that the Japanese might bomb Vancouver." Some time following the war, and after Carr's death in 1945, the works returned to the VAG, and when the Emily Carr Trust was dissolved in the 1960s, the works that remained in the VAG's custody, including *Vanquished*, "were legally deeded to the Gallery" (Thom, "Emily Carr's *Vanquished*").

A little country on the map of Europe

Stands so, as firm

And in the clenching of her fists

A harvest yield is spread

For those who'll not take flight, but stay

And winter with us. (54-5)

According to the speaker, Spain "stands" in the same manner as the tree: nature

and culture mirror one another in the poem, but nature also embodies culture

through the anthropomorphized tree—an image central to Carr's *oeuvre*. In both

Carr's paintings and a number of Livesay's poems, trees represent humanity,

whether the self or Other, and demonstrate the interconnectedness of nature and

culture.[47] In "Spain," the rowan tree is a "tangible testimony" to the emotional

turmoil of the Spanish people: this alliterative phrase encourages the reader to im-

agine touching the tree's "ripening fruit" in his or her hand, just as the tree holds it

in its clenched fist. The tree invites the reader to feel the softness of the fruit,

representing the vulnerability of the Spanish people during the Spanish Civil War.

The tree also holds up its clustered red fruit as a reminder of the blood that was

shed during this conflict, as a testament to the atrocities committed against the

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[47] Relke suggests that the tree is "Livesay's personal symbol" and is consistent with "her role as poet-mediator, for the tree. . . is a conduit, or link, between two realms," especially between male and female realms, which Relke implies represent culture and nature respectively (155). As her poem "Spain" suggests, however, Livesay's trees are not always gendered and are not necessarily a "conduit" between nature and culture so much as they are symbolic of the mutual embeddedness of nature and culture. In an interview with Bernice Lever, Livesay explains the role of the tree in her poetry: "I would say that of all the natural images, the tree is central because it has roots; underground roots to the basic elements of life and death. Everything that dies goes to the earth and the tree is reaching to new universes, in a sense, and towards the sun with its branches, and the tree doesn't flourish by itself very often. The tree needs company, other trees. And, of course, according to the archetypal patterns, trees in a sense are people" (Interview).

Spanish people, and as a gesture of anger at this violence and Franco's coup. The red berries, like Carr's purple clouds in *Vanquished*, assert sensations in the poem as they "Beckon" both the birds and the reader, who is called on to "See" the meaning behind these landscape images—an entreaty underscored by the incidental and brief shift to falling rhythm opening lines two and three. In addition to this audio-visual testimony, the fruit appeals to the reader's sense of taste. Ben Highmore suggests that "every flavour has an emotional resonance" (120): in Livesay's poem the bitter rowan berries, which are associated with wine and symbolic of blood—both bitter tasting—resonate with a sense of emotional distress or the affect of disgust in response to the historical event. The poem, however, ends on a hopeful note, with the speaker promising a "harvest yield . . . / For those who'll not take flight" but instead fight against injustice in their country.

The 1938 manuscript version of "Spain" exemplifies Livesay's experimentation with the affective possibilities of colour and imagery and the transition from nature to landscape in her poetics: these new qualities are particularly striking when one compares the poem with another "Spain," published in *New Frontier* in June of 1937—one year earlier. It is unlikely that this earlier "Spain" is a different version of the 1938 manuscript, as it is drastically different in content, theme, and tone (note that Irvine considers the manuscript version of "Spain" to be "previously uncollected" / "unpublished"). The 1937 "Spain," however, similarly begins with the image of a tree: "When the bare branch responds to leaf and light / remember them: it is for this they fight" (*CP* 98). While the speaker also suggests that this generic tree has a mnemonic function, it does not share either an archival or affective role with the rowan tree of the 1938 "Spain." The tree of the

1937 "Spain" reminds those "who live quietly in sunlit space / Reading The Herald after morning grace" of the sacrifices made for the "peace" they experience and enjoy; but in itself it does not appear connected to this human culture and does nothing to stir readers to an empathic perspective or a desire to fight for justice themselves. This earlier "Spain" is much more didactic in its tone and direct in its imagery, which is perhaps why Livesay collected this poem alongside her social poems of the 1930s in *Collected Poems* (*CP*). The 1938 manuscript version of "Spain" reflects a significant alteration in Livesay's work of the late 1930s towards a landscape poetics with an affective (emotional and social) role.

Another comparison of two of Livesay's poems of the late 1930s will highlight this transformation towards a configuration of landscape as archive of affects. Her poems "Deep Cove: Vancouver," published in *New Frontier* in October 1936, and "Speak Through Me," written as early as 1936 or 1937,[48] feature similar landscape content, with the central image of a mountain that both poems have in common with Carr's *Vanquished*. In "Deep Cove: Vancouver" (*CP* 94), the mountains and their natural environment are incapable of stirring the poet and reader to action. The speaker explains that "The mountains, yearning forward into silence / Have done with shaking; for the stir / Of centuries is only a brief wrinkle / Where the thunders were." The mountains, which still have an emotional capacity to "yearn" in the present, no longer shake (as they did in the past) because their movement was ineffective in translating the feeling of the "thunders" that shook this place. The poem, like the mountains, does little to trigger readers' senses and

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[48] A copy of an original typescript of the poem in the Dorothy Livesay Papers at Queen's University is dated as of 1936 or 1937.

affects. Although the sun touches the "flesh and bone" of the poet and readers, it does not inspire action in those who "lie like lizards on a rock-ledge / suckling the sun's breast." Other environmental elements are no more effective in piquing our senses and communicating past emotions to warn against future injustices: the "thrush," we are told, "will never give us warning: / His singing will not cease," and "The bees will hum all down the darkest morning / inveigling us to peace." It is the poet who must call upon us to "rise up" and take action; nature will not.

In "Speak Through Me" (*CP* 106), conversely, the poet-persona affirms that the mountain has both an affective and mnemonic role, one that can help the poet "cry out" against the environmental toll of war on a place and recall a time before war when nature flourished. The speaker calls on the mountain to "speak through her" by "shock[ing]" her "senses with your vibrant stillness." Unlike the mountains of "Deep Cove," this mountain has a "walled heart" of patience: an emotional dimension capable of documenting and reminding the poet of "Movement in the womb and green renewal," of the beauty and life that live on its landscape and that are threatened by the loud sound of "sirens," the "thunder" of "guns," and the "monstrous voice of man." The sensual "shock" that the poet experiences through the mountain's quiet stillness recalls the vulnerability of the "small life quivering" in its "armpits," and the poet sets about translating the feelings of this "small life" to the reader by appealing to our senses:

> /   ˘   ˘ | /   ˘

Speak through me, mountains.

. . . .

/ ˘ ˘ | / ˘ | / ˘ ˘| / ˘

Speak of the pheasant running to cover

˘ ˘ / | / / | ˘

And the grouse drums calling.

/ ˘ ˘| ˘ / | / /

Draw me to the bare high ribs

˘ ˘ / | / ˘ | / ˘

Where the sun takes his pleasure

/ ˘ ˘|˘ / | / ˘ ˘| ˘ /

Urge me to the rare coolness of your brow

˘ ˘ | / / | / ˘

Where the snow's light dazzles—

˘ / |˘ ˘| ˘ ˘ / | ˘ ˘ / |˘ / |˘

Bewilder me with your height and your gaze to seaward

/ ˘ | / ˘ | ˘ ˘ / | ˘ / | ˘

Shock my senses with your vibrant stillness.

/ ˘ ˘ | / ˘

Speak through me, mountains

˘ ˘ / |˘ / |˘ ˘ /|˘

Till the other voices be silent

˘ ˘ / |˘ / | ˘ ˘ / |/ ˘ ˘ | / ˘

Till the sirens cease and the guns muffle their thunder

˘ ˘   / | ˘   / | ˘ /|˘   / | ˘ ˘   /|˘

Till the monstrous voice of man is sheltered by quiet—

/   ˘   ˘ | / ˘ |/ ˘| / ˘

Speak through me, speak till I remember

/ ˘ |˘ ˘   / | ˘   / | ˘ /|˘

Movement in the womb and green renewal

/   \ | / ˘ |˘ ˘ / | ˘

Sundrenched maples in September

˘   ˘   / |˘ / |˘ ˘ / | /   / | ˘

And the sweep of time as a gull's wing slanting.

Livesay heightens the sound of the mountain's "grouse drums calling" through an anapest followed by a spondaic foot and the rising rhythm of its line. She similarly emphasizes the mountain's voice through the anaphoric phrase "Speak to me" and the mild caesura between the repeated word "speak" in the fifth line of the second stanza. Through spondaic emphasis on the "snow's light" and "sundrenched" trees, the poet stimulates the reader's tactile senses by taking them to extremes of cold and warmth. It is significant that the poet wants the landscape to "speak through her. . . / till the other voices be silent / till the sirens cease and the guns muffle their thunder": the phrase suggests the poet-persona, who has a special connection with landscape, has a responsibility as its advocate and has the power to stop the atrocities of war and violence that threaten it. Although the poem may appear to revel in the beauty and sensory delight of the mountains, the final stanza affirms an affective purpose to this poem's images, particularly the image of the "pheasant running to cover": to communicate the vulnerability of the

voiceless natural world by allowing it to "speak through" the poet.

In Carr's painting *Big Raven* (Fig.8), it is the Haida nation of the Queen Charlotte Islands that is without voice. Smallpox contracted from colonists killed many Haida natives, and others were exiled from the landscape to avoid infection. All that remains as a testament to their presence in this landscape is the totemic raven. The painter, however, lets the landscape "speak through" her as a documentary witness revealing—through colours, patterns, and textures—the sense of loss and loneliness experienced by the Haida people.

Fig. 8. Emily Carr, *Big Raven,* 1931, oil on canvas, 87.0 x 114.0 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C., Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.11 (image courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery)

The purple, stormy sky, as in *Vanquished,* recommends a feeling of dampness and confinement evoking a range of possible emotions: anxiety, fear, terror, awe, wonder, even anger. Carr enhances the painting's feeling of constraint through the density of swirling, dark green grass on the verge of engulfing the raven totem, as well as the foregrounding of a diagonal slope of high ground in the top right cor-

ner. While these elements imply that the last remnants of an exiled culture are under threat of disappearing entirely, Carr's composition suggests that the landscape has archived the culture and emotions of the Haida nation. The raven, after all, is the "[m]ost important of all creatures to the coast Indian peoples. . ."; it performs "the transformer, the cultural hero, the trickster, the Big Man," among other important roles (Stewart 57). The diversity of its cultural functions alludes to the flexibility and possibilities for self-renewal of the Haida people, while its steadfast stance in the painting implies the durability and persistence of their culture. The angled, lone tree that stands high on the hill behind it mirrors the raven's posture. This tree is like a reverse maquette or model of the raven that records its presence in the landscape while reflecting the loneliness and stress, as well as the resilience, of the Haida people.

From the late 1930s until the publication of *Poems for People,* Livesay's poetry underwent a fundamental change in the depiction of relationships between people and landscape; like Carr's paintings, Livesay's poems from this period increasingly portray humanity and the land as interconnected and the landscape as an archive of human affects. In her poem "West Coast: 1943," first published in *Contemporary Verse* in 1944, Livesay similarly depicts the historical and emotional experiences of the inhabitants of a place. The poem recalls the practices of wartime shipbuilding on the Vancouver coast and considers—as Paul Denham argues—that this industrial labour may be "purposeful activity: the unemployed and dispossessed now have employment, and although the war is mentioned only obliquely, the date in the title, and the line 'ships to right the wrong upon'. . . imply that these ships are being built to fight Fascism" (97).

Denham's claim that the poet depicts this industrial labour as a "force of renewal" (97), however, is too quick to dismiss the uncertainty of the narrative voice and (what he himself identifies as) "a momentary lament . . . for the loss of a personal green world which this industry necessitates" (97). Denham does not remark, for example, that the line containing the phrase "ships to right the wrong upon?—" ends in a question mark and a dash; nor does he adequately acknowledge the narrator's consistent expressions of uncertainty, as in the line "for now, our voices are free." The speaker's lament for the loss of a "green world," moreover, opens the poem—and arguably closes it—which makes it a prominent aspect of the work,[49] and the poet definitively describes this loss as leading to "a poorer view." The speaker's expressions of hesitation and lament suggest that a sharper critique of the industrial labour that has caused this "poorer view" is part of the poem's message.

The poet, for her part, presents the landscape in affective terms: she intensifies through sounds, colours, and textures the feelings and sensations of this place that challenge any implications of "renewal" or liberation and may well stimulate suspicion on the part of the reader. In the first stanza, the narrator (who includes us in her perspective through the first person, plural pronoun "we") sits on top of the hill and observes an affective transformation of the land below:

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[49] Livesay's interest in and concern for nature and the "green world" are shared with other female modernist poets from Canada, such as Miriam Waddington, P.K. Page, and Phyllis Webb. These three female modernists, however, examined and explored the natural world through an idiom known as biomorphism, which I discuss in Chapters Two and Four. Although Livesay's poems about nature share with biomorphic poetry a similar interest in themes of flux and renewal, her poems before 1945 rarely experiment with scale to the point of abstraction or employ the internal corporeal, insect, solar, and atomic imagery associated with the idiom. A few poems she wrote after 1945, such as "London Revisited: 1946" (*CP* 170-3), "Improvisation on an Old Theme" (*CP* 174), and "On Looking into Henry Moore" (*CP* 236) do, however, exhibit some of the images and characteristics of the idiom.

> This hour: and we have seen a shabby town change face,
>
> the sandy soil be stripped of evergreen
>
> and broom, born yellow into golden May
>
> scrapped farther up Grouse Mountain. We, who lay
>
> in roses and green shade under the cherry tree
>
> we too were rooted up, set loose to beg
>
> or borrow a new roof, accept a poorer view.
>
> The tide had turned. That early gull adrift
>
> on empty inlet, keel to sun, he was outrun
>
> by humming plane, the flying boat on trial;
>
> and pleasure schooner skirting the dark shore
>
> was soon forced into harbour; for the grey gaunt giants,
>
> hunters of skyline, convoy cruisers, they
>
> jostled the bay. (*CP* 140-5)

The speaker describes the dramatic alteration of the land as seeing a "shabby town change face": the west-coast landscape is like a face expressing its affective reaction to the industrial activity that has also changed its appearance. The poet amplifies the sensory impressions of this altered face / land in a variety of ways. Her alliterative emphasis on images of the "sandy soil stripped," for example, foregrounds the painful vulnerability of this landscape, just as the echoed [s] in "scrapped"—audibly close to the painful "scraped"—continues to suggest a feeling of vulnerability or tactile sensitivity. Colours also convey the emotional history of place in the poem. The speaker explains that the tranquil "green shade" of the cherry trees and peaceful gulls of this coastal town have been replaced by the

drone of war planes and "grey gaunt giants," or ships, that devour the "skyline"—harsh, industrial sounds and colours that establish an uneasy and fearful atmosphere.

The skyline in "West Coast: 1943" is a key landscape element that documents the impact of industrial labour on the landscape and emotional reactions of the west-coast inhabitants / workers who experienced this activity. "On morning shift. . . ," we are told, "sky and water melt": the sky and sea become fused together as if by the welding torches of workers below. Livesay also visually complements the audible discomfort of the first stanza through the darkening of the skyline, which changes to "cool purple"—a colour that Janice Lindsay suggests is commonly associated with "mourning" (337)—and finally "blue and violet" with "quick magenta flash." Blue, while often perceived as a calm colour, has idiomatic ties to sadness—as in the phrase "feeling blue"; the "magenta flash" from the welder's torch complements the latter symbolism because it "pierce[s]" the sky with pain. These colours assert the human inscription on this landscape and both document and communicate the painful, unpleasant feelings and emotions of the workers and their families who lived there.

In Livesay's *Poems for People*,[50] and her later "Call My People Home," landscape similarly retains an imprint of past experiences and emotions that the poet foregrounds through olfactory, auditory, and tactile images and techniques.

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[50] Livesay explores both the feeling of place and feelings of people through the landscape genre in this collection. In "Autumn in Wales" (*CP* 176-7)*,* for example, a landscape painting transports the speaker to Wales. The description of that painting and the poem's proximity to "In Time of War" and "London Revisited: 1946" in the collection recall the trauma of the Second World War attacks on Swansea, Wales in February of 1941 and the fires that raged there and transformed the landscape: the "common sheep" are "rust red," hinting at the colour of blood, and the "hill" is "Helmeted with tawny elm," as though it is a soldier armoured for battle.

Sanchez-Pardo argues that Livesay endeavours to capture the "evocation of place" in *Poems for People* (1947) and that the volume presents "a richer feeling for humanity, for tolerance and affection" (179). In "London Revisited: 1946" (*CP* 170-3), for example, the cityscape records the affects of war through its "face" that is "scarred and grimed by human hand." Although the cityscape begins to change, heal, and rebuild after war, its "bony manufactured grin" can't hide the "skeleton" beneath it that recalls the death and destruction its inhabitants have endured. While "the mushroom houses grow / In prim, prefabricated row" and "Where debris was, a park will be / and here a chaste community," the voice "we heard time out of mind"—presumably of the prophets who earlier "cried Ruin!"—can still be heard "rustl[ing] when the leaves are thin." The "long fingered wall of the house disembowelled [*sic*]," moreover, still stands and "stares in prayer" at those who walk by, its stone "inerasably stained" by the experiences of the past. The "disembowelled [sic]" house, the "rubble," and the rustling leaves are the "veins and flaws" on the "face" of the cityscape "reverberating on the heart / to warn the way the winter was." These corporeal images function similarly to the deep scar on Carr's mountain in *Vanquished*: they recall the pain and suffering humans experienced in London during the war and warn, through a sensory and affective appeal, against repeating the actions that led to their presence.

In "Call My People Home" (*CP* 180-94), written between 1948 and 1950, landscape imagery, smells, and colours reflect the sadness, fear, and pain endured by west-coast Japanese Canadians who were placed in internment camps during the Second World War and exiled from B.C. following the war. As the fisherman in the poem describes "[t]he grey dawn opening like a book / At the horizon's

rim," we are encouraged to read the landscape like a book documenting the dim historical and emotional experiences of the Japanese people. The "tears" of the Isseis—the generation of Japanese Canadians born in Japan—formed this landscape by making "channels" that "became irrigation" for the "fruit growing and pushing / so painfully watered." The wife reveals, moreover, that the prairie landscape to which they were exiled was no more a home than B.C.'s forests: the prairies also record the pain and suffering she and her family endured through their "stabbing green / of the young wheat" that grows in neighbouring fields, which is suggestive of sharp pain. The "Heart-snaring song of meadow-larks" reflects their sadness sonorously within this landscape.

For the Niseis—the generation of Japanese Canadians born in this country—however, British Columbia was home, and they saw her "as mother" and "beheld their future in her pungent evergreen." The "pungent" nature of the evergreen might have warned the Niseis of the pain and suffering the future would hold for them: in botany, the word "pungent" refers to a plant ending in a sharp point. "Pungent" is also a word describing a sharp or acrid taste or smell. Although some pungent smells can be pleasing, the word often refers to something irritating or painful (it comes from the Latin *pungere*, which means to prick, sting, or bite). Pungent smells, therefore, often trigger the affect of "dissmell," a "drive auxiliary affect" that when combined with other affects can develop into "contempt" (Kaufman 39). The sharpness of the prairie crops, the pungent trees of the B.C. forests, and the dark grey atmosphere of the Canadian dawn contribute to a feeling of confinement and discomfort in the poem that reflects the "stifling feeling" reiterated throughout the poem—by the Young Nissei and Mariko, for exam-

ple—that many Japanese Canadians clearly felt during this dark period of Canadian history.

"Call My People Home" and Livesay's poems of the late 1930s and early 1940s evidently reflect an ongoing transformation in her poetry's depiction of the relationship between humans and the land: a transformation that coincides with her meeting Emily Carr and her continued study of the artist's work. Whereas in Livesay's earliest poems culture and nature are in "conflict" (and only the female poet can become "the uniting force between culture and nature" [Relke, *Greenworl)ds* 160]), her later poems reflect—as do Carr's paintings—the embeddedness of culture in nature through depictions of landscape as documents and archives of human affects. Through the use of colour schemes, sounds, rhythms, and other aesthetic elements, Carr and Livesay intensified the sensual aspects of their landscapes to record and translate human feelings and affects that both expose and condemn social, environmental, and political injustices. From the red berries in Livesay's "Spain" that communicate the bitterness and acrimony felt by the Spanish people following Franco's coup, to the dark, stormy skies in Carr's *Vanquished* that record the pain and fear the exiled inhabitants of her landscape continue to endure, both poet and artist appeal to readers' and viewers' senses to inspire affective responses to the various injustices depicted or implied in their works.

IV. "Boss, I'm smothered in the darkness":
Darkness as Affective Stimulant in Carr's Paintings and Livesay's Poetry

That darkness can stimulate an emotional response in humans is not a

novel idea. The association of darkness and blackness with such feelings as depression, sadness, fear, and horror is so common that it has influenced our terminology for cultural products evoking these emotions: the black comedy, the film noir, or Black Romanticism, for example. The philosophical connection between darkness—as an aesthetic—and emotion, however, was perhaps most famously suggested by Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757): the author argued that darkness is "a cause of the sublime" (162)[51]—an aesthetic evoking fear, terror, pain, and astonishment in its audience.

Burke's sublime aesthetic was highly influential in the visual arts, where, as Thomas McEvilly notes, it "was conceived primarily as a landscape theme" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continued to influence landscape painting into the early twentieth century (48). The sublime landscape, Anne Kostelanetz Mellor explains, is "one which seems to threaten the viewer's life" and that includes the aesthetic qualities of "greatness of dimension[;] . . .obscurity (which blurs the definition of boundaries); profound darkness or intense light;

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[51] According to Burke,"[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime;* that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure" (44). Burke later explains that "if the pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually noxious; if the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person. . . they are capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror" (154). The sense of "delightful horror," in its most intense form, is what Burke calls "astonishment." Less extreme versions of this feeling are "awe," "reverence," and "respect" (154). Burke insists, however, that these "passions" or feelings are not the same as pleasure because they still involve "some degree of horrour" (64).

and sudden, sharp angles" (131).[52] Working towards a sublime aesthetic, many

artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries painted dark landscapes,

such as J.M.W. Turner's and James Macneill Whistler's nocturnes, Thomas

Cole's stormy skies, and the Group of Seven's dark, dense forests rimming shore-

lines and lonely, black pines.

The dark landscape is certainly a staple of Emily Carr's *oeuvre*;[53] Livesay

noted, for example, Carr's penchant for sombre hues in her review of the 1938

exhibition: "The very colors she uses most—purple, green and blue—are to be

found only on inner mountain trails where the sun rarely enters" (MacNair).

Carr's dark landscapes were undoubtedly influenced by Group of Seven paint-

ings; darkness, however, serves a broader affective purpose in Carr's work. Fol-

lowing her meeting with the Group of Seven in 1927,[54] Carr began experimenting

with a postcubist idiom of sculptural form and a darker palette to create land-

scapes that resembled the Group of Seven's "wilderness sublime" aesthetic: a ver-

sion of Burke's sublime that—according to Jonathan Bordo—envisions the land-

scape as *terra nullius*. Bordo and Richard Brock are critical of these landscape

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[52] Ian D. Whyte remarks that Burke's definition of the sublime landscape was also "gendered," as it was characterized as "rugged and masculine," as against the "soft, rounded, feminine" pictures-que landscape (72).

[53] See, for example, Carr's *Forest, British Columbia* [1931-2]; *Forest Interior in Shafts of Light* [c. 1931-7]; *Wood Interior* (1932-5); and *Quiet* (1942).

[54] Carr met members of the Group of Seven when she came to Ontario to exhibit her work in *West Coast Art: Native and Modern*, organized by the National Gallery of Canada. The exhibition was not a financial success for Carr, but it "marked a turning point in her life" (Hill, "Backgrounds" 121). Charles C. Hill explains that Carr "emerged as the most prominent artist in the exhibition" and it launched a "new phase" in the artist's career "through the validation of her art and ambitions by artists and curators she respected, ones with whom she shared certain ideals and who saw her as the professional artist she knew she was" ("Backgrounds"121). A close relationship with Lawren Harris, who greatly influenced Carr's work in the 1930s, resulted from this encounter. For an in-depth, historical discussion of the exhibition, see Hill's "Backgrounds in Canadian Art." For a description of her meeting with the Group of Seven artists, see Carr's chapter entitled "Meeting with the Group of Seven, 1927" in her journal *Hundreds and Thousands* (21-42).

paintings because they see them as enacting an "erasure of aboriginal presence" that "creates, as it were, a space that is indeed a gap. It is also a territory to be occupied and possessed . . ." (Bordo 98). They feel that the tenebrous palettes and sombre atmospheres typical of the wilderness sublime aesthetic underscore emptiness in these landscapes and legitimize colonial projects of territorialization. Although the complete absence of an aboriginal presence within these landscape paintings is somewhat troubling, Bordo's claim, and Brock's reiteration of it, that the Group of Seven paintings deliberately enact an "erasure of aboriginal presence" are not convincingly substantiated with either biographical or visual evidence.[55] Nevertheless, the emptiness and the dark and sombre palettes of their paintings do contribute to a sense of isolation and loneliness that may inspire awe and fear of the unknown in its audience.

Carr's dark landscapes, conversely, are not entirely empty of human content. Certainly there are rarely, if ever, actual human figures in these works. Livesay, in fact, was critical of the absence of people in Carr's paintings: in her early review of Carr's 1938 exhibition in Vancouver, the poet laments, "What Emily Carr ignores is herself and her audience, the world of people. Not a human being walks across her canvasses. Sometimes his homes are there, but never the man

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[55] Brock cites only A.Y. Jackson's *A Copse, Evening (*1918) to illustrate his point that the Group of Seven's paintings enact a gendering of landscape through a "body-landscape" relation that somehow (Brock is not entirely clear on this point) enacts the erasures that Bordo suggests are part of the Group of Seven works. Bordo, meanwhile, insists on a chronological relationship between two paintings by F.H. Varley: *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* 1920, and *Indians Crossing Georgian Bay* 1922, both at the McMichael Gallery. He argues that the relationship, in which "a visual 'wrong' seems to have been 'righted'" in the "apparition" of aboriginal presence that emerges in the later painting to correct the absence in the earlier one, is exceptional in Varley's oeuvre. Bordo, therefore, bases his claim about the "erasure" of aboriginal presence in Group of Seven paintings on a supposedly "exceptional" example of aboriginal presence in Varley's *Indians Crossing Georgian Bay*. No other specific paintings by Group of Seven artists are cited by Bordo, although he discusses the image of the jack pine (as in Tom Thomson's famous painting) as a "symbolic deposit" that "carries its human absence behind it" in their landscape paintings.

who built them" (MacNair). When she wrote these comments, during the height of the Popular Front, Livesay's own art—poetry and prose—demonstrated a deep concern for "the people."[56] Rifkind explains that members of the 1930s left, including Livesay, believed that "literature," and I would add visual art, "must be interested, that it must find meaning in, from, and through its relationship to people's experiences of power" (8): how could art explore people and power without representing the human being either iconically or abstractly? Livesay's comments reflect an uncertainty over the full ability of Carr's landscapes to connect with people and social issues; a similar uncertainty, I will show, emerges over her own landscape poetry of the Popular Front era, much of which the poet suppressed from publication. Although Livesay observes with a critical eye that Carr's paintings lack people, I do not see this lack as inhibiting her paintings' potential to communicate human affect. Livesay herself observes that Carr's paintings do not exclude humanity entirely: houses, as well as totems, and potlatch figures, reflect both present and past human presence within the landscape. W.J.T. Mitchell suggests of the Group of Seven aesthetic that their "wilderness obliterates history" (*Landscape* 309); but in Carr's dark landscapes, as we saw in *Vanquished,* history is inscribed on the landscape, not erased from it. In Carr's landscapes where material history is absent, furthermore, trees have human characteristics, even body parts (see Cochran). Carr's dark landscapes depict a human

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[56] Candida Rifkind writes of the leftist poets' "preference for the definite article: 'the proletariat,' 'the unemployed,' and 'the workers,' which changed in the Popular Front Era to 'the people'" (41). Rifkind cites Livesay's 1936 radio talk, "Decadence in Modern Bourgeois Poetry," as exemplary of this penchant.

presence that may not be obvious, but it is nevertheless there. [57]

Initially, Livesay may have been uncertain about the lack of human figures in Carr's paintings; by the 1940s, she had come to terms with this absence. In a review of Carr's "Indian Sketches" from the 1940s,[58] the poet proclaimed Carr's "problem" to be "Not nature alone, but nature's relationship to man." One thing is certain: Livesay did not perceive an aesthetic similarity between Carr's paintings and the Group of Seven's wilderness sublime paintings. The poet insisted that Carr "stood alone" over the past decade and remained "uninfluenced by the Group of Seven."[59] Carr's paintings might employ or explore darkness within the land-scape; however, I do not see darkness legitimizing colonial projects of conquest in her paintings. Her paintings, instead, interrogate the legitimacy of colonial ideolo-gies and appropriations and examine through landscape, as do Livesay's poems of the late 1930s and early 1940s, people's emotional experiences of power.

Darkness plays an affective role in Carr's paintings, and often a sublime role,[60] one that is mirrored in Dorothy Livesay's poems written during her period of transition to *Poems for People*. Whereas Livesay's earlier poetry employed

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[57] Bordo remarks that the anthropomorphic form of the foregrounded, solitary tree is also common in *Group of Seven* paintings and is a "symbolic deposit" on the landscape of the "*having been there* in order to record as work one's being there" (117); the solitary tree is part of what Richard Brock calls a "tension" of the wilderness sublime "between the aesthetic desire to deny human presence in wilderness on the one hand. . . ." and a colonial desire to record the subjective pres-ence of the "white, male artist" on the other (57). Carr's anthropomorphized trees, as we shall see, are typically female: much more animate than the Group of Seven's trees, they embody the Other, not the colonial subject Bordo and Brock perceive in the Group of Seven works.

[58] Carr's "Indian Sketches" were first read over the radio, on the local C.B.C. station, in January of 1940 (Bridge 4); later in the decade the stories were read aloud on C.B.C. Radio's national broad-casts. Livesay likely first heard the stories, which were collected and published as *Klee Wyck* in 1941, on the radio, given that she uses the pre-publication title "Indian Sketches" in her review.

[59] The accuracy of Livesay's statement is beside the point: what matters, for the purposes of this essay, is that Livesay *perceived* an aesthetic discrepancy between the Group of Seven's paintings and those by Carr.

[60] See footnote 53, page 86, for examples. While Carr engages with Burke's sublime aesthetic, she does not exactly employ a "wilderness sublime" aesthetic.

darkness as a metaphor for death or loneliness, her poetry from the late 1930s on-
wards engages darkness as a possible sensory stimulant, whether in a natural or
industrial landscape. In this way, Livesay's configuration of the dark landscape is
more varied than Carr's, whose paintings stray little from wilderness or forest
scenes; nevertheless, both painter and poet fill these landscapes with life—
whether human, animal, or plant. Their dark landscapes are not necessarily con-
cerned with inspiring loneliness or emptiness, but they work to promote sympathy
or empathy with the life they depict. Whatever the specific setting, both poet and
artist engage darkness to intensify viewers' senses and provoke emotional res-
ponses to social, political, environmental, and gender injustices.

A number of Carr's later landscape paintings use darkness both metaphor-
ically and affectively to question and, subsequently, challenge patriarchal attitudes
towards women. In her painting *Old Tree At Dusk* (Fig. 9)—included in Carr's
solo exhibition in Vancouver that Livesay attended in the fall of 1938 (Shadbolt
207)—the setting of an old pine at twilight establishes a dimming atmosphere that
serves as a metaphor for old age and death.

Fig. 9. Emily Carr, *Old Tree At Dusk,* c. 1932, oil on canvas, 112 x 68.5 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinberg, ON. Gift of Colonel R.S. McLaughlin, 1968.7.13 (image courtesy of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection)

The tree stands as a symbol of the ageing self—its trunk large and gnarled and its branches bare and grey (particularly near the "head" of the tree) evoking an elderly appearance. As the sun sets and darkness falls, this tree's impending death looms large. Carr's lament over the logging industry's decimation of old-growth forests in B.C., and her interest in painting the effects of this decimation in the 1930s, have been well documented (see McKay, Udall, and Collett and Jones, for example). *Old Tree at Dusk* bemoans as it anticipates the loss of the old tree either by its natural toppling or, more seriously and alarmingly, at the hands of a logging industry that had decimated old-growth forests in B.C. for capital gain.[61] There is

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[61] According to Gordon Hugh Hak, "[r]egulations governing reforestation were largely non-existent" in British Columbia in the early twentieth century, and governments typically (and erroneously) ". . . agreed with the companies that proper and potentially expensive conservation practices were not appropriate until the old-growth forests had been logged off" (44). By the 1930s, when Carr painted *Old Tree at Dusk*, it became evident that the ecological impact of old-growth logging could not be repaired by reforestation since the "environmental services" old-growth trees provide to coastal ecosystems are unique and "non-renewable" (Haley and Luckert 57). By the late 1930s, "a focused consensus for change emerge[d]" among government officials and bureaucrats in the province (Hak 44).

also, however, a personal and gendered dimension to this portrait of a tree at dusk.

Sharyn Udall has compellingly argued that Carr's trees are not gender-neutral,

that they "have a sex—female, in Carr's thinking; their pain is hers" (159). Anne

Collett and Dorothy Jones make a similar argument about Carr's depictions of

trees, in which "the feminine is epitomized in the grace of limbs, the flow of hair,

the folds of softly draped foliage. . ." and what the authors call (borrowing a line

from Australian poet Judith Wright's poem "Woman to man") the "'intricate and

folded rose'. . . of female sexual anatomy" (Collett and Jones n.pag.). The tree in

Old Tree at Dusk displays the graceful limbs, curved trunk and "flowing hair" of

Carr's female trees; however, that hair is silvered from old age, and the folds of

foliage Collette and Jones argue represent female reproductive anatomy are sug-

gestively absent.

 Carr's old, female tree provokes a critical consideration of societal views

and stereotypes about the sexuality of the elderly female. Laurie Russell Hatch

remarks that

> [t]he social worth of women has been linked more closely with their phys-
>
> ical appearance compared to the situation for men, and these social valua-
>
> tions decline more markedly with age for women than they do for men. . . .
>
> Looking 'old' is viewed more harshly for women across diverse cultures
>
> . . . . (19)

Evelyn Rosenthal adds that "[t]he assumption that women are no longer sexual

beings when they have passed their childbearing years is clearly an aspect of pa-

triarchy" (39). Carr's old tree, given the apparent absence of its reproductive anat-

omy (foliage, seeds, and cones, for example), is vulnerable to such assumptions

about its asexual status. The dimness of this landscape does not obscure the signs of old age, but rather emphasizes the folds of wrinkled bark and the silver colour of branches under the light of the moon. Darkness in this painting serves as a metaphor for the treatment of elderly women, who are frequently "left in the dark," or ignored and deemed worthless by patriarchal culture.

The darkness of dusk nevertheless activates a distinct sensuality in Carr's foregrounded tree that challenges patriarchal assumptions about the asexual status of elderly women. Christopher Dewdney suggests that "[i]rreducibly, night is intimate. When our sense of sight is diminished, we become more private; when our range of action is limited by darkness, we retreat indoors and often into ourselves" (15). In Carr's painting there is no retreat indoors, but the twilit setting promotes an intimacy between the self / tree and the viewer that encourages affect through a sensory appeal to touch. Carr's deep blue and black palette, for example, appeals to more than just the viewer's sense of vision. Kandinsky, whose theories influenced Carr, argued that blue is the colour most inclined towards "depth," as it has a tendency to "retreat from the spectator" (*Concerning the Spiritual* 38). The deeper the blue—and Carr's blue in *Old Tree At Dusk* is so deep it is almost black— the greater the sense of depth it establishes, according to Kandinsky. Scientifically speaking, depth is perceived through the sense of vision; however, there is a long lineage of art historians and philosophers who believed the third dimension was a synaesthetic one: perceived through vision but affecting the sense of touch. The art historian Alois Riegl once wrote, for example, that "[i]t is thus in any case essentially through the sense of touch that we experience the true quality, the depth and delimitation of objects in nature and works of art. . . . Whereas the optical

qualities [colour and light] disappear in the dark, the tactile qualities remain"

(181). Carr's painting has a similar effect on viewers: the dimness of her setting

and deep blue / black palette highlight the texture of the trees' grooved bark, their

bare—but sharp—branches, the uneven folds of ground leading to deep forest and

establishing distance between foreground and background. The heavy shadows

that fall on the foregrounded old tree, in particular, expose the wrinkled and

gnarled tree bark and signal the brain to consider how it might feel to run one's

hand across this surface—like running the hand across the wrinkled flesh of the

elderly female's body. The moonlight, moreover, exposes human sexual features

of the tree, such as the tree hollow near its base, which is suggestive of female

genitalia and presented front-and-centre; however, the hollow offers no sign of

reproductive sexuality, as would the typical lush folds of foliage that characterize

a number of Carr's paintings. The non-reproductive sexuality of this elderly, fe-

male tree / self is, therefore, asserted, not sublimated. Its tactile appeal may in-

spire a range of affects in readers—from distress-anguish in sympathizing with

the vulnerable tree that exposes its sexual nature to interest-excitement at the pos-

sibilities this exposure might mean for the elderly tree.

Carr's painting *Grey* (Fig. 10), completed between 1931 and 1932, estab-

lishes a similar affective atmosphere through the painter's use of a dark, monoch-

romatic palette.

Fig. 10. Emily Carr, *Grey*, [1931-2], oil on canvas. Private Collection (Shadbolt 103, fig. 82)

Grey challenges patriarchal gender expectations and roles by engaging the sense of touch through darkness within an anthropomorphized landscape. The painting features a central, triangular tree that stands in front of an endless army of black trees that proliferate into the background. The central tree is anthropomorphic: it stares at the viewer through its cat-like eye in a menacing glare. The dark forest is fearsome, but not because it is empty; it is frightening because of this unknown tree presence, which is androgynous. Doris Shadbolt argues that the central conical tree's opening "is also an eye or a mouth or a womb" that is "mysteriously revealed out of the dark" (78). As Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro have noted of Emily Carr's painting *Forest of British Columbia*,[62] *Grey* transforms landscape into a "metaphor for the murky, unknown female interior" in which "[t]he winding and binding forms[—]sometimes cavern, sometimes womb, sometimes

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[62] Chicago and Schapiro do not provide details about the painting and its location is unknown. It is possible the authors mean Carr's painting *Forest, British Columbia* [1931-2], as this painting (with a similar title) features the "winding and binding forms" mentioned by the authors.

forest[—]reiterates [*sic*] the mysterious and infinite life process" (42). The dark forest setting makes the multitude of trees behind the central tree indistinct and heightens their mystery; it also draws the viewer's attention to their textured folds of branches that recede, layer upon layer, into the background. The textured layering titillates the viewer's sense of touch and makes tangible the trees' generative abilities. The central tree, meanwhile, is not submissive to a maternal role: it is subversive of any such gender expectations. Catherine Blackedge remarks that "one of the most common cross-cultural vaginal symbols underlines the view of female genitalia as sacred and creative. This symbol is the downwards-pointing triangle…" (46). Carr's tree, however, is an upwards-pointing triangle, an inversion of traditional vaginal symbolism that makes it suggestively phallic. The tree is both female and male—it transgresses the boundaries and expectations of gender by asserting its generative power. It also assumes a rather upright and phallic stance that poses a challenge to patriarchal expectations of women. Through the dark, grey / sepia palette—a shade somewhere between extremes of black and white that represents the ambiguity and transgression portrayed in her painting—Carr focuses attention on shapes and textures of her forestscape that can inspire both fear and awe.

Livesay's poetry written around the time she began to engage with Carr's paintings similarly employs dark colours and settings that amplify sensory elements and images to inspire progressively affective responses in her readers. As previously mentioned, Livesay's first encounter with Carr occurred during a period of transition for her own poetic output, from her proletarian poetics towards a documentary poetics in which she instrumentalizes landscape to expose social in-

justice. Livesay's poetic engagements with darkness also underwent a transformation during this period. In her early, lyric poetry, darkness typically served a metaphorical purpose either reflecting emotional states of the poet-persona or functioning as a general (and somewhat clichéd) signifier for death, loneliness, melancholy, depression, ignorance, or social injustice. In poems from the period of her first two collections of poetry (1928-32), such as "Explanation" (*Green Pitcher* 14), "Staccato" (*Signpost* 3-4), and "Fire and Reason" (*Green Pitcher* 16), for example, darkness is a place of metaphorical "death" signaling the end of a relationship, highlighting the absence of a lover, or asserting the loneliness of the persona. The poem "Old Man" (*Signpost* 38) employs night and darkness as symbols of the titular subject's memory loss, a decline into ignorance brought on (presumably) by Alzheimer's disease or some form of elderly dementia. Livesay's "In Green Solariums" (*CP* 72-5), first published under the title "A Girl Sees It!" in *Masses* in 1933, expands the meaning of darkness to a symbol of both ignorance and social injustice that the bourgeoisie, who sit in bright, green solariums, are unable to see with their own "dark eyes." As the speaker of the poem, Annie, learns and asserts, "darkness" is something "to be fought against," as it is in most of Livesay's early poetry of the 1930s, where it is typically a negative symbol or metaphor.

Although darkness continues to carry some of these metaphorical associations throughout her poetic career, as early as 1936 Livesay began to instrumentalize darkness as a sensory stimulant provoking affective responses to social injustice: her well-known poem "Day and Night" (*CP* 120-5), which first appeared in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* in January of that year, is exemplary of the poet's

affective use of darkness to expose and contest labour and racial injustice. Critics of the poem have already acknowledged the poet's critique of both "the industrial alienation of modern capitalist production" (Rifkind 64) and the harsh oppression of African Americans in the labour force (McCallum; Vellino). Also noted is the poem's imagining of a "collective response to modes of domination" (McCallum 195; see also Vellino 44). Few have remarked, however, that Livesay executes her critique and motivates a collective response to both labor and racial injustice via the senses and that darkness plays a key role in such stimulation. Brenda Carr Vellino is unique in this regard, as she acknowledges that—in response to calls from contemporary leftist critics of the 1930s, such as William Philips and Philip Rahv, who recommended that worker-oriented literature be "steeped in the senses" (Philips and Rahv 544-5; qtd. in Vellino 53)—Livesay's documentary mode seeks a "*passionate* identification" with the other (my italics, Vellino 53). While she notes Livesay's machine age "acoustics" in the poem and the role they play in a sensual-passionate identification with the Other, a full account of Livesay's sensory appeal through darkness and its affective role in the poem falls beyond the purview of Vellino's essay.

In "Day and Night," darkness sharpens readers' auditory and tactile senses and inspires an affective response to the socio-economic and racial injustice portrayed within the industrial landscape. The setting of the poem's opening at dawn, in particular, activates an atmosphere conducive to sensory and affective intensity. Much like dusk (the setting of Carr's *Old Tree at Dusk*), dawn is a twilight hour when light has not yet reached its full potential and darkness lingers or intrudes by obscuring one's surroundings. Ofelia Ferràn suggests that twilight "is a time of

uncertainty, when things are ill-defined, unclear, caught in the midst of change"

(183). Although vision cannot be relied upon in this dim setting, Livesay ensures

that her readers can both hear and feel the intensity of the scene through a barrage

of acoustic images and kinetic forces: the alternating iambic and trochaic qua-

trains that mimic the men's "dance in time to the machines" and command the

reader to "hear" its "crack," "the roaring voices" that "drown your shout," and the

onomatopoeic "whack" of steel that "Sets you spinning back." These lines also

encourage the reader to feel his or her own heart that "pounds / against your

throat" and later, in section three, to sympathize with the speaker's sensation of

"the pounding / in the knives against my back." The temporal and visual instabili-

ty of dawn, and the sensory impressions that its obscurity foregrounds, establish

an emotionally charged atmosphere that is "red and angry"—a colourful affect

that the reader can begin to appreciate via the recreation of the industrial worker's

sensory landscape in the poem. Livesay urges the reader to feel what the workers

feel to call attention to the injustice of their labour situation: grueling work for

very little pay or benefit.

 While darkness intensifies the reader's sensory experience of the industrial

landscape in the first sections of "Day and Night," it equalizes human subjects

sensually in the fourth section of the poem. In the fourth stanza of this section,

darkness becomes figurative, as the human forms of the workers are silhouetted

against the "red hot" flames of the furnace. Livesay characterizes the impact of

this darkness as painful but communizing: it "burn[s] our skins away," notes the

speaker, turning both workers black as they toil at their jobs. The white worker

models empathy for the black worker's experience in the second stanza by focus-

ing on the pain and suffering attributed to his newly acquired blackness / darkness: "Lord, I'm smothered in the darkness / Boss, I'm shrivellin' in the flames / Boss, I'm blacker than my brother." By imagining the sensation of being "smothered" by darkness and feeling his skin "shrivel[. . .]" from the intense heat of the coal fires, the white worker feels like / for his black colleague and becomes motivated to speak up to the "Boss" and demand acknowledgement of their inherent equality. Ironically, the speaker emphasizes this equality by insisting on his greater degree of "blackness." Blackness and darkness, then, are not terrifying states in the poem: they certainly do not inspire loneliness, but rather they present sensory and emotional possibilities that can mobilize readers towards social change. When "evening" falls and brings darkness with it, "[t]here's a hush," explains the speaker of the poem, who advises us to "listen" and "look": to use the silence of darkness to engage our senses and "Add up hate / and let it mount," for an emotionally charged response to racism and classism presents the best possibility for a revolution that will turn life "[t]he other way."

In her 1941 poem "Nocturne" (*CP* 222), Livesay articulates more explicitly than in "Day and Night" the affective and creative potential of darkness. The poem is dedicated to Alan Crawley, the editor of *Contemporary Verse*, who was blind, and Livesay equates Crawley's visual impairment with "darkness"—a common misrepresentation of blindness. She reconfigures his disability, however, into sensory and (therefore) creative ability and implicitly compares his blindness to the "Nocturne" poem (or musical composition, painting) that is the title of the poem. As William Sharpe explains, "the nocturne emerged after 1860 as a lyric mode of expression [in poetry] allowing highly subjective mediations on the states

of perception intensified by darkness. . . ," and it "became one of the foremost expressions of the movement toward synaesthesia" (108). The nocturne, according to Sharpe, is a landscape genre; however, the landscape it represents is a "delocalized landscape of human emotion" (119). We might consider, for example, Carr's *Old Tree at Dusk* as a nocturne, given its twilight setting and delocalized, anthropomorphized forest of feelings.

Livesay's "Nocturne," however, is an internalized landscape, as the speaker remarks in the first line that "Countries are of the mind / and when you moved upon my land / your darkness ringed my light." Livesay's diction suggests that the landscape she represents is metaphorical: her encounter with Crawley's "darkness" has engendered new feelings and tranformed her mind into a "landscape lovely, looped / with loping hills, wind-woven / landscape of love."[63] This new landscape inspires the speaker to become retrospective about the variety of sensations she might have experienced—had she then known Crawley—in the previous cognitive "landscape": she might have felt the "frozen years" of "snow" in winter, or felt and heard the "crackling wood" under her bare feet in the summer; she might have heard the "wild crying" of spring and felt its "sap's ascent / burning the blood," or sensed the "solitary" feeling of autumn as she heard and felt the dead "leaves" under her feet. It is "Only now," after her encounter with Crawley and his "darkness," that the poet hears "the shout / of knowledge" of these past sensations. Instead of its typical associations with ignorance (as in her earlier

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[63] Livesay's lines from her 1941 poem pre-date the publication of P.K. Page's "Landscape of Love," which first appeared in the inaugural issue of *First Statement* in August 1942. The first lines of Page's poem, along with the title, pay homage to Livesay's affective configuration of landscape: "Where the bog ends, there, where the ground lips, lovely / is love, not lonely." I will discuss Page's poem in the next chapter as an example of the forties trope of the landscape as body (see 165-7).

poem "Old Man" [*CP* 41]), darkness in "Nocturne" engenders affective knowledge that the poet yearns for and demands in her calls to be bound "with ropes of darkness": a knowledge that promises to improve her poetic ability. The poem's sensory stimulation is also designed to help readers empathize more richly with Crawley's experience as a blind man and to admire his wisdom and creative ability.

Other poems from her transitional period similarly call on darkness to elicit affective responses from readers. In her poem "In Praise of Evening" (*Archive* 49)—first published in *New Frontier* in 1937—Livesay sets the stage for an affective appeal to readers through a setting charged with "excitement": the "evening," a time when the sun sets and darkness falls. One would assume (following the logic of Burke, for example) that such darkness would obscure one's surroundings and create a tense or frightening atmosphere; this evening, however, is a "bare relief," we are told, "in living"—a phrase that could have a number of possible meanings. The words suggest that the evening is defective or insufficient as a "relief" to homelessness, the main topic of the poem. "Relief" may similarly refer to the government's financial aid, which is lacking in this case, to the homeless and unemployed. In the visual arts, however, a "relief" is a sculptural technique in which the sculpture is raised against a wall or plane: Livesay's use of darkness in the poem, through its stark contrast with the light of the setting sun, may "throw into relief" the issue of homelessness and leave things "bare" or open to view. To be "bare" is to be naked or unclothed, and the setting sun in the poem clearly exposes the "thrusting hand" of the homeless, which becomes a dark "silhouette" like "a tree on the rim of the horizon" in a landscape of poverty.

The disembodied hand is both the "gesture of homelessness" and a symbol of loneliness and touch in the poem. It alerts the reader to the feeling of homelessness the poet attempts to recreate in the following lines. Livesay encourages the reader to feel, hear, and smell the "liveness of breathing" and imagine the sensation of "hunger" in the stomach or the pounding of the heart "contracting, expanding" in his or her chest. These sensations promote empathy and attempt to inspire the reader to lean towards the homeless in the gesture of love displayed in the final lines of the poem. As Irvine acknowledges, Livesay idealizes "love" in the poem as a "social force" that promises a better future (*Editing* 66), which is certainly an utopic understanding of feelings or emotions. Whether or not this vision is realistic, it is clear that Livesay employs darkness in the poem to alert readers to the social injustice of homelessness without simply suggesting clichéd and negative symbolic associations of darkness.

A later poem entitled "Catalonia" (*CP* 98-101), Livesay's "longest poem about the Spanish War" (Vulpe 169), clearly illustrates a more refined fusion of her lyric and social-realist poetics. The poem was recovered by Livesay herself, who first published it in *Canadian Literature* in 1971 and included it in her 1972 *Collected Poems* in the section "The Thirties." Written as early as 1938, most likely following Carr's exhibition that she attended at the VAG in October of that year and right around the time she met Carr,[64] "Catalonia" remained suppressed for over thirty years—which may reflect the poet's uncertainty about its value un-

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[64] A version of the poem in the Dorothy Livesay Fonds at the University of Manitoba is included in a file with poems written in 1938. The battle of Ebro, which Vulpe identifies as the topic of Livesay's "(fictitious) tank battle" in the poem (169), began in July of 1938 and ended in November of that year (H. Thomas 819). Since Livesay describes the "retreat" of the Republican forces in the poem, it was likely written between November and December of 1938.

til a later date. Although the poem is primarily a narrative describing the battle of Catalonia and the story of Sorenson, a soldier who selflessly volunteers to enter dim tanks full of wounded men, the final two stanzas more or less abandon Sorenson's story and increasingly incorporate lyric elements, such as end-rhymes ("Spain" / "remains"; "snow" / "blow"; "again" / "Spain"), internal rhyme ("Spirit sustained, the floor of Spain / A ground not tilled in vain with blood"), alliteration ("Bundled with babies"; "bits of bread, dried beans"; "breath and bone"), anaphora (as in the phrase "People are marching"), and the bardic "O" of the final stanza. Although these lines do not shift to a lyric "I," they do turn to the first-person plural "we" in the line "Now we retreat in better order, confident" and they shift focus from the heroics of war (represented by Sorenson's selfless act) to the experiences of ordinary people who "march" down the roads "Bundled with babies, chattels, straggling tots." As in "In Praise of Evening," the poem culminates with a utopic vision prophesied by the speaker: in "Catalonia," however, the lyric romanticism of the speaker's vision of resurrection in the final lines is tempered by the "conclusiveness" of the "burial [of the dead] in Catalonia's 'rolling plains'," which Nicola Vulpe rightly argues "makes this resurrection distant indeed" (169-70). The sadness and desperation of the immediate present that Livesay establishes in the previous stanza—her images of people "marching with all song / Gone out, all sunlight flattened grey / upon their faces" as they retreat and Franco seizes control of their homeland—nearly nullifies the poet's use of the future tense in the final stanza.

"Catalonia" also demonstrates a revised and more prominent role from Livesay's apprenticeship poetics for darkness as a stimulant of sensations and

emotions. The poem both opens and closes with the image of a "flag of darkness. . ." lowering to "half mast." In the third section of the poem, darkness stimulates Sorenson's senses: "the smoky darkness stretched itself" and revealed the "air that clutched at his face" with the "acrid" taste and smell of oil that "shoved his nostrils in / [c]lung to his palate" and "burned in his lungs." The pungent smells and tastes that Sorenson experiences, and the caustic feelings he must endure as a result, may imaginatively arouse dissmell and distress-anguish in the reader. Vulpe argues that "Catalonia" is one of the few Canadian poems about the Spanish Civil War that "attempts to describe something of the Spanish War as a war fought and endured by real people rather than as an issue" (169): Livesay's detailed descriptions of the sounds, smells, and tastes of war document the human experience of conflict. The poet harnesses the powerful potential for darkness to amplify these sensations and inspire an empathic response to Spain's situation; like Carr's *Old Tree at Dusk*, "Catalonia" does not reject or exclude a symbolic role for darkness. Livesay's lyric and socialist modes coexist and interact in the poem to communicate the emotional experience of a landscape of war and destruction.

"Catalonia" and "In Praise of Evening" exemplify Livesay's early experiments with the power of darkness within a landscape to foreground or heighten the affects associated with a place or environment. Livesay developed an affective role for darkness within her landscape poetry as early as 1936 in "Day and Night." In this famous poem, darkness foregrounds the sounds and sensations of the "red and angry" industrial landscape and equalizes subjects of different races by promoting empathy. Livesay's poems "In Praise of Evening" and "Catalonia" dem-

onstrate the poet's experimentation with this new role for darkness in her late 1930s poetics. The poet, however, was still experimenting with darkness and working out the balance between her persistent didacticism (characteristic of her social poetry) and resurgent lyricism (which includes her sensual and emotive imagery) during this period and into the 1940s.[65] Her exposure to Carr's work in 1938 appears to have helped Livesay better integrate these two modes through the use of darkness in "Catalonia," which Livesay wrote right around the time she met with Carr; but her development of a poetics of affective landscape, and the role of darkness within these spaces, was certainly not steady or unwavering.

V. "[S]et my swing between / The shift and shimmer of green leaves": Movement and Sensation in Carr's and Livesay's Landscapes

As we have seen, a number of Carr and Livesay's dark landscapes favour moments of transition and flux, whether dusk or dawn—as in Carr's *Old Tree at Dusk* and Livesay's "Day and Night" and "In Praise of Evening." Livesay and Carr also explored these motifs of transformation and fluctuation through their depictions of movement within various landscapes. Expressive or affective images of nature's motion and movement were common in Livesay's early lyric poetry; as we shall see, however, these apprenticeship poems rarely, if ever, in-

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[65] Many poems exemplary of Livesay's experimentation with darkness in her transitional period are suppressed poems that have been included in Irvine's *Archive of Our Times.* For example, in her poem "New Day" of November 1937 (*Archive* 51), the speaker calls for "day" to "come early," for the darkness of night has revealed the shocking sounds and smells of war: "night's rain" foregrounded the sound of "footsteps against pavement," and a personified "midnight with her slanting lips" and the "dark of a gutter" forces us to "hear[. . .] / Unseen around the corner rout of war. . . ." Livesay wrote these dark landscape poems during the Popular Front era and shortly after; she may have suppressed them because, with their emphasis on landscape and emotion (so similar to her early lyric poems), she was uncertain of their social potential or of their reception by her modernist and leftist peers.

strumentalize movement to convey a social critique or message. During her transitional period of the mid-1930s, Livesay's depictions of movement and rhythms began to acquire an affective purpose that she would hone throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s. The poet's meeting with Carr and exposure to her landscape paintings helped Livesay connect her lyrical impressions of movement to her socialism of the 1930s: like Carr's swirling brushstrokes and images of swaying trees, Livesay's analogous kinetic images and driving rhythms serve as sensory stimulants within the landscape promoting affective responses to the deceptively stable ideological structures and institutions—such as Fascism and patriarchy—discussed or implied in her works.

According to Peter Adey, "mobility is something we feel in an emotional and affective sense. . . " (162). He notes that sociologist Mimi Sheller has argued that "[m]otion and emotion. . . are kinaesthetically intertwined and produced together through a conjunction of bodies, technologies and cultural practices" (227; qtd. in Adey 162). Sarah Ahmed suggests that fear can both restrict and promote the body's mobile capacities: fear may be "paralyzing," but it also "seems to prepare the body for flight" (69). Massumi, meanwhile, recommends that we consider the relationship among the following four terms: "body—(movement / sensation)—change" (*Parables* 1). Cultural theorists have ignored the connections among these terms for too long, argues Massumi, and it is time to consider the materiality of movement and its political implications. "When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name," he writes, "two things stand out. It *moves*. It *feels*. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving" (*Parables* 1). The body detects movement through proprioception, which

is "a specialized variation of the sensory modality of touch that includes the sensation of joint movement (kinesthesia) and joint position (joint position sense)" (Frontera 237). Just as emotion can promote or restrict mobility, as Ahmed's discussion of fear suggests, Massumi argues that the sensation of motion can also generate emotion. The sensation of movement is "always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling" (*Parables* 13). When humans move, they also feel, and feelings have the potential to generate emotions and affects.

It was precisely the affective impact of rhythmical movement in Carr's paintings that struck Livesay when she saw them at an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1940. In her review of the show entitled the "Rhythm of Nature Expressed by Emily Carr," which I discussed on page 60, Livesay wrote of the "mood" or "experience" Carr creates in her paintings through swirling, twisting, and sweeping images. She mentions Carr's *Light Swooping Through* and *Sunshine and Tumult* (Fig. 11) as exemplary of the artist's poetic titles that "suggest she is giving you a mood to experience" and reflect the movement and rhythms of her brushstrokes. When the gallery visitor in her review asks Livesay if she is an artist, the poet replies (under a new sub-heading—"Rhythm Strongly Appeals to Observer"):

> "No. . . And I'm not a musician either. But the rhythms in these pictures appeal to me as music does. Take the swirl of that foliage, the sombre brooding trunks, the twisted, dead roots below. What a powerful movement there is between the three, and how well the artist has felt the relationship. If the forest could sing, surely its music would be akin to that!"

Livesay suggests that Carr has captured in paint a "felt" experience of the fo-

restscape through the "swirl[s]" and "twist[s]" that establish an impression of movement in paint.[66] Although Livesay's comments seem strangely aestheticist for a poet usually concerned with social and political content, it is important to keep in mind the intended audience and purpose of the review: published in the *Vancouver Daily Province*, it was meant to speak to average citizens who were resistant to modern art. The aesthetic and affective elements of Carr's paintings represent a "common ground" between Livesay and the gallery visitor who is unsure of their modernist qualities—both poet and visitor can appreciate the beauty and emotion of Carr's paintings.

Fig. 11. Emily Carr, *Sunshine and Tumult,* [c.1938-9], oil on paper. Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, ON (image courtesy of the Art Gallery of Hamilton)

Although most of the paintings discussed in this chapter have been predo-

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[66] Livesay, once again, openly admired the musical or moving quality of Carr's landscapes in her review from 1945 of Carr's "Indian Sketches." She wrote of an unidentified skyscape by Carr—possibly *Blue Sky* of 1936, which fits her description—that "represents high vaunlted [*sic*] firs meeting above a sombre blue abyss. The effect," according to Livesay, "is tense, expectant. Almost as if it were music or poetry, it carries one amaway [*sic*] from the diredt [*sic*] image into symbolism" (Review of Emily Carr's *Indian Sketches*).

minantly sculptural landscapes featuring heavy (sometimes geometricized) forms,

Carr's style transformed radically in the mid-1930s, according to Roald Nasgaard,

to embrace the "flowing expressing [*sic*] sweeps and swirls that transform her

paintings into fields of rhythm and movement" (*Mystic North* 202), as in *Sunshine*

and Tumult.[67] Nasgaard, like Livesay, identifies Carr's moving landscapes as

"Northern symbolist landscapes" that strive "for the expression of affective or

transcendental content through close communion with an intimately experienced

landscape" (*Mystic North* 8).[68] In her symbolist landscapes, Nasgaard suggests,

"[m]ovement as embodied in a spontaneous and flowing technique became . . . a

vehicle of personal expression" (*Mystic North* 201-2); movement also sensually

guides viewers through the landscape to stimulate affects related to Carr's scenes

of destruction and / or regeneration. Robert Linsley has argued that it is the ex-

pressive "flowing" of Carr's later paintings that sets them apart from the Group of

Seven's frozen, nationalist works; whereas both the Group of Seven paintings and

Carr's later works are "produced within the same tradition of an allegorical na-

tional landscape. . . . the turbulence of Carr's paintings," he argues, ". . . talks

about the real turbulence of that history as enacted on the land—the industrializa-

tion of the wilderness" (91).[69] It is difficult to think of a painting like F.H. Var-

ley's *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (1920) as "frozen" or without movement,

and the wilderness ethos of the Group of Seven paintings must surely have been,

to some extent, inspired by concern over rapid industrialization; these issues

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[67] A number of critics have identified the quality of movement in Carr's later paintings (Linsley, 91-3; Udall, 100; Shadbolt, 142; Barzilai 260).

[68] For examples of Northern symbolist landscape paintings, see Harold Sohlberg's *Flower Meadow in the North* (1905) or Georgia O'Keefe's *The Lawrence Tree* (1929).

[69] Linsley cites as examples of Carr's turbulent landscapes her paintings *Swaying* (1936) and *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1936).

aside, Linsley is correct to suggest that the impression of movement in Carr's painting is often tied to a similar distress about the state of the Canadian landscape. What Linsley and others have not explained, however, is how Carr's "expressive" movement engenders expression: that is, how does it promote sensation and feeling in the viewer?

Consider one of Carr's famous paintings, *Above the Gravel Pit* (Fig. 12), painted around 1937—just a year prior to Carr and Livesay's first meeting. Livesay would have seen this painting at Carr's exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1938.

Fig. 12. Emily Carr, *Above the Gravel Pit*, 1937, oil on canvas, 77.2 x 102.3 cm. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C., Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.30 (image courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery)

Did a good sketch yesterday—woods, light, movement, and wrestled with the gravel pit last night of which I made a botch and learned something. I suppose the whole hitch is I am not sufficiently interested in the pits. They are spacy but there is the crudity of men about them, and they smell commercial. The merry rattling stones and the glistening gravel are now roads and buildings, married to other ingredients, dead and uninteresting, and nature has not had time to heal the scars and holes yet.

—Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands* (330-1)

In the painting, Carr presents a landscape that has been attacked by economic interests: trees have been cut down and a large pit dug in the ground for the extraction of gravel—a natural resource. When Carr first painted the pits, she wrote in her journal that she was not "sufficiently interested" in them because they had "the crudity of men about them, and they smell commercial" (330-1). Her comments, however, point less to her lack of interest in the pits—which she spent a good deal of time painting as a series (see also *Above the Gravel Pit,* Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, c. 1934)—and more to her ongoing contemplation of the destruction of nature for the sake of commercial gain. While, at first glance, this landscape appears distressfully devastated and devoid of life, Carr's brushwork and formal composition inspire both anguish and hope. Shadbolt has suggested that Carr's brush, in particular, "becomes activator rather than narrator or shaper" in this painting (142), creating the impression of fluid movement; her brushwork also serves as a sensual guide through the landscape, leading the eye to various images and elements that might stimulate the viewer's senses. The stream of light emanating from the sky immediately pulls the viewer's eye to the meeting point between the two clusters of trees that are slightly off-centre on the horizon. The sloped hill, however, pulls the eye back down and around the gravel pit where the dark brush strokes shunt it back up towards the tree stumps in the foreground. This movement may stimulate the viewer's proprioceptive abilities; it also encourages him or her to feel the undulations of the gravel pit, not to mention the contrast between rough gravel and smooth grass as the eye passes over the pit and up the hill. It is the image of stumps, however, that truly appeals to the sense of touch. As in *Vanquished*, these amputated trees inspire anguish and distress.

There is no point of rest in *Above the Gravel Pit,* as the eye is continually transported in cyclical fashion through Carr's curvilinear, undulating banding of both grass and sky—in stark contrast to the straight horizontal banding of sky in Tom Thomson's well-known painting *The Jack Pine* (1916-7). In Carr's painting, sky and land are intimately connected by the natural rhythm of brushwork. The sky, however, dominates the painting—which is perhaps why Carr referred to *Above the Gravel Pit* as a "skyscape" (*Hundreds* 293). Carr's active brushwork communicates the fact that the sky, while a physical space, is an ephemeral and constantly changing entity—always in motion, always in transition—and the landscape, partly by virtue of its connection to sky, can have a similar transformative potential. The movement of sky and land in Carr's painting contests capitalist narratives of progress, as this motion is cyclical and suggestive of the potential for change and, therefore, reversal. Nevertheless, the connotations of renewal and regeneration in the painting do not exclude the possibility that destruction and devastation could happen here again. Carr's dim atmosphere and images suggesting pain and anguish warn of the toll these commercial pursuits impose on nature.

Carr's symbolist landscapes exemplified for Livesay ways of connecting the expressive motion of the natural world that she had explored in her appren-ticeship period to a social or political purpose. Both Livesay and Carr created moving, affective landscapes to condemn and challenge the destruction of forests for the sake of profit; Livesay, however, also mobilized her landscapes to engage with broader social and political issues—labour injustice, women's rights, and civil rights, for example—and motivate readers to take action against inequity,

oppression, or social injustices.[70] Her poem "Motif for a Mural" (*Archive* 71-3)—

written sometime during the Second World War—reflects on the power of land-

scape art to inspire the public to contest the social and political problems of war

and posits this genre as an alternative to the rhetorical model of activism popular

in the 1930s. As Irvine remarks, the poem's title "allud[es] to the murals of Cana-

dian artists in the 1930s and 1940s," especially the work of the PAC muralists,

such as Jack Shadbolt, whom Livesay knew well.[71] The poem itself "imitates the

three-panel structure of a triptych—the traditional format of altarpieces but also

common to murals" (*Editing* 113). He suggests that the painting Livesay creates

in "Motif for a Mural" "exhibits characteristics of modernist—specifically, ex-

pressionist—visual art" (*Editing* 116), by which I understand Irvine to mean ab-

stract expressionist art (given the abstract and active language the poet uses).

We might also think of the third panel of the triptych as a symbolist land-

scape painting, resembling the later, moving landscapes of Emily Carr. In the

poem's third section, the poet clearly creates an expressive scene of nature's

movement and "life force" that can inspire social activism. In the first stanza, by

contrast, she paints an image of young men ready for action, but who are "shifted

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[70] See, for example, Carr's *Study in Movement* [c. 1935-6]; *Odds and Ends* [c. 1939]; *Edge of the Forest* [c. 1935]; *Stumps and Sky* [c. 1934]. See also Livesay's poem "Scourge" of 1938-9 (*Archive* 59-60), in which the frantic motion of the forest animals trying to flee a fire promotes fear, anxiety, or distress that calls into question our treatment of the forest. In "Bulldozer" (*Archive* 91), published in the *Canadian Forum* in 1950, the speaker's movement results in a sympathetic motion sickness with the "seasick and distracted tree" whose life is threatened by the machine that promises to "knuckl[e]" its "roots."
[71] Shadbolt, in fact, also knew Emily Carr (whom he met in 1930) and was an "enthusiastic admirer of her painting" (Walker 33n12). Carr, conversely, was incredibly critical of Shadbolt's work and called him a "goof-nit-wit" in a letter to Nan Cheney (328). According to Marjorie M. Halpin, Shadbolt wrote in his journal that he was "originally fired" by "Carr's powerful and brooding evocations of tragedy" (qtd. in Halpin 3) and cited Carr as a major influence on his works (3). Shadbolt created *The Hornby Suite: Homage to Emily Carr*, a series of large charcoal drawings inspired by Carr's paintings, in 1971 (Walker 33n12).

to low gear / thrown in reverse"; through its automotive imagery of deceleration and diction of abatement, Livesay's phrase connotes a Depression-era setting. Although these young men of the 1930s "[r]un in their sleep," in waking life they are forced by their economic situation to "walk in the street" and remain socially inactive. In section two, the poet writes of a "time of speech" that was utterly ineffective in motivating her "inert audience." "In the time of action," the poet was more effective in convincing the "crowd" at least to "roar[. . .]"; but while "Skyscrapers toppled" and "Cathedrals perished" in this urban thirties setting and period of activism, the speaker was ultimately "routed" or defeated. Following this upset, "In the time of quiet," the speaker found a rural setting in which to reconnect with her own emotions, as she lay "under a stone / Weeping." This time of "healing" leads to her artistic epiphany in the third section, in which the speaker commands her body to be painted as a moving and feeling landscape:

> Now curl me colour, a plumed cloud
>
> Purple to circle the sky!
>
> And a blue shaft darted
>
> Thought's charger mounted,
>
> Drench me with orange, let fly
>
> The burnt gold rain
>
> The tropic sunshine shafted
>
> Into a wheel of fire
>
> Vaulting the monument, the spire
>
> And on its shadowed side, dove grey
>
> Luring the light to fold its wings

Against a scarlet day.

Now dash and daze me in the sway

Of yellow, gold and green

Rock me in a summer breeze

And set my swing between

The shift and shimmer of green leaves

Where sun's sharp fingers lean!

As Irvine remarks, "the speaker of this third section never employs rhetoric to

persuade an audience to take action" (*Editing* 115); instead, her landscape paint-

ing inspires action. Depictions of movement within nature communicate these

emotions to viewers through the sensations they stimulate.

Livesay's landscape in "Motif for a Mural" is full of movement and sensa-

tion, and the poet underscores motion, in particular, through rhyme and metrical

stresses: for example, Livesay's half-rhyme of "purple" and "circle" within the

second line yokes the viewer's vision to a reeling sensation. The poet-persona's

demand from colour, or some other unnamed figure, to "curl" her into a cloud that

will "circle" the sky in this painting calls to mind Carr's curving brushstrokes that

circle the deep blue sky in *Above the Gravel Pit*. Livesay's masculine end-rhyme

on active words, such as "sky / fly," propels the reader forward, as does the as-

sonance of the final syllable of most lines in the second-last stanza—"green" /

"breeze" / "between" / "green leaves" / "lean." The alliteration in the first line of

this stanza between "dash" and "daze" connects a thrusting movement to surprise

or amazement. The kinetic energy of Livesay's verse builds with the words

"sway," "rock," "swing," and "shift" that climax in the final line of the second last stanza with the sensory image of the "sun's sharp fingers." All these words of movement and the sensations and positive or neutral affects they produce or inspire—whether surprise-startlement, enjoyment-joy, or interest-excitement (evoked through the poet's exclamatory punctuation)—lead to the final regenerative image of the poet as salamander or phoenix rising from "the world's own ashes." The persona is "bound in the bands of colour" that carry the poet and reader through the poem's various sensations and help assert the transformative potential of both landscape and self. The mural, therefore, attempts to empower readers to take action, to revolt against social injustices, whether economic or political, in a manner that rhetorical models of persuasion had been unable to achieve for Livesay—as her portraits of disillusionment in the first and second parts of the poem suggest.

"Motif for a Mural" exemplifies the transformation of Livesay's poetics from a social poetics of the mid-1930s to one that incorporates her early lyricism in a poetics of affective landscape. A brief glance at her apprenticeship poetics quickly reveals that images of nature as mobile and emotive elements were present in her early lyric poetry; these images, however, typically lacked social concern or critique and rarely contributed to an "evocation of place" (Sánchez-Pardo 178). Consider, for example, the poem "Autumn" (*CP* 2) from her first collection, *Green Pitcher*. The speaker identifies a number of sensations experienced during that season: "The light, light air / floating through trees / as a river through rushes," the "feel. . . of wind / Drawing down leaves / To their last surrender," and the sight of "children walking apart, / Unreal, / Smelling the day /

In brief snatches of wonder!" Each of these images calls attention to the

movement of the natural world and the sensations and emotion of "wonder" it

promotes, but the poem ends there: it does nothing to mobilize these sensations

and emotions in readers, nor does it even suggest the speaker has a social

conscience.[72] Her epigrammatic octave "Neighbourhood" (*CP* 33) in *Signpost*

similarly connects the speaker's movement to nature and emotions:

> Whenever I passed the house
>
> At far, rare intervals
>
> Memory stabbed,
>
> The tree at the gate grieved.
>
>
> But now, passing it daily
>
> I scarcely remember—
>
> Pain has a too familiar look
>
> To need the averted head.

The speaker's movement past the house sparks her memory and triggers negative

emotions expressed by the grieving tree. While her "daily" passings by the house

appear to have less impact on memory, their emotional intensity remains intact.

Evidently, Livesay's apprenticeship poems demonstrate an early but as yet

undeveloped understanding of the link between movement and emotion that she

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[72] Livesay's poem "Fantasy in May" (*CP* 4-5) from her first volume comes closest of any of her early poems to launching a social critique through a depiction of nature's movement: the poet compares the city tulips to "drunken harlots" that "totter and reel" and sway in the male wind, which seems intimidated by their bold movements and leaves the city for the country to blow out the "virginal candles" that are "yellow and steadily bright /Trying never to dance." While the allegory in a veiled way rejoices in female sexual empowerment, it does not connect the movement of the tulips to sensations; nor does it attempt to inspire an affective response—whether empathy, anger, rage, joy, or distress—on the part of readers through its movement.

would later call upon to rework her social poetry.

In addition to "Motif for a Mural," a number of poems from Livesay's transitional period reflect the poet's reintroduction of the motion / emotion paradigm of her early lyric poetry and the impact of Carr's expressions of the "Rhythm of Nature"—of the social and affective potential of movement within landscape.[73] "Prelude for Spring" (*CP* 128-30), first published in the *Canadian Review of Music and Art* in 1942 (after she had met Carr and written reviews of her work), describes the movement of the "fawn"—addressed throughout the poem in an imperative voice that implicates the reader—whom the "Proud prowler," a "bird of prey," pursues within a dream landscape. As Sánchez-Pardo suggests, "Prelude for Spring" can be "read as a modernist poem which uses metaphor to tell a story about fascist aggression": the bird of prey represents Hitler, who was "often represented as such while Western democracies were viewed as pursued" (179). The poet draws on the fawn's movement, intensified through rhythm and rhyme, to connect the reader to various sensations within the landscape setting. These sensations might trigger the "fear" mentioned in the poem, or a range of other empathic or reactionary affects related to the distress-anguish of the fawn's experience. In the middle of the poem, the speaker instructs the fawn to "Dive down then, scuttle under: Run, fearless of feet's thunder," directions that lead the fawn through a landscape of sensory impressions:

> O beat of air, wing beat
>
> Scatter of rain, sleet,

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[73] See, for example, Livesay's poems "Fantasia" (*CP*137-9), "Serenade for Strings" (*CP* 131-3), and "Five Poems" (*CP* 134-7) from *Day and Night*, as well as "London Revisited: 1946" in *Poems for People.*

Resisting leaves,

Retarding feet

And drip of rain, leaf drip

Sting on cheek and lip

Tearing pores

With lash of whip

And hoof's away, heart's hoof

Down greening lanes. . .

The masculine end-rhyme in the first few stanzas of this middle section of the

poem helps to establish a driving rhythm that propels the reader forward. This

rhythm simulates the "wing beat" of air mentioned in the first line and leads to the

stressed "rain, sleet," which foregrounds other wet sensations in the landscape,

such as the "drip of rain, leaf drip" in the subsequent stanza. The wetness

becomes painful when it "Sting[s]" the cheek and lip and "Tear[s]" the skin's

pores "With lash of whip." The fawn's initial experience of the landscape reveals

a whirlwind of sensations and images that "scatter," "Dive," "drip" and "beat" to

create a rhythmic impression of the natural world analogous to that established

through Carr's brushtrokes in *Sunshine and Tumult* or the sky of *Above the Gravel

Pit*. The movement and sensations of Livesay's lines might inspire empathy in

readers who imagine the panic and fear of the fawn running for its life.

Many of Livesay's poems from the 1950s revive this theme of movement

and affect within the landscape as a metaphor or model for freedom from a

restrictive or oppressive patriarchy. "The Three Emilys" of 1953 (*CP* 202), which

is in part about Emily Carr, touches upon this theme briefly: landscape, although not particularly mobile in the poem, is certainly a realm of movement and "liberty" for the three Emilys. These women were free to "wander[. . .] lonely"—a line invoking the Romantic lyricism of William Wordsworth's "I wandered Lonely as a Cloud"—through trees and past lakes, to find a "mountain for their stand," and to "bat[. . .] clouds with easy hand" in the sky that was "Their kingdom." The Emilys, however, "cry to [the persona] / as in reproach," or so she believes. While she was "born to hear their inner storm / Of separate man in woman's form," the persona "moves as mother in a frame" instead of in a landscape: she is confined to a maternal role and her "arteries / Flow the immemorial way / Towards the child, the man." Consequently, the Emilys "move triumphant through [her] head," she writes, as in their landscapes they possess a freedom from patriarchal expectations not now available to the persona.

Those familiar with Livesay's work will immediately think of the movement and gendered roles of "Bartok and the Geranium" from the Fall-Winter 1952 issue of *Contemporary Verse* (*CP* 215). Although one might correlate the natural image of the female geranium to Livesay's early lyric poetry of emotion—and certainly the tension between Bartok and the geranium revives what Relke has shown to be a conflict between nature and culture from her apprenticeship poetics—the flower is incredibly passive and passionless in the poem: "Whatever falls / She has no commentary / Accepts, extends." It is the dark music of Bartok that is full of "mad intensity," with movement that "storms and crackles / Spits with hell's own spark." The poet inverts the gendered expectations of female as emotional / irrational and male as reserved / rational while maintaining the tradi-

tional role of female as passive and male as active. Male has the freedom to be passionate, while female is confined to a domestic interior. This is not a landscape poem, and the motion of Bartok does little to inspire or generate affects. For all his "mad intensity," his movement does not lead to images rich with sensation; instead, he "Soars beyond sight" and abandons us and the geranium in the final stanza. The stillness of the potted geranium, meanwhile, and the pitiful way she "leans a lip against the glass"—the only movement she is capable of—might inspire empathy or anger against an implied patriarchal ideology that keeps her cloistered in the room. Although "Bartok and the Geranium" is one of the poet's most canonical poems, its curious reversals of gendered roles and related treatment of movement and emotion are highly anomalous in Livesay's oeuvre.

In contrast, Livesay's well-known poem "On Looking Into Henry Moore," published in 1956 in the *Fiddlehead*, includes a number of landscape elements that the speaker calls on explicitly to generate affect through movement. Although, as the title suggests, Livesay's inspiration for the poem was the work of the British sculptor Henry Moore, the poem equally exhibits the moving and expressive landscape elements Livesay admired in Carr's 1930s paintings; it also revives the imperative voice and sun and tree imagery of "Motif for a Mural." The speaker begins by commanding the natural world to transform her into a new, androgynous being:

/   / |˘   ˘ / |˘

Sun, stun me, sustain me

/   ˘ | ˘   /

Turn me to stone:

/   / |˘   ˘   / | ˘

Stone, goad me and gall me

/   ˘ | ˘   /

Urge me to run

  /   ˘ | ˘   /

When I have found

  ˘   / |˘ ˘ | ˘   /

Passivity in fire

   ˘   / | ˘   /

And fire in stone

/   ˘ | ˘   /

Female and male

 ˘   / | ˘ /

I'll rise alone

   /   ˘   /   ˘   ˘   /   /

Self-extending and self-known.

Livesay's spondaic opening emphasizes the sublime power of the sun to affect her emotionally, to "stun" her senses and therefore transform her to "stone." The stone has a similar affective power over the speaker to stimulate her and "gall" her, or drive her to anger and rage. It is tempting to think of stone as stable or immobile; but the speaker's transformation to stone "urge[s]" her "to run," to continue to move, possibly to escape the strictures of the patriarchal binaries of "Passivity in fire / fire in stone / female and male" and find a way to unify them.

Susan Gingell argues that the "alliteration, assonance, and rhymes of the first stanza. . . work to unify" these binaries, as do the "motive forces of stunning and sustaining, goading and galling," which contribute to the "fashioning of the ideal self as androgyne in the poem's final stanza" (8). Her rhythmic patterning also reflects a unity of male and female forces, as the generally falling rhythm of the first five lines is inverted in the subsequent four through iambic metre; the verse eventually returns, however, to a falling rhythm in the last line that culminates with a forceful spondee on "self-known"—foregrounding the significance of self-actualization over pre-conceived notions of gender.

Before the speaker fashions herself as androgyne, however, she must look to nature for a prototype, which she finds in the tree of the second section. Like Carr's anthropomorphized trees, Livesay's tree is a metaphor for the self that displays "bliss" in its "Aloneness" and ability to defy boundaries by living both above and below ground. The tree's duality inspires the speaker in the last section to "burn myself to bone" and become "as a tree or stone / Woman in man, and man in womb." Livesay's caustic image, moreover, is anamnestic: it recalls the regeneration of the phoenix in the final lines of "Motif for a Mural." Although the process of burning one's flesh for the sake of renewal, a prominent motif in her earlier poem "Day and Night" (1936), sounds painful, Livesay's vision of androgyny promises the "bliss" of the tree through self-contentment and freedom from patriarchal constraints.

Livesay's poems from her transitional period display a clear interest in the impression of movement as a conveyor of emotions that the poet had identified in Carr's paintings. In "Motif for a Mural," the poet paints a Carr-like landscape that

includes her body in its movements and sensations to evoke surprise and amaze-

ment at the possibilities of change that the painting / poem describes. "Prelude for

Spring," also from this period, reflects Livesay's attempts to integrate the motion /

emotion paradigm of her early lyric verse in a social allegory about Fascism. The

poet describes the panicked movement of the fawn through the landscape to

recreate its fear and anxiety; but the poem's inconclusiveness suggests the poet

was as yet uncertain about the potential of affect to deal with social and political

problems. In later poems of the 1950s, such as "The Husband" and "Henry

Moore," Livesay takes the expressive power of movement within landscape for

granted as a powerful combatant of patriarchal structures and traditions. It was

Livesay's engagement with Carr's symbolist paintings, in particular, that inspired

her use of movement to relate an affective element of landscape capable of moti-

vating readers against social injustice.

VI: Conclusion

Livesay's Carr-like attitudes to landscape do not comprise a period in Li-

vesay's oeuvre, for the impact of Carr's paintings on Livesay's poetics was dura-

ble. Painterly attitudes persisted in Livesay's poetry of the fifties and became even

more forceful in the 1960s with a renewed interest in the documentary poem

sparked by the publication of her retrospective collection *The Documentaries* in

1968. In the "Village" section of her "Zambia" cycle (*CP* 306-14), for example,

the speaker (expressing a rather colonialist perspective) romanticizes the inhabi-

tants of the village as "too much of" the place: "they smell of grass, of leaves / of

the pitiless dust / they rise up with the rain / and die with it // Between the land

and themselves / they feel no difference" (307). Nature and culture are inextrica-
ble in Livesay's Zambian village, an interpretation reflecting her depictions of
landscape during the transitional period of the late 1930s and 1940s and later
poems, such as "Threnody: Easter, 1968 (for Martin Luther King)" (*Archive* 165)
and "The Pied Piper of Edmonton" (*CP* 332-6). Livesay reiterates this under-
standing of landscape in "Water Colours: Victoria" (*Archive* 177-9), written as
early as 1966, in which the speaker assures us that the history of the city is best
observed outside, not inside the "Parliament Buildings," which is the title of one
of the poem's sections:

> The best exhibit is outdoors:
>
> *sequoia*, a cedar of Lebanon
>
> . . . .
>
> she was witness of
>
> the killer whale harpooned upon the shore,
>
> Haida war cry
>
> medicine of prayers.
>
>
> Her branches point within
>
> where in an archive neatly tucked away
>
> John Jewitt's story. . . . (*Archive* 177-9)

The trope of landscape as archive and the convergence of nature and culture em-
bodied in the image of the tree were lasting elements in Livesay's oeuvre that
were, if not inspired, then certainly reinforced by the poet's interest in and reflec-
tion on Carr's paintings.

Livesay's experimentation with the affective powers of darkness in the late 1930s and 1940s and her interest in Carr's "sombre" and "brooding" landscapes (Livesay, "Rhythm of Nature") also had broad implications for her later poetry. In her post-1960 poems, the play of darkness on both literal and figurative landscapes clearly plays an affective role in promoting either racial equality or gender equality, especially in the poetry Livesay wrote following her travels to Africa. In her poem "The Second Language," published in the "To Speak with Tongues (1960-1964)" section of her *Collected Poems* (258-60), the speaker transforms language into a landscape between herself and her lover: a pair "who do not dare to speak" of their love because it is interracial at a time when mixed-race relations were taboo. Their "second language," consequently, is a sensual language of touch: these lovers "walk between words / as if they were trees / touching rough bark / exploring origins." As in Emily Carr's "Old Tree at Dusk," darkness amplifies the tactile elements of Livesay's poem, in which the "rough bark" of trees is also suggestive of the rough skin of a lover. When the lovers do "speak" to one another, darkness conceals their passion: in the "green shade" of this landscape of love, they are "shadow[ed]" by "a tree's name," and in their "black forest" of "soundless shadows, / the trees parade," hiding the "wanting mouth" and "longing arms" from public view. Through darkness, Livesay inscribes sensually the lovers' silence and "suffer[ing]" in the poem, which encourages the reader to empathize with the emotional injustice of racism.

In other poems of this period, darkness exposes—via the senses—an uneasy tension and a complicity between competing injustices of racism and sexism; her poem "The Touching," published in *The Unquiet Bed* (1967), for instance,

represents a strained relationship between sexual and racial injustice through landscape imagery. Darkness unearths emotions and sensations in the poem that shed light on women's troubled relationship with the racial Other and that suggest women's struggles for equality are as urgent as any other struggle for equality. Livesay, therefore, expanded the scope and role of darkness in her oeuvre; in the 1960s, curiously, that role related more directly to Carr's own use of darkness in her 1930s landscapes, in which darkness exposes gender inequality.

Livesay's exploration of movement and sensation during her transitional period also had a lasting impact on her poetics. That she forcefully embraced the movement motif in the 1950s, as we saw in her poems "The Three Emilys" and "On Looking into Henry Moore," reflects that decade's cultural interest in energy, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. Livesay's fascination with affect and movement, however, persisted in her post-1960 verse, in which the poet consistently calls upon the movement of landscape and its elements to protest capitalism, racism, and sexism. For example, the "Second Coming" (*CP* 291), published in 1964, focuses on the movement of a landscape element: the rowan tree, which undergoes a process of renewal in autumn and performs possibilities of personal revitalization in old age. Livesay alludes in her title to Yeats's famous poem "The Second Coming," an apocalyptic poem about the aftermath of the First World War. Her poem, however, envisions not apocalypse but genesis, as it inverts Yeats's verse both rhetorically and thematically. Where Yeats ends with a question ("And what rough beast. . . / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"), Livesay begins with two: "What unwithering / is this? / the gnarled tree un- / knotting itself?" Livesay enacts the "widening gyre" of Yeats's poem, a doubled vor-

tex, which is also reproduced visually in the poem by Livesay's lineation. The vortex represents movement, which the poet describes as an "unwithering" of the "gnarled tree un- / knotting itself": the "coming   be / coming" of the natural world exemplifies possibilities of activity and regeneration in old age. The tree image, much like the tree in Carr's *Old Tree at Dusk,* represents a rejection of common stereotypes of the elderly as "passive" (Sigelman and Rider 309) and sedentary. It was during her transitional period, however, with the example of Carr's paintings to guide her, that Livesay developed a way of mobilizing kinetic images of nature towards a political or social purpose.

Livesay's poem "Motif for a Mural" exhibits a trope that became popular in Canadian poetry in the 1940s: the body-as-landscape, which I will explore in the next chapter. This trope was more likely inspired by Livesay's poetic colleagues than by the 1940s Montreal artists whose paintings influenced the decade's poetic trope and aesthetic. Livesay, living on the West Coast, had little contact with Montreal painters and poets during this period; she worked closely with *Contemporary Verse* poets instead. Her location in B.C. may also help to account for her interest in Emily Carr's paintings of the province's landscape; the paintings inspired a regionalist aspect to Livesay's modernism that differentiates her poetry from the modernisms emerging in eastern Canada. Carr and her paintings also likely helped the poet develop a role for landscape in her own documentary poems that accommodated the personal and the social, the lyric and the political, the affective and the journalistic. Livesay's meeting with Carr and her interest in Carr's paintings inarguably continued to intrigue the poet and to inspire her expressive depictions of landscape throughout her career.

Chapter Two:

MONTREAL MODERNISMS, LITTLE MAGAZINES, AND

THE AGENCY OF VISUAL ART IN THE 1940S

I: Interartistic Sites:
The CAS, The Little Magazines, and the Discourse of Agency

When John Lyman organized a meeting of "a dozen artists" at his apartment on

Sherbrooke Street in 1939 and inaugurated the Contemporary Arts Society (CAS),

he was not likely aware of the web of interartistic affiliations he and his organiza-

tion would eventually spin. The purpose of the CAS, according to its constitution,

was to "give support to contemporary trends in art and to further the artistic inter-

ests of its members by any means at its disposal" ("Constitution"). Although he

and the inaugural CAS associates may have envisioned the inclusion of collectors

and possibly critics as part of their new society (Varley 12), they likely did not

anticipate the diversity and scope of participants and members the CAS would

eventually encompass.

The regular *salons* CAS members attended at Lyman's apartment, howev-

er, introduced the artists to a broad cast of characters: doctors, lawyers, musicians,

professors, and writers who became involved in CAS activities by participating in

public events, attending exhibitions, and writing reviews of their work. Among

the non-artist attendees at Lyman's *salons* were a number of poets and writers

who were married to CAS artists: F.R. Scott, the husband of painter and CAS

member Marian Scott; Patrick Anderson, who was married to the artist Peggy

Anderson (also known as Marguerite Doernbach);[74] and Margaret Day Surrey, the wife of the CAS's Treasurer, Philip Surrey. Patrick Anderson and Margaret Day Surrey, in fact, first met at one of Lyman's gatherings (Bentley and Gnarowski), and, together with F.R. Scott, Bruce Ruddick, and Neufville Shaw, these writers decided to start a little magazine in 1942 called *Preview* (1942-5).

The personal affiliations between CAS artists and *Preview* poets and editors, I argue, had a definitive impact on the creation of the little magazine, its content, and the aesthetics of the poetry it published. A comparison of *Preview* poems and paintings by Marian Scott and Philip Surrey reveals that these CAS artists and *Preview* poets experimented in common with the depiction of the human body as landscape and the abstraction of the human body through a new idiom known as "biomorphism,"[75] a term used to describe abstract modernist art that represents the natural world and its vital processes. By comparing *Preview* poems with CAS artist Paul-Émile Borduas's early forties gouaches, I will demonstrate that the little magazine's poets also experimented with the Surrealist form of abstraction known as automatism.[76]

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[74] Peggy Anderson was not an inaugural member of the CAS. According to a published "List of Artist Members," she joined the organization as early as 1942.

[75] The term was first introduced to the art world by Geoffrey Grigson in the English magazine *Axis* in 1935, and it was intended to replace Wilhelm Worringer's term "organic," which was problematically opposed to abstraction (Botar 51, 56). In his 1998 dissertation on biomorphic art, Oliver Árpád István Botar calls biomorphism "a still little-understood phenomena [*sic*] to be found in the overfished waters of the early- to mid-20th century Modernism" (5). There has been a considerable resurgence of critical interest in the idiom since the 1990s. In fact, the 2008 summer exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada entitled "The 1930s: The Making of the 'New Man'" included an entire section devoted to biomorphic art entitled "Genesis" (see Clair, *1930s* 120-45).

[76] The artistic conversation between CAS and *Preview* and *Northern Review* members is not limited to the poets and the three artists mentioned here. Given the poets' personal relationships with these artists and / or evidence of the poets' admiration of their artwork, which I will disclose in this chapter, these artists were a logical starting point. Regrettably, due to the sheer paucity of information about Peggy Anderson—her involvement with the CAS, her work with *Preview*, and her own artwork—I will only touch upon her role with both groups.

A simultaneous comparison of Scott's, Surrey's, and Borduas's paintings with poems published in *Preview'*s so-called "rival" publication, *First Statement* (1942-5), by contrast, reveals that—with the exception of poems by members and poets affiliated with *Preview*—the poetry published in *First Statement* rarely demonstrates a similar affinity to the kinds of abstraction seen in CAS artworks. The contrast between periodicals will serve to highlight the fact that an increased exposure of *First Statement* poets to CAS visual art and artists following the amalgamation with *Preview* in 1945 altered their modernist vision in painterly terms. Following 1945, *First Statement* poets, such as Irving Layton, Louis Dudek, and Raymond Souster, began to write poems that more closely resemble the experiments with body as landscape, biomorphic modernism, and Surrealism in CAS paintings and *Preview* poems. These modernist experiments, not unique to Canadian art or poetry, were co-opted and refocused by CAS artists and forties poets towards the same purpose: to reintroduce the human being into a Canadian visual and literary culture, which, many perceived, had become dehumanized; and to make their paintings and poems, through their rehumanization, into what Charles Altieri calls "models of agency" for their viewers, readers, and themselves (4), which would enable them to combat the many debilitating economic, political, and social forces of their historical situation.

Altieri argues that modernist American poets sought to recreate "alternative models of agency. . . in the countercultural gestures elaborated by the visual arts" (4). The artists believed that abstract art was capable of "exemplifying certain performative dimensions of spirit" (7) that artists and audiences could, as mentioned in my introduction, "project into extraartistic contexts" (Altieri 7). A

comparable affiliation between modernist poets and painters developed in 1940s

Montreal; in contrast, it was not the case that Montreal's poets were necessarily

looking to *recreate* "alternative models of agency" they saw in the paintings (Al-

tieri 7), or that the city's painters were attempting to mimic certain powers of ex-

pression they saw in the poetry. The proximity of *Preview* poets to CAS artists

was unlike Altieri's example of the American poets who looked to European art-

ists for their inspiration. The nearness of poets and painters in Montreal suggests

that the impetus to create literary or visual art motivating and empowering its au-

dience, or acting as examples for this audience to emulate in the real world, likely

arose organically between them as a result of mutual discussion and creative sti-

mulation.[77]

Despite recent critical emphasis on the collaborative and social nature of

Canadian modernism and Montreal's little magazines (Irvine, *Editing*; Norris),

literary criticism of the forties and *Preview, First Statement*, and *Northern Review*

paradoxically suffers from what Sean Latham and Robert Scholes describe as the

narrowly specialized studies of periodicals. They explain that

> [w]hile individual scholars or students might be able to mine these
>
> sources for a narrow range of materials relating to their fields, they are
>
> rarely in a position to say much about the periodical as a whole. As a con-
>
> sequence, we have often been too quick to see magazines merely as con-

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[77] *Preview* editor and poet Bruce Ruddick has noted that "[a]s a matter of fact the most illuminat-ing social life I ever had came because *Preview* introduced me. . . to the Painters [*sic*] whom I had never met, and we all met on St. Famille Street" (Bentley and Gnarowski). Ruddick is referring to the CAS painters, and his comments suggest that the conversations between *Preview* and the CAS were an important, "illuminating" aspect of his social and artistic life.

tainers of discrete bits of information rather than autonomous objects of

study. (517- 8)

With few exceptions,[78] critics have treated Montreal's little magazines of the

1940s, if not as the place to examine some interesting literary squabbles, then as

receptacles of a handful of editorials and a number of early poems by now famous

Canadian poets. We still know relatively little about the impact the collaborative

nature of these periodicals had on their content; nor do we know much about the

various styles, structures, themes, and subject matters the poems and prose grap-

ple with and display. Contributions by lesser-known or "minor" poets, moreover,

represent a significant absence from critical discussions of these little magazines.

"The Rise of Periodical Studies" that Latham and Scholes cite presents an

opportunity to discover these unknown aspects of not only *Preview*, but also its

"rival" magazine *First Statement* (1942-5) and the result of their merger, *Northern*

Review (1945-56). The renewed interest in periodical studies "reveals these ob-

jects to us anew," according to Latham and Scholes, "so that we have begun to see

them not as resources to be disaggregated into their individual components but as

texts requiring new methodologies and new types of collaborative investigation"

(518). This new critical perspective, which sees periodicals as both literary docu-

ments and "cultural objects" (Latham and Scholes 19), makes one more sensitive

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[78] Irvine's discussion of *Preview* and *First Statement* in *Editing Modernity* is somewhat exception-
al, for the author briefly examines the production values and processes of both periodicals; howev-
er, Irvine's consideration of each periodical is still based on a single poet's work—P.K. Page's
poems in *Preview* and Miriam Waddington's poems in *First Statement.* Although Trehearne's
Montreal Forties (1999) does consider a number of poems published in *First Statement* and in
Preview, he only analyzes poems by the four poets that structure his book—P.K. Page, A.M.
Klein, Irving Layton, and Louis Dudek—and by the little magazines' main editors, John Suther-
land and Patrick Anderson. *First Statement*, however, had an impressive fifty-seven contributors
during its run, and *Preview* had approximately twenty in addition to Page and Anderson (Fisher 9).
Trehearne's study considers and describes a period style; it does not attempt to characterize the
content of or contributions to the little magazines.

to the ephemeral or non-literary elements of a little magazine, such as advertise-

ments, inserts, dust jackets, and artwork.

When *Preview, First Statement,* and *Northern Review* are approached and

compared in this way, many overlooked elements and distinguishing qualities be-

come evident. A consideration of the extra-poetic content of the three Montreal

magazines reveals that in both *Preview* and *Northern Review,* conversations about

the visual arts are ubiquitous; by contrast, *First Statement* poets did not engage

with issues or discussions about the visual arts to nearly the same degree as the

poets of *Preview*. In addition to a few ekphrastic poems and short stories,[79] *Pre-*

view includes editorials about the state of painting in Canada, an interview with

contemporary Montreal painters, and even a drawing by Patrick Anderson.[80] *First*

Statement, meanwhile, published a few poems that allude to international artists

and visual art (such as the ekphrastic poem, "Portrait," about Renoir's painting

The Lady, by Miriam Waddington and the reference to "Whistler's twilight" in

Paul Halley's "Hamlet Reads Time"), and an article by John Sutherland reflecting

on the relationship between landscape painting and poetry ("Mr. Coulter"): an en-

gagement with the visual arts, however, ends there. When *Preview* and *First*

Statement amalgamated in 1945 to form *Northern Review,* the new little magazine

included reproductions of works by Canadian artists, most of them members of

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[79] For example, see Patrick Anderson's poem "Wild Duck" in the January 1943 issue of *Preview* (1) and his short story "Danny—Nova Scotia" in the October 1943 issue (1-7); and Neufville Shaw's poem "Factory Posters," in the February 1943 issue (n. pag.).

[80] See the last page of *Preview* 2, April 1942. The drawing is attributed to "P.A.," which are also Peggy Anderson's initials; however, Anderson's comments in a letter sent to a friend in the 1970s suggest that he may be the artist of the drawing: "I remember looking for amethysts under Cape Blomidon and living in a kind of concrete igloo near a place called Chipman's Wharf on the Bay of Fundy. We were very poor and lived largely on salted Herring [sic] and blackberries. (There's a chapter on this in my book *The Character Ball* and also a sketch I rather think of reviving of my host at the seashore which first appeared in *Preview…*)" (Letter to Lorraine).

the CAS, from its very first issue. Many of these reproductions are accompanied by a brief article about the artists and their work written either by a fellow CAS member, an art critic, or a poet. For example, the July-August 1948 issue features the work of Betty Sutherland, with an accompanying article about her by fellow CAS member Louis Muhlstock. Other artists featured in the little magazine include Muhlstock himself, Goodridge Roberts, John Lyman, Gordon Webber, Jacques de Tonnancour, Allan Harrison, and Ghitta Caiserman, with articles written by Robert Ayre, Patrick Anderson, Neufville Shaw, Arthur Lismer, Eldon Grier, Paul Dumas, respectively (the article that accompanies Caiserman's work is anonymous). In-depth attention to content related to the visual arts in each periodical reveals that *Preview*'s editors and *Northern Review*'s early editors and poets displayed an interest in the CAS and its activities that was not shared by *First Statement*'s poets and editors.

Although the abundance of visual art-related material in *Northern Review* more closely resembles the pages of *Preview* than those of *First Statement*, it was ironically John Sutherland's idea to include an "Art Section" in the periodical. In fact, the section was originally planned for an issue of *First Statement*, which never appeared.[81] It is unclear what prompted his idea for the section: perhaps he was hoping to match the visual arts content and discussion he saw in *Preview*; perhaps his growing acquaintance with *Preview* members introduced him to Canadian artists before the inauguration of *Northern Review*. The impetus behind the idea might never be known. From looking at and reading its pages, however, it is evident that *First Statement*, unlike *Preview* and *Northern Review*, rarely paid

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[81] See page 18, footnote 10.

official attention or homage to Canadian visual arts or artists throughout its run. The varying treatment of the visual arts in these little magazines, moreover, reflects the socialized, interartistic networks of each magazine's modernism. A study of these documents and networks, I argue, can help us better understand the aesthetics, subject matters, and styles of the poems included in each publication.

The significant amount and variety of art-related material included in *Preview* reflects the role visual artists played in the production and editing of the little magazine and the editors' involvement in CAS activities. At least two CAS artists, Peggy Anderson and Philip Surrey, were also members of the little magazine's editorial board. Peggy Anderson played a significant role in the creation and distribution of the little magazine as its business manager and typist (Irvine 135).[82] Hard evidence of her contributions to *Preview* beyond the clerical, however, is elusive. Nevertheless, it is clear that she was not entirely excluded from *Preview*'s conversations about modernist poetry and literature. In fact, she read much of the poetry written by *Preview* poets. In an undated letter Anderson sent to P.K. Page following the release of *Preview*'s July 1942 issue, she expresses her nervous anticipation of the newest number:

> We haven't got the PREVIEW yet and are hoping it didn't get lost in the
>
> mail and will arrive tonight. We are very excited to see it. . . . Patrick

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[82] In *Search Me*, Anderson's autobiography, he refers to Peggy Anderson as the "business manager" of *Preview* (149), a title she shared with Neufville Shaw's wife, Kit Shaw. Since Peggy Anderson never wrote poetry for the magazine, her mark on the periodical is visible elsewhere. *Preview*'s Marxist elements may be at least partially attributed to Peggy Anderson, an active member of the Labour Progressive Party who had used their offices to mimeograph *Preview* (Anderson, *Search Me* 149; Irvine 134-5). In fact, Patrick Anderson admitted that his Marxism at the time was "very much skin deep," adding that it "was perhaps partly induced in me by the fact that my then wife… became very ideologically left-wing for a while and I was supposed to tag along" ("A Conversation" 67).

> hasn't written much more than usual because he thought he had been rush-
>
> ing too much and now he is taking more time - he is just working on one
>
> about Russia now about the Russian dead lying in the fields 'in strict sim-
>
> plicity and utter frankness'. (Letter to P.K. Page [1])

Peggy Anderson's letter discloses her enthusiasm for *Preview* and her discussions

about her husband's poetry with both him and Page. Her subsequent letter to Page

communicates her satisfaction with the issue's poetry: "We got both papers—I

think it a very good issue—I liked your poems very much especially the one about

the stenographers" (Letter to P.K. Page [2]). This letter to Page reveals that Peggy

Anderson was reading *Preview* and discussing its contents with *Preview* poets and

editors.

Philip Surrey's contributions to *Preview* are little-known and un-

documented. Recalling her first meeting with *Preview*'s editorial board, however,

P.K. Page notes that Surrey was in attendance.[83] He was included in the *Preview*

group during the magazine's early run and attended at least one of the little maga-

zine's first meetings. A letter from Patrick Anderson to Margaret Surrey in 1942

also reveals that Philip Surrey may have played a role in the selection of poetry:

> I heard from Neufville. He was, apparently, tremendously taken with my
>
> poem 'Night Out', which you 'have not read' but which Philip 'liked'. So
>
> were Pat and Bruce. It has, like some others of mine in a small way, the
>
> beginnings of a quality that has been curiously absent in recent English

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[83] As Page recalls, "Patrick said he had started a magazine called *Preview*. . . He wondered if I'd like to come to a meeting and bring some poetry. There was Frank Scott and Bruce Ruddick and Margaret Surrey and Philip, her husband, a good painter. And Neufville Shaw and myself" (Djwa, "P.K. Page: Biographical" 41).

poets. . . . Are you and Frank and Philip going to let me drown when I have these potentialities? (Letter to Margaret).

"Night Out" was published in the July 1942 issue of *Preview* (n. pag.). No critic has recognized that Philip Surrey was involved in *Preview*'s editorial decisions.

Of the three CAS members married to *Preview* members, it is surprising that Marian Scott seems to have had the least involvement with the literary publication. The first and many subsequent *Preview* meetings were held at the Scott home at 451 Clarke Avenue in Westmount. Her early forties paintings also speak to the poetry in *Preview* to a degree that, surprisingly, F.R. Scott's own work within the periodical does not consistently achieve. Perhaps this is because, as Patrick Anderson has commented, F.R. Scott—born in 1899, at least a decade before the rest of the *Preview* group—acted as a "mentor" to the little magazine ("Introduction" iii), and his "relationship to the group was slightly avuncular" ("A Conversation" 54). Although Marian Scott, born in 1906, was still older than many *Preview* poets and editors, she was much closer in age to them than her husband (only three years separated her and Margaret Day Surrey, for example). Marian Scott's younger age might have made her more attuned to the issues and concerns that interested the *Preview* generation: indeed, she explored themes, stylistic techniques, and forms in her paintings bearing striking similarities with those found in *Preview*'s poetry.

Although his wife was not directly involved with the *Preview* group, F. R. Scott took an active interest in the CAS. Christopher Varley remarks that

In the early years, the CAS placed much emphasis on public education and many members, as well as invited non-members gave lectures at their

meetings. . . A transcript also exists of one half of a debate between Frank Scott and Philip Surrey, both of whom were members of the society, in which Surrey played the devil's advocate and suggested that abstract art fell short of representational painting because its meaning was never specific enough, for 'the more completely the picture is divorced from the objective world the greater the number of possible associations and interpretations'. (12)[84]

Varley suggests F.R. Scott was a member of the CAS, a fact that cannot be otherwise confirmed since available membership lists only include "Artist Members." His membership in the society is, nevertheless, likely: a CAS constitutional by-law indicates, "[m]embership shall consist of a class of artist members and such other class or classes as may be hereafter enacted" ("Constitution" 38). In an interview with Charles Hill, Philip Surrey confirms that the CAS consisted of "lay members and artist members" and corroborates Varley's narrative about the debate between himself and Scott.[85] F.R. Scott, whose wife was President of the CAS membership committee, may have been granted membership under a different class. Regardless of his status within the group, F.R. Scott's debate with Philip Surrey attests to his active involvement with CAS projects.

Other *Preview* editors shared F.R. Scott's interest in local visual arts and involvement with the CAS. Patrick Anderson was also actively involved with CAS exhibitions. In fact, he wrote a brief note on "The Graphic Arts" for the ex-

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[84] According to Varley, the transcript is located in the Archives of the Art History Department, University of Montreal. The University, however, no longer has a record of this document in either the Art History Department archives or the University Library archives.

[85] Surrey explains that the CAS was created "to bring artists and public together. . . . And we used to meet and there were talks and debates. I remember I debated something or other with Frank Scott, but I can't remember what it was about now" (Interview).

hibition catalogue of the CAS's December 1941 show, "Drawings, Prints, Sculpture" (n. pag.).[86] Further evidence of *Preview*'s engagement with Canadian visual art, and with the CAS specifically, can be found in its Red Army issue of February 1942. Here, Patrick Anderson interviewed three CAS artists—Philip Surrey, Harry Mayerovitch, and Eldon Grier (who was also a minor poet, to be published by Louis Dudek in the mid 1950s)—to learn about painters' contributions to the war effort.[87]

The relative absence of art-related material in *First Statement* reflects the group's scant involvement in CAS activities. There is little evidence that the editors attended CAS shows or participated in CAS events during *First Statement's* run. Although *First Statement* also included a painter and eventual CAS member on its editorial board—Betty Sutherland, John Sutherland's sister who married Irving Layton in 1946—there is no evidence that she was affiliated with the CAS until 1946, when she exhibited in the organization's Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings (Varley 42). Betty Sutherland was, therefore, not likely a part of the CAS's larger conversations about painting and visual art in Canada, nor was she exhibiting with them while she worked on *First Statement*. Given that the artist, editors, and poets of the little magazine do not appear to have been interested in, or even aware of, the CAS, it is not surprising that the editorials, essays, and poems in the little magazine do not demonstrate a close affinity to CAS concerns or the abstract aesthetic of its artists.

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[86] Thanks to Dean Irvine for bringing this document to my attention.

[87] In "Painters," published in the February 1943 issue of *Preview,* Anderson calls Surrey "a painter with a reputation for thinking collectively and working in isolation," and he goes on to mention the war posters Surrey had done a few years earlier and his recent project with "A.Y. Jackson in Toronto, for silk-screened pictures to be hung in barracks" (n. pag.).

Preview's concerns about Canadian painting, meanwhile, ran parallel to those of the CAS, who were generally critical of the Group of Seven and their "rugged out-of-doors nationalism" (Reid 202). Neufville Shaw's article "Wasteland" in *Preview*'s October 1942 issue (9-10) "comment[s]" sharply on the absence of the human in Canadian painting, which Shaw claims has generally consisted of "cold pictures of the Laurentians, still lives, street scenes without people" (9). What these paintings lack, according to Shaw, is "love of the individual" (9). Shaw's concern over the lack of figuration in Canadian painting mirrors Livesay's critique in her review of Emily Carr's 1938 exhibition of the absence of people in Carr's landscapes.[88] Shaw expresses "hope that the show which is to be put on by the CONTEMPORARY ARTS SOCIETY, November 6 to November 30, at the Art Association—will provide evidence that some of our painters are aware of [the absence of the individual] and, possibly, even have solved it," and notes that "[t]he same problem which is facing the painter is facing the writer" (10). The article serves a dual purpose: it draws a firm connection between poetry and painting in Canada, highlighting their shared artistic dilemma—the need to bring the human back to the centre of visual and literary art—while publicizing the CAS's Fall show. It also points to the poets' attention to the human being and consideration of the visual arts as a possible model for combining or uniting aesthetic interest with political or social concern in art.

Social welfare and the issue of human agency were central to *Preview*'s editors, who worked to feature experimentally liberating verse in their publica-

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[88] See discussion on pages 87-8. Both Shaw's and Livesay's comments reveal a general interest on the part of leftist artists and poets of this period in understanding the relationship between the significance of the landscape genre in Canadian culture and socialist concerns for humanity.

tion. According to David Held, human agency involves the individual's ability to "exert power by reasoning and making choices" (153). Agency is not, Roland Bleiker asserts, "something that exists in an a priori manner. . . ," for "its nature and its function are, at least in part, determined by how we think about human action and its potential to shape political and social practices" (16). The poets understood well that agency was not an *a priori* aspect of the human being, and they perceived human agency as threatened by the rise of Fascism and Nazism during the Second World War. Patrick Anderson, F.R. Scott, Margaret Day Surrey, Bruce Ruddick, and Neufville Shaw published a "Statement" in the little magazine's inaugural issue revealing this perception: "All anti-fascists, we feel that the existence of a war between democratic culture and the paralysing forces of dictatorship only intensifies the writer's obligation to work. Now, more than ever, creative and experimental writing must be kept alive and there must be no retreat from the intellectual frontier. . ." (March 1942: n. pag.).[89] These words attest to the *Preview* group's belief that experimentation with visual abstraction and the exploration of new forms of writing could incite change and promote human agency (for both its writers and readers) capable of combating the "paralysing" forces of their socio-historical moment.

    First Statement editors and poets were also concerned about human agency, of course, but contributors—with the exception of *Preview* poets who also published in the little magazine—rarely approached the issue through the kinds of abstraction seen in *Preview* and Scott and Surrey's paintings. As a little magazine,

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[89] Since *Preview* did not originally include numbers for its issues, parenthetical references to poems or articles in the little magazine will include the date of the issue (if not previously mentioned) and the page number(s) of the item cited.

First Statement was much more eclectic than *Preview*,[90] a quality that makes it difficult and inaccurate to associate the magazine with a particular modernist aesthetic. Critics have, nevertheless, identified at least two significant poetic modes published in *First Statement*: realism, at times expressed as social realism (Norris; Francis, "A Dramatic Story"), and "New Apocalypse" (Wiens; Trehearne, *Montreal*). Both of these modes enabled the poets to engage with issues of agency but were resistant to the abstract elements that characterize *Preview* poetry and many CAS paintings.

Generally speaking, *First Statement*'s editors and poets expressed and presented a clear interest in realism, particularly social realism, as opposed to abstraction. In an "Editorial," published in *First Statement*'s March 1944 issue (2.5: 1),[91] the editors argued that

> Canadian literature is 'romantic', if one can use the word to indicate its lack of connection with life. Presumably, therefore, the work of editors in Canada will be based on the assumption that a fundamental realism is lacking in Canadian writing. They will endeavor to encourage those writers who show themselves capable of a critical awareness of the individual and society. (1)

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[90] In *First Statement*'s third issue, the editors made explicit in an "Editorial" their "desire to exhibit, without discriminating against any, the various modes and types of writing as we find them in Canada" (1.3 [September 1942]: 1). As a result, the aims of *First Statement* are less clear and the content less coherent throughout its run than those of *Preview*. Neil Fisher also suggests that "the variety in tone and material" in the little magazine reflects its high number of contributors (9): "*First Statement* opened its pages to fifty-seven contributors. . . ," whereas Preview was dominated by Anderson, Page, Scott, Shaw, and Ruddick and the "[e]ighteen others" who "made occasional appearances" (9).

[91] *First Statement* did not originally date its earliest issues; the editors, however, did include volume numbers and issue numbers on the masthead. Parenthetical references to poems and articles in *First Statement*, therefore, will include the volume number and the issue number, followed by the date or suspected date (as per Fisher) of the issue (if not previously mentioned), and the page number(s) of the item cited.

Responding to this stated intention to restore "realism" to Canadian writing, a

number of *First Statement* poems, especially those by Miriam Waddington, Ray-

mond Souster, and Irving Layton, display qualities of social realism—a poetic

mode that involves "a primarily aesthetic orientation, in which the description of a

particular kind of urban scene (or, less commonly, action) is arranged around an

accumulation of visual details in an attempt to evoke class-poignancy in the read-

er" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 289).[92] Social realism is fundamentally engaged with

the issue of human agency: generally, the mode assumes "that the reader does not

usually, but badly needs to, see. . ." a social scene or setting "if he or she is to take

the necessary ameliorative social decisions" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 289). As its

namesake suggests, social realism's "aesthetic orientation" is towards realism,

towards the end of "predominant referentiality" on the continuum of abstraction.

Robert Atkins, in fact, suggests that social realism has a "bias. . . against AB-

STRACTION and toward the didactic illustration of political subjects. . ." (173).

Such a bias does not preclude abstract elements from *First Statement*'s social real-

ist poems: as we shall see, however, these realist poems of the little magazine of-

ten display an uneasiness with abstraction and rarely exhibit the abstract qualities

of *Preview*'s poems and Surrey's and Scott's paintings.

Recently, Erwin Wiens and Trehearne have identified at least one other

poetic mode that interested a number of *First Statement* poets: the poetry of the

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[92] While Trehearne has also shown that the social realism of *First Statement* poetics has been over-
stated (*Montreal*), the mode is nevertheless present in numerous poems published in the periodical,
including, as Trehearne has shown, poems by Dudek (*Montreal* 290). Trehearne argues that "so-
cial realism is not of much interest to Dudek in the *First Statement* period" (290). Nevertheless, he
notes that Dudek's "On a Bridge at Pt. St. Charles," published in the May 1943 issue of *First
Statement,* and "The Mountains," in the little magazine's March 1944 issue, both display contexts
and qualities related to the social realist mode.

"New Apocalypse." As both Wiens and Trehearne note, Irving Layton first expressed his interest in Apocalyptic poetry in his article "Politics and Poetry," published in the August 1943 issue of *First Statement* (2.1: 17-21). Trehearne has even identified some of the ideas and techniques of the school in at least one other *First Statement* poem: Paul Halley's "Apocalypse," published in a subsequent issue (2.3 [October 1943]: 9).[93] Essentially, the poets of the "New Apocalypse" sought a more realistic poetics than Surrealism, one that asserted the "conscious control" of the human being (Fraser 3).[94] This aim for "conscious control" aligns *First Statement*'s New Apocalypse poetry with *Preview* poets' and CAS artists' emphasis on human agency; the aspiration simultaneously distinguishes *First Statement* poems from *Preview* poets' and *CAS* artists' Surrealist-automatist works with an orientation towards a primarily subjectivist automatist abstraction. In *First Statement*, a number of poems by Layton, Halley, Souster, and others strive for New Apocalyptic "wholeness"—a fusion of objectivist and subjectivist perspectives. These poems display an interest in modeling human agency; they also portray, however, a didacticism and "fundamental realism" that sets them apart from *Preview* and CAS experiments with abstraction.

Preview and *First Statement*'s amalgamation in 1945 to form *Northern Review*, however, exposed *First Statement*'s editors and poets to the work of CAS artists. Even if Dudek, Souster, and Layton, among other *First Statement* poets,

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[93] "New Apocalypse" poetry originated with the English poets Henry Treece, G.S. Fraser, J.F. Hendry, Nicholas Moore, and Norman McCaig. According to John Goodby, the manifesto "Apocalypse, or, The Whole Man" described their poetry as "a rejection of mechanistic thought, including the 'ethereal [abstract] rationalism' of thirties poetry, Marxism's claim that human mastery of nature would eliminate myth and. . . the 'deliberate irrationalism' of Surrealism" (860).

[94] G.S. Fraser writes in his essay "Apocalypse in Poetry," published in Hendry and Treece's anthology *The White Horseman*: "Apocalypticism, then, unlike Surrealism, insists on the reality of the conscious mind, as an independent, formative principle" (5).

never attended a CAS event or exhibition in the 1940s, they most certainly saw the paintings and drawings by its artists that were published in *Northern Review.* This exposure to Canadian modernist visual arts and artists had an increasing impact on the poetry of these *First Statement* poets: they began, although slowly, to write poems that more closely resemble the experiments with body as landscape, biomorphism, and Surrealism in CAS paintings and *Preview* poems. In fact, I will demonstrate that, up until John Sutherland published his review of Robert Finch's *Poems* in the August-September 1947 issue, *Northern Review* included a number of poems displaying these abstract aesthetics. The presence of these painterly poems prior to the departure of *Preview*'s faction from *Northern Review*'s editorial board suggests that the *Preview* group held quite a bit of editorial sway in the magazine's early issues; the poems also reflect, as Trehearne discusses in *The Montreal Forties*, a conflict between Sutherland's criticism and editorial practice—he appears to have been considerably more hospitable to *Preview*-style poetics in the early issues of *Northern Review* than he was as the editor of *First Statement*. Although Sutherland was managing editor of *Northern Review*, the content of the magazine's early issues bears striking similarities to the literary and artistic matter in *Preview.*

The articles about CAS art in *Northern Review* reiterate the concerns about Canadian painting originally expressed in *Preview*. In an article about the artist Goodridge Roberts published in the inaugural issue of *Northern Review*, for example, Patrick Anderson revisits the issue of the absence of the human being in Canadian art that Shaw expressed in "Wasteland." Although Anderson praises Roberts's work for his "innocent" vision that is "touched by the coldness and soli-

tude of the Laurentians, the harshness and abstract power of the bodies of child-

ren"—a pure vision and power that sets him apart from the Group of Seven, who,

according to Anderson, had an "ulterior motive"—Anderson is also critical of

Roberts's perspective, which at times results in "a touch of boredom in those

green landscapes and violet rivers and blue skies which have so rarely a trace of

habitation. Not even a telegraph pole" (23). Roberts's landscapes had not solved

the problem of landscape painting, but his paintings were not representative of the

work of CAS artists either.

The anonymous author of an article on Ghitta Caiserman makes clear the

fact that there were CAS modernist painters primarily interested not in the depic-

tion of landscape but in the depiction of the human being and humanity. "The ten-

sions she creates," he argues of Caiserman, "are human tensions, the 'emotive

fragment' of the abstractionist is the human emotion of the artist and her subject"

(17). The author, whose stance is rather similar to that of Neufville Shaw in his

Preview article "Wasteland," argues that "[w]hile the bulk of Canadian painting

has devoted itself to nature, the time has come to shift the emphasis from land-

scape to people" (17). Both the poets and editors of *Preview* and *Northern Review*

promoted a poetic and visual culture that included the human being and empha-

sized his or her agency in the modern world; the greatest potential for such em-

phasis, they believed, was through the abstraction of the human body.

II: Reading "a lung-born land":
Picturing the Body as Landscape in *Preview* and *Northern Review*

In the 1940s, CAS artists, *Preview* poets, and a number of *Northern Review* poets shared in an effort to reintroduce the human body (even in its sometimes fragmented state) into a Canadian visual and literary culture that had, both artists and poets perceived, left it out of the picture for far too long. The image of the body as landscape, and its affiliated image the landscape as body, presented a solution to this absence of the human because the images directly confront the contemporary dominance of landscape as a trope for Canadian identity by integrating or conflating the human body with its environment.[95] The poets and artists achieved this body-environment integration primarily through abstraction of the human body: bodies reduced to shadows or silhouettes that blend and merge with their surroundings; bodies that have internalized their world, taking on its shapes and forms; landscapes with human body parts or qualities. The paintings and poems incorporate this imagery to address the problem of human agency as it relates to environment—to consider the inhibiting and enabling impact that the urban or natural environment can have on the human being, whose subjectivity, independence, and individuality, were continually threatened by the rise of totalitarian governments abroad, as well as intrusive government policies and imbalanced

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[95] The body-as-landscape imagery in *Preview* relates to the unity of body and landscape in Klein's "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." Klein's poem was published with the title "Portrait of the Poet as a Nobody" in *First Statement*'s June-July 1945 issue (3-8): as an editor of *Preview*, however, he was likely familiar with the paintings by CAS artists, such as Marian Scott and Philip Surrey. For this reason, and because Liisa Stephenson has already offered a significant analysis of the poem in her essay about the interartistic genre known as the "portrait as landscape," I will not be discussing "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape." Instead, I will explore variant, less-known treatments of the body as landscape in Montreal forties poetry that will offer a valuable context for the significance of Klein's poem, which was written sometime between 1944 and 1945.

rights and freedoms in Canada during the 1940s.[96]

Although it had been over a decade since the Group of Seven reigned in Canadian art circles—and numerous Canadian painters had since moved away from depicting isolated, empty landscapes—many Canadians still believed that landscape painting defined Canadian visual art. In fact, as late as 1948, Hugh Kenner published an article called "The Case of the Missing Face," in which he suggested that the Canadian face in both highbrow and popular culture was lacunal. Its absence, he argued, was the corollary of an ascendancy of landscape in Canadian culture. According to Kenner, this ascendancy of landscape was firmly established by the Group of Seven paintings in which "Nobody ever appeared . . . no human form except occasionally a tiny portaging figure hidden by his monstrous canoe" (206).

It was not the faceless quality of Canadian culture that concerned CAS artists and *Preview* and *Northern Review* poets; rather, it was its dehumanized quality that concerned them. Indeed, the poets were as eager as CAS artists to distance their work from Canada's stark and "lonely" landscapes, a fixture of the country's poetic "Golden Age" that many continued to associate with contempo-

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[20] Although women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1918, many minority groups, such as Asian Canadians and Native Canadians, still did not have this right in the 1940s (Butling, *Writing* 16). Quebec residents, in particular, suffered from intrusive policies and imbalanced rights throughout the 1940s. In 1937, for example Quebec's Premier, Maurice Duplessis, passed An Act to Protect the Province against Communist Propaganda, known as the "padlock law." The act "made it illegal to print or publish any newspaper, periodical, pamphlet, circular, or document propagating communism or bolshevism and to accommodate any organization propagating these views" (Clément 38). The Act, however, did not define Bolshevism or Communism, which, Dominique Clément notes, made it easy for Duplessis to abuse: "he used his powers under the act against the CCF and trade unions, and even closed down Jewish and Ukrainian community centres" (38). With the help of F.R. Scott, who acted as a lawyer for the famous *Switzman* v. *Elbling* case (see Djwa, *Politics* 297-303), the law was officially struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1957.

rary Canadian poetry.[97] For example, in January 1943, *First Statement* published

an editorial regarding—what the editors perceived to be—slighting comments

about the state of Canadian poetry made by author John Coulter on the C.B.C.

Coulter remarked that the "younger" Canadian poets, including Earle Birney,

Anne Marriott, and A.J.M. Smith, were "hard at it, rigorously striving to achieve

an exact verbal reflection—of what? Of the Canadian countryside. . . Canadian

poets are almost exclusively concerned with catching up on the Canadian pain-

ters—with doing in terms of words and verbal rhythm and pattern what the Group

of Seven did superbly in terms of oil paint" (qtd. in "Mr. Coulter" 7). *First

Statement'*s editors picked up on the inaccuracy of Coulter's comments and, using

the example of poets who published in *Preview* and, eventually, *Northern Review*,

such as A.J.M. Smith and Anne Marriott, demonstrated that "the direction that

Canadian poetry is taking is not the one that Mr. Coulter so disparages" (8). Con-

trary to Coulter's claims, the direction these poets were headed in was one that,

like the CAS painters, moved away from the empty landscapes associated with the

Group of Seven and towards a consideration of the human being's relationship to

landscape—whether urban or rural.

Although many CAS paintings do little to illuminate Kenner's lacunal Ca-

nadian face, they generally contradict his claim that "[o]ur artists are still out on

the Loon Lake portage confronting the rocks and the black bears" (206). Land-

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[97] In December of 1943, Neufville Shaw published a review of A.J.M. Smith's *The Book of Cana-dian Poetry* in *Preview*'s December 1943 issue called "The Maple Leaf is Dying" (1-3). In it, Shaw belittles the poets of Canada's "Golden Age" published in Smith's book because of their "surrender to empty landscape" (2). The "curse" of these poets, like the painters of the 1920s and 1930s, was that they did not focus on the human being (2); it is a "curse," according to Shaw, "which still persists in our painting, but happily one which the next generation of writers was able to overcome" (2).

scape in Scott's and Surrey's paintings is no longer the northern wilderness but the cityscape of one of Canada's largest metropolises, Montreal; and whereas landscape in Group of Seven paintings *replaced* not only the human face but also the human body, Scott and Surrey's CAS paintings reintroduce the symbiosis of the human body and its environment through their frequent fusion of shadow and landscape. Anonymity and ambiguity prevail in these artworks because they model the avenues of agency available to any city-dweller, or they represent crises of agency that urban residents may confront. For example, Surrey's painting *Night* (Fig. 13), originally called *The Alley* ("Canadian"*)*, posits the alley-way as the locus of a confrontation between two human shadows.

Fig. 13. Philip Surrey, *Night,* 1942, oil on canvas. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Montreal (image from Musée des beaux-arts de Montreal)

The threateningly narrow site of this confrontation seems conducive to their in-

evitable encounter and restricts their ability to escape or avoid one another. Two

fences also surround the alley: the one on the left features sharp spikes, which

reinforce its confining character. The trees curve to form a domed enclosure

above the alley, denying these figures even the possibility of a vertical line of

flight. Meanwhile, the painting's multiple windows—on the vaguely ecclesiastical

structure to the left, on the building in the painting's background, and on the en-

closed residence to the right—imply that someone may be watching these sha-

dows from above.

The space of the alley is also a metaphor for the two human figures in the

painting, and it is ironically connotative of their ability to appropriate this space.

Peter Donahue asserts that "[a]lleys offer all the namelessness and de-location of

self that a person can wish to find in a city. Something about them defies defini-

tion. . ." (76). In *Night*, the alley's namelessness and clandestine qualities are re-

capitulated in the human shadows. Certainly, these qualities threaten to reduce the

human being to nothingness, to the mere darkness and outline of a shadow, but

that threat is also part of the painting's point. Surrey stages a seemingly hopeless

or threatening scene and then offers the viewer a number of ways in which to ma-

nipulate that scene and find possibility where hopelessness once pervaded. The

shadows are not immobile, lifeless figures, but apparently vivid and active ones

that have the ability to resist simple and clear identification. Therefore, they may

evade the surveillance systems of their environment, symbolized by the windows

above the alley. While confrontation between the two shadows may be inevitable,

their flexible bodies allow them to manipulate the alley in creative and liberating

ways. The foreground shadow has multiplied into two different shadows, making it difficult to determine the exact location of the person casting the shadow. There is also the possibility of camouflage: as the two figures move into the darker, shadowed areas of the alley, they will blend into the environment and become less visible. The shadows are not just metaphorically associated with the alley; they are physically part of the alley they occupy, and, in this sense, they are bodies depicted *as* landscape: a state that grants them a considerable degree of freedom and flexibility.

If we understand Surrey's shadows as a Surrealist interest, we locate the human subject's inclusion in his painting. As an index, the cast shadow always refers to the object it doubles. Precisely because of this "semiological" quality, the shadow became an object of fascination for Surrealist painters eager to ". . . reintroduce ambiguity in the only sign that escapes it" (Hollier 115). The two shadows in *Night* are what Denis Hollier calls "orphan shadows": ". . . shadows detached from their indexical origins, shadows cut off from their cause, shadows thrown by an invisible object, shadows of objects repressed outside the frame" (119). The background shadow may either be a human body in silhouette or one of Hollier's "disindexed" shadows (115), shadows "less cast than broadcast, reported on" (Hollier 115), and cut off from the objects they reference. The foreground shadow, however, is simultaneously disindexed—in that the object it refers to is outside the frame of the painting—and reindexed at the moment a viewer stands in front of *Night*. In the latter event, the painting pulls the viewer into its scene as the object casting the shadow. The independence and elusiveness this shadow symbolizes, in its anonymity and ambiguity, are ultimately conferred onto

the body of the viewer.

Marian Scott shared Surrey's fascination with Surrealist shadows: her painting *Stairways* (Fig. 14) [98] incorporates shadows and silhouettes capable of transgressing spatial boundaries. Unlike Surrey's *Night*, Scott's *Stairways* features competing environments: the realm of the buildings, the in-between space of the stairways and balconies, and the city streets. These spaces might be interpreted as the domestic space of the home, the public space of the city, and a liminal stage between the two. While the scene is set entirely outdoors, Scott distinguishes be-tween these spaces in her painting through contrasting colours and forms: the building façades are red, geometric, solid structures with rectilinear windows and doorway, and the balconies and staircases are dark, curvilinear, transient forms representing an in-between space that connects the private realm to the urban landscape of the city. In *Stairways*, spatial divisions are implicit and relate to the shadows' gender. Scott Coltrane suggests that the "idealized notion of separate spheres"—where women are typically relegated to the internal, domestic space of the home, whereas men are associated with the public, external space of the city— "shapes what it means to be a man or woman in our society" (25). Coltrane clari-fies that although "historical studies show that a rigid public / private split is something of a myth. . ." (25), in North America a belief in separate gender spheres and rigid divisions between women's domestic space and men's public space "enjoyed widespread popularity during most of the twentieth century" (37).

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[98] Scott presented *Stairways* at the *Fémina* exhibition held at the Musée de la province de Québec on 10 February-16 March 1947. This was one among a number of exhibitions held across North America just after the Second World War devoted entirely to Canadian women artists (Trépanier 186-7).

It is significant that Scott paints the domestic realm a hellish red, and that its bal-

conies have the appearance of cages: these images and colours depict a kind of

domestic prison that might limit a subject's (suggestively a female subject's)

agency.
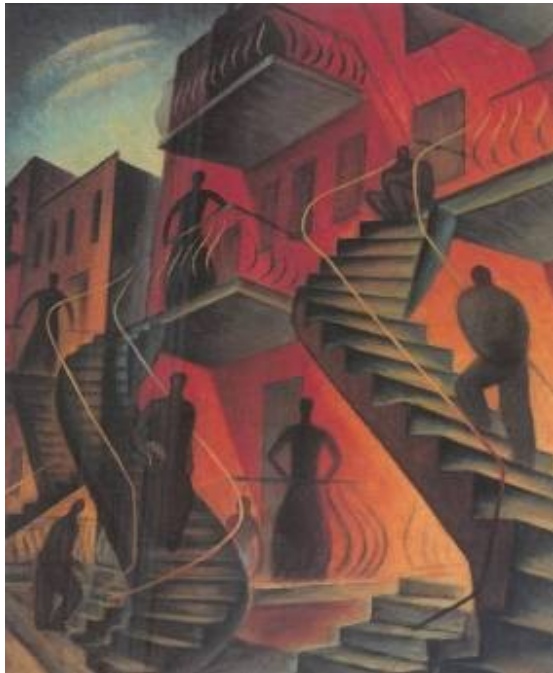
Fig. 14. Marian Scott, *Stairways*, 1945, oil on canvas. Power Corporation of Canada, Montreal (image from Trépanier 26, fig. 43)

Scott's shadows are body-as-landscape images that belong primarily to the

fluid and liminal space of the stairways: the abstract figures are positioned within

these structures and, because they are the same colour, the figures literally merge

with the stairs and balconies (as is the case with the central shadow on the lower

balcony, whose arms and skirt become part of the balcony's railing and spindles).

Similar to the shadows in Surrey's *Night*, which are metaphorically associated

with the alley (another liminal and connective urban space), Scott's silhouettes are

figuratively connected to the space of the balconies and stairways. Homi Bhabha

argues that

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, be-

comes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that con-

structs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hith-

er and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it

allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial

polarities. (4)

Whereas Bhabha's stairwell deconstructs binaries of race and invites the concept

of cultural hybridity, Scott's stairways dismantle binaries of gender. The "connec-

tive tissue" of the stairway in her painting denies a "settling into primordial po-

larities" between male and female, between public and private. While many of the

silhouettes' clothes reference their gender—some wear pants (male), others wear

dresses (female)—these supposed markers of identity are purposefully compro-

mised through frequent commingling with the stairwell and balconies. Only three

figures in the painting can be reasonably identified as male because they wear

pants: the figure in the bottom left corner, the figure mounting the staircase on the

mid-right side, and the figure sitting at the top of this same staircase. Significant-

ly, two of these masculine figures appear to be mounting staircases and heading

towards the supposed "domestic" realm of the home, while the third figure sits

perched atop a staircase and is resolutely immobile in his proximity to the "do-

mestic" space. Meanwhile, the only other mobile figure in the painting is the an-

drogynous one holding a circular object, and he / she marches boldly down the

staircase towards the public, urban realm.[99] *Stairways* demonstrates that the gen-

---

[99] The figure's gender is indeterminate because it has the stature of the other male, pant-wearing figures, but appears to be wearing a dress.

dered space of the urban environment can be subverted,[100] as its ambiguous silhouettes or disindexed shadows, whose genders are not easily identified, may venture freely into either public or private space.

Like Surrey and Scott, *Preview* poets found similar ways of representing both possibilities and crises of human agency within urban and rural environments through body-as-landscape images. John Sutherland, in his essay "The Writing of Patrick Anderson," published in *First Statement's* May 1943 issue (1.19: 3-6), was the first to identify this imagery in Anderson's poetry: "[i]t is easy to trace in [Anderson's] poems a pattern of images, in which, alternately, the environment is impinging on the body, or the body is absorbing the space of the environment" (3). Sutherland cites two *Preview* poems, "Montreal" (June 1942: n. pag.) and "Seascape" (March 1943: 8-9), as poems exemplary of this imagery. In "Montreal," for example, the speaker initially compares his "head" to "a theatre" and later calls attention to the "bogus façade of [his] middle class face." Not entirely faceless, he appears to wear a mask of urban architecture that does not represent his real identity. As he walks through a surreal, urban landscape, he eventually comes across an image of the landscape as body, which he describes as an

> . . . abstract place: a red brick wall
>
> guillotined with shadow a square of added dust—
>
> o the human clasp had shrunk from its finger-nails,
>
> the head was drowned below antennae-aerials!

---

[100] Historically, a major deterritorialization of urban space occurred around the time Scott painted *Stairways*: throughout the Second World War, Canada experienced women's exodus from the kitchen to the factory. Veterans Affairs Canada reports that "[o]ut of a total Canadian population of 11 million people, only about 600,000 Canadian women held permanent jobs when the war started. During the war, their numbers doubled to 1,200,000" (Government of Canada).

>   Suddenly a radio blared like a paper flower
>
> in a bowl of brass. Against one wall [he] saw,
>
> almost invisible, the sandy soldier
>
> through whose wounded face a stone face was trying to form.

Anderson's cityscape is "abstract," but so is his description of this space: the ambiguous possessive pronoun "its," which might refer to the "red brick wall" or to the "shadow," defers the reader's understanding of the image, for example. The lack of an expected comma between "shadow" and "a square of dust," moreover, makes the relationship between nouns unclear. The poem calls on the reader—as an agent—to make certain interpretive choices in order to understand its images.

Regardless of one's interpretation of "Montreal," it is certainly the red brick wall that was "guillotined" as if it was a human body whose "head" was cut off, presumably, by a "shadow." Similar body-as-landscape images emerge in the poem, such as the head, perhaps the head belonging to the wall, that "was drowned by antennae-aerials." It is less certain to whom the "finger nails" and "human clasp" belong: they may be part of the "shadow" or "brick wall." In either case, the hand and nails combine with the wall through the poet's abstractions. The image of the "sandy soldier" who is "almost invisible," meanwhile, resembles Scott's and Surrey's abstracted figures of shadows and silhouettes who blend and merge with the environment. The "stone face" that "was trying to form" in the soldier's own face is quite menacing because the soldier has been "wounded." The verb "trying" also implies that this stone face seems to form against the soldier's own will—an identity imposing itself on the soldier whose wound makes it difficult for him to assert his subjectivity. These violent images are certainly

threatening: the landscape as body models a possible devastating impact the urban environment could have on the human being's potential to act. In his review, Sutherland notoriously concluded that the "rhythm" of these images in Anderson's poems "reflect[s] a sexual activity" or "mirror[s] some former sexual experience stereotyped in the author's mind" (3).[101] These images, however, are not only found in Anderson's poems; they are present in numerous *Preview* poems and reflect more than just an individual experience.

Bruce Ruddick's poem "#25," published in *Preview* in September 1942 (4), includes images of the body as landscape to address issues of subjectivity. Ruddick abstracts the human body by depicting a cadaverous urban body-space. The first stanza depicts an autopsy performed on a labourer, which reveals that he has literally internalized the factory and urban environment in which he worked:

> In the lab, flat on his back
>
> bedsores open, eyes closed
>
> Joseph A played Death admirably.
>
> At first we were awed
>
> our senses unaccustomed.
>
> Later we stood with heart
>
> and brain raw in hand
>
> following channel and tract,
>
> studying pulley and hinge,

---

[101] Following Sutherland's disclosure of Anderson's homosexuality in this essay, *Preview*'s editors threatened to launch a libel suit against *First Statement* (Edwards 65; Francis, "Montreal" 29). Consequently, Sutherland published a retraction of his statements in the subsequent issue of *First Statement*.

lung and gut that fanned and fed.

And cities of cells,

the thoroughfares of blood,

the luxurious lolling in eye

the rich in tongue and ear

and the dark tough slum of the rectum.

Joseph A has literally become the factory environment of his workplace and the urban environment in which he lives: his guts, we are told, are made of ". . . channel and tract" and "pulley and hinge." Aural relationships reinforce connections between body and environment in the poem: the repetition of similar sounds in words relating to the cityscape and in those relating to the body, such as the soft [c] shared by "cities and cells" or the [k] and [um] in ". . . dark tough slum of the rectum," yokes the body's parts with its surroundings. Similar to Scott and Surrey's shadows that blend and merge with city space, Joseph A's body merges with its urban landscape in Ruddick's poem.

In "#25," the relationship between body and landscape is internalized to the subject's own detriment.[102] The body's absorption of its work environment is emblematic of the loss of identity and confusion of self with workplace that Ruddick suggests an urban environment can impose on any human being. In the second stanza, it is evident that Joseph A's class, profession, and environment defined him: he was not simply a person, but rather a ". . . labourer, muscle ma-

---

[102] While we learn later in the poem that Joseph A lived to be rather old—the speaker tells us that "Age crept like a vine" in Joseph A—the cause of death remains to be discovered through the autopsy. He may have died of old age, but he may have also died as a result of his poor working conditions.

chine." The bulk of his daily activities was job-related, since he expended most of his energy on "loads lifted, running to and fro – 43%." Only "6%" of his energy, we are later told, was devoted to "leisure activities (pursuit of happiness, defense of freedom etc.)." Consequently, the urban, economic, and political environment of his workplace, both figuratively and literally, consumed Joseph A.[103]

Ruddick does not leave readers passive to the negative effects of environment on the human body; nor does he leave them lonely or distant from the world in which they live. He positions his reader, instead, as anatomical voyeur, as the subject with the ability to perceive the simultaneously symbiotic and destructive relationship between body and landscape. The first-person plural pronoun "we" implicitly includes the reader as a laboratory observer in the poem. In fact, the pronoun "we" has an analogous function to Surrey's "disindexed" shadows in *Night*: although, as with all first-person pronouns, "we" is "inherently *indexical*," it can still shift "in reference according [to] the context in which [it] occurs" (Rumsey 105). In the context of "#25," "we" refers inherently to the poem's speaker, but it simultaneously refers to either a colleague or friend of the speaker, or to the reader made privy to the vision of the labourer's internal body through Ruddick's poetic description. The "we" is flexible in its reference point, as is the foregrounded shadow in *Night*, and can include the reader as a participant in the scene. Furthermore, by denying Joseph A eyesight—his eyes, we are explicitly told, are "closed" by death—Ruddick reinforces the privilege and responsibility of his reader's position as someone who *can* perceive the impact of environment on

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[103] One might equally suggest that Joseph A consumed his environment, which is now inside his body. This interpretation would place the responsibility of his body's internalization of its environment on Joseph A himself.

body. A glimpse of the internal body through dissection is not a sight for all to see: it is usually reserved for those in a medical or coronatorial profession. "[O]ur senses," as the speaker puts it, are "unaccustomed" to these realities. But, in "seeing" these images, the reader is pushed towards an awareness of his or her responsibility to prevent the relationship between body and landscape from becoming parasitic, in which case (as with Joseph A) the environment takes over the body, and the human being risks losing his or her status as a healthy subject.

While Anderson, Ruddick, Surrey, and Scott tended to explore urban landscapes in their forties body-as-landscape images, some *Preview* poets explored a rural or more natural body-environment relationship in their poems. James Wreford's "Identity," published in *Preview*'s May 1944 issue (5-6), also includes body-as-landscape imagery to problematize common conceptions of subjectivity and female identity. The poem's male subject finds solace in the familiarity of his lover's body, whose "lips" he calls a "well known frontier," a ". . . war-torn boundary and bridge." He identifies her body in terms of the natural landscape. This "geography," however, is one that he "projects" onto her body, we are told, and it appears to misrepresent her personhood: despite the speaker's persistence in defining her body as landscape, he admonishes himself that "in between her flaccid breasts there is no valley." Her body, therefore, is not necessarily a landscape, but the speaker "limns his lover," or *chooses* to represent her body in this way. "Her limbs his image rediscover," he tells us: the trope enables him to redefine her body at his own will—the suggestion of male conquest is forceful and obvious.

The reader, however, is encouraged to distrust this representation of the

woman in Wreford's poem because the speaker also admits to having a limited perspective: "His eyes" roam "no further than the bone," and he is "lost to all but limb and lip." "Their love. . . / fills their eyes with tropic sight," blinding both him and her with its brightness. Evidently, the lovers' infatuation with each other makes them oblivious to reality, and they live in the darkness of ". . . their platonic cave," ignorant of the world outside. The female lover, therefore, bears some responsibility for her own misrepresentation and the eventual abstraction of her "body" into a "shadow silhouette" that the "flame" projects "upon the wall" of their cave. Wreford's poem aligns itself with CAS paintings and other *Preview* poems in its shadow imagery and mingling of body with landscape. It uses this imagery to communicate the problems of defining the body, and by extension identity, in terms of landscape and to question the validity of gender identifications, which are (Wreford's poem suggests) constructs commonly created or established by a male, biased majority.

In Page's "Landscape of Love," published in the August 1942 issue of *First Statement* (1.1: 8), the body-landscape imagery features the bog, the prairies, and the scrubland. Her poem, then, revisits the natural scenery of earlier Canadian landscape poetry and painting. Relke has noted that this poem

> may even be seen as a corrective to the male landscape poetry of early Canadian modernism in that it directly contradicts A.J.M. Smith's "The Lonely Land," which is often cited as the most representative landscape poem of the period. Page's landscape is by contrast "not lonely" because, unlike Smith's, it is an intensely "Personal Landscape," for this was how she retitled the poem when she chose it as the opening piece for her 1946

volume, *As Ten As Twenty*. ("Tracing")

As a corrective to the earlier landscape poetry that continued to define Canadian

visual and literary culture, Page's landscape is not simply "not lonely"; it is also

replete with images of the landscape as body:

> Where the bog ends, there, where the ground lips, lovely
>
> is love, not lonely.
>
>   Land is
>
> love, round with it, where the hand is;
>
> wide with love, cleared scrubland, grain
>
> on a coin,
>
> Oh, the wheatfield, the rock-bound rubble;
>
> the untouched hills
>
>   as a thigh smooth;
>
> the meadow.
>
> . . . .
>
> A lung-born land this,
>
> a breath spilling,
>
> scanned by the valvular heart,
>
> the field glasses.

The "ground" of Page's poem "lips" around the bog: diction that deliberately calls

forth the image of a mouth and connects it to the landscape. "Land / is love. . ." in

"Landscape of Love"; but that land, we are told, is ". . . where the hand is." It is

located either at, on, or through the body, affirming the integration of landscape

and body. Later, the speaker compares the "untouched hills" to the smoothness of

a "thigh" and describes the land as "lung-born" and "a breath spilling," as though it came from the human body itself.[104]

Page uses landscape-as-body images in her poem, as do Surrey and Scott in their paintings, to confront issues of identity and subjectivity. Relke describes these images in "Landscape of Love" as an "intersubjective space" ("Tracing"), which she elsewhere defines (based on Jessica Benjamin's discussion of the concept) as "a place between self and other where both meet in a web of intersubjective connection" and in which ". . . subjects are interconnected, not merged, and thus remain subjects in their own right" (*Greenwor(l)ds* 186). While I would argue that it is not clear that the subject does not "merge" with landscape in Page's images, it is obvious that she is not "submerged" by the environment. The celebratory tone of the speaker, as in her expressive "Oh," suggests that her personality remains intact and that the state of intersubjectivity is pleasing. The poem, therefore, models a relationship between human and environment that would appear to enable a certain degree of, if not exactly agency, at least self-expression. Unlike Surrey and Scott's images of shadows in threatening urban scenes, her imagery is of the natural landscape and is meant to challenge representations of a Canadian identity only as impersonal landscape, to the exclusion of the human being. Whether in rural or urban environments, *Preview* poets and Scott and Surrey experimented with the abstraction of the human body merging or combining with the landscape. Sometimes their body-as-landscape images display the con-

---

[104] The landscape in Alice Eedy's poem "Individual" (*Preview* [July 1943]: 3) bears a striking resemblance to the body as landscape in Page's "Landscape of Love" (published almost a year earlier). Both poems feature the soggy marshland of the bog in their body-as-landscape images, and both attempt to counteract the distance and loneliness of earlier Canadian landscape poetry.

straints of environment on the human being; other times, as is the case with
Page's poem, this imagery depicts enabling possibilities of human-landscape rela-
tionships.

First Statement, evidently, also published poems that feature the image of
the body as landscape or its inverse, but most of these poems were written by
poets who had published in *Preview*, such as Page. Although *First Statement*
poets—such as Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster—on occasion
included similar imagery in their poetry published in the little magazine to address
issues of human agency, their depictions of body as landscape or landscape as
body rarely featured the abstraction of the human body or the landscape merging
with the human subject like the images in CAS paintings and *Preview* poems.
Consider, for example, Dudek's first of "Three Poems" published in the tenth is-
sue of *First Statement* (1.10 [December 1942]: 1). The speaker begins the poem
by comparing the sun to elements of the human body:

> Like a rich vein of purest gold
>
> Suddenly revealed
>
> To the light of day
>
> Is the rising sun;
>
> Like a precious vein cutting a streak
>
> In the rock-face of clouds
>
> Is the rising sun over the city
>
>
> The city is wakening for work
>
> With grey and dusky eyelids;

Washing herself in the light of the morning

She looks long moments at the sun rising.

Dudek's opening lines weakly connect landscape and body through simile: the "rising sun" is "Like a rich vein of purest gold"; "Like a precious vein cutting a streak / in the rock-face of clouds." *Preview* poets only rarely establish their body-as-landscape images through simile—they more often use metaphor, as in Page's "a lung-born land this" or Anderson's "a red brick wall / guillotined. . . ." Dudek's images, moreover, distance the sun from humanity through their inclusion of non-human elements: the sun is not simply a "vein" but a "vein" of "gold," and the clouds do not have human faces but "rock-face[s]." Although, in the second and final stanza, Dudek does use metaphor to depict the city as a face "with grey and dusky eyelids" waking in the morning sun, his description of the city is more im-agistic than it is particularly abstract. There is very little demand placed on the reader, as we saw with Anderson's "Montreal," to decide how to interpret the stanza because Dudek's language and pronouns are fairly straightforward and un-ambiguous. Although the city apparently has a face in Dudek's poem, it is without a body. Dudek's image does not at all resemble the faceless silhouettes and sha-dows of Scott and Surrey's paintings.

Some of Souster and Layton's poems in *First Statement* also connect the body and landscape to depict or suggest the environment / world as a threat to human agency; their poems, however, rely on simile to establish the connection between body and land, as in Dudek's first of "Three Poems," and do not explore landscape's merging with the body that is characteristic of Scott and Surrey's paintings and *Preview* poems. In Souster's poem "Go to Sleep World," published

in the December 1944-January 1945 issue of *First Statement* (2.10: 7), the speaker compares the "world" to "the body of my beloved" and speaks to it as though it were a person: "Go to sleep, world / Draw yourself up for the night / Like the body of my beloved / Curling so sleepily on the sofa / With her eyelids closed / Like a soft lazy cat." Similar to the speaker of Dudek's first of "Three Poems," Souster's speaker uses "Like" to compare the world to "the body of his be-loved"—a weak connection that becomes even more distant when the speaker also compares the body of his lover to "a soft lazy cat" and then warns the world to "not look at my beloved lying there." Souster's poem essentially personifies the world—which is hardly a landscape in the poem, since Souster only briefly men-tions one landscape-as-body image, the "blood running in little rivers." Besides this and the last line of the poem that briefly mentions the "rotten gut" of the "world," however, Souster does not describe the body and landscape merging or blending.

Nor does Layton really invoke the landscape-as-body image in his poem "Vigil," in volume one, issue twelve of *First Statement* ([January 1943]:10). The speaker notes "The shadowy swaying of trees / Like hooded nuns in a forbidden dance," a simile that relates the trees to nuns but fails to merge the two images. His description of "Dawn. A crayon held in a master's fingers / Pencilling in soft outlines the earth," although artistically graphic, does not connect dawn to the body of the master but rather to the crayon held in his or her hand. In neither Souster's nor Layton's poems does an abstract landscape merge with the human body to form a kind of "intersubjective space," as in Page's "Landscape of Love" or in the depictions of shadows and silhouettes in Wreford's "Identity" and Scott

and Surrey's paintings. The *First Statement* poets may have written about the rela-

tionship between body and landscape, as well as the agency of the human being in

the world, but their poems rarely establish body-as-landscape or landscape-as-

body images through the metaphoric and abstract language of the *Preview*

poets.[105]

When *First Statement* and *Preview* formed *Northern Review* in 1945, the

body-as-landscape imagery in poems by Souster, Dudek, and a number of other

First Statement poets, such as R.G. Simpson, began to resonate more closely with

that of *Preview* poets and CAS artists. The *First Statement* poets' new approach to

the body-as landscape image reflects an increased exposure to the visual art and

artists of the CAS through their social interaction with *Preview*'s former editors

and through the pages of the little magazine. For example, Souster's poem "After

Dark," which is the only poem he published in *Northern Review* before the *Pre-

view* editors quit in 1947, demonstrates a slight shift in his description of the

body-landscape relationship from his earlier poem "Go to Sleep World." In "After

Dark," the poet lists various landscape settings in which he has experienced love.

At least one of these landscapes, "the cold-lipped sands of beaches" is a land-

scape-as-body image that bears a striking resemblance to Page's description of a

landscape "where the ground lips" in her "Landscape of Love." Souster also lists

the "dark shadows of parks" and "anywhere at all under the sweep of trees, smell

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[105] Layton's poem "De Bullion Street," published in *First Statement*'s March 1944 issue (2.5: 3), is exceptional for a *First Statement* poet because it establishes the landscape-as-body image primarily through metaphor: the "soft lanes. . . " of the city "Are listening ears . . . " and a ". . . Red light winks / viciously," for example. Unlike the CAS paintings and *Preview* poems, however, the body that Layton inscribes on the landscape is not human: in the final stanza, he describes it as "reptilian" with "scaly limbs" that are "crooked stairways," and later he describes the "grocery store" as the creature's "dreaming half-shut eye."

of grass" among his landscapes of love-making. While these are not landscape-as-body images, they do call to mind Scott's and Surrey's identity-less shadows and silhouettes. Souster's shadows and trees, however, conceal not the lovers' identities but rather their expressions of love from the "Peeping-Tom public eye": the images provide a space of agency for the lovers, who are threatened by public surveillance. Although these bodies do not merge with landscape, the shadows and trees evoke "earth's nearness" to the lovers' bodies, and the landscape appears to condone their activity through its "wind-whispered blessing."

In R.G. Simpson's abstract poem "The Balance," in the second issue of *Northern Review*, the female subject of the poem attempts to become a body-as-landscape because she feels forced to be something she is not. In the first stanza, the speaker describes the female subject: "Isoceles [*sic*] is her symbol and her veil / Shielding not, like sere brown leaves / And arms of grey trees and trellis, / The pale wanting of her lesser sisters, / But sentinel of the torment in her blood; / The fashion and the frame of violent equipoise." The subject attempts to conceal or shroud her geometric identity—the "isoceles" [*sic*] triangle—with a veil of organicism that is "like sere brown leaves / And arms of grey trees and trellis." Like the *First Statement* poems, Simpson's poem establishes the body-as-landscape image through simile, which is a less forceful association. Nevertheless, like the *Preview* poets and CAS artists, Simpson's depiction of the human body is immediately oriented towards the pole of abstraction. The female subject's body is geometricized, not realistic, and she seeks to assert her "will" through a different kind of abstraction—a merging of body with landscape elements. Her attempt to transform her arms into "grey trees" is not successful, but the act alone generates

a "violent equipoise" that has the potential to "hurl" her spirit "past the dimly lighted gates" and "burst" its "bondage." Evidently, the tension between the abstract body as landscape and the geometric body proffers the female subject freedom, independence, and agency.

Published in *East of the City* (1946), Dudek's poem "The Shadows," from the same period as *Northern Review*, could almost be an ekphrastic poem of Surrey's *Night*, with its faceless "shadow" that "will walk in the streets, / in the waiting / stony streets, at night / by the red brick like a cardboard city, / soft, while the streetcars whisper / a small thunder in the street." This shadow is quite different from the city-face he depicted in his "Three Poems" from *First Statement* because it is without an identity and, like Surrey's and Scott's shadowy abstractions of the human form, it can blend in with its environment: "He will fold / into doorways, and bend / on walls, and pleat / like a card— / that a grain of dust left over / on a ledge, may tell him, / or perhaps a girl in a white window / will tell him, become an image.)" Through its ability to "fold," "bend," and "pleat" into its environment, the shadow-figure of Dudek's poem has the power to negotiate its urban environment. The speaker even suggests that it has the ability to "become an image"—a transformative power not normally associated with the human being but that Dudek gives to this human-like shadow. Although the poet's language and expression, as in his earlier *First Statement* poems, is still quite straightforward and referential, his depiction is not nearly as imagistic and concrete as in his earlier poetry. In "A Shadow," the human figure is abstracted like the figures in *Preview* poems and CAS paintings, and through its abstraction, the body has acquired some interesting abilities as agent within an urban environment.

Preview poets, CAS artists Scott and Surrey, and eventually the *First*

Statement poets all attempted to revise the landscape tradition of Canadian art and

literature up to the 1940s that typically ignored the relationship between human

being and landscape by leaving the human out of the picture. Through the image

of the body as landscape, they asserted the human being's ultimate authority over

landscape and ability to resist definition by it. Following the creation of *Northern*

Review, the trope gradually appears in poems by *First Statement* poets, such as

Dudek, Souster, and R.G. Simpson, who began to experiment with its abstraction

of the human body. These poets' adoption of the body-as-landscape image reflects

the *First Statement* poets' introduction to and increased collaboration with CAS

artists following the merger with *Preview*, whose members were friends and

spouses of CAS artists. The artists and poets' attempts to include the human being

in landscape art and poetry can be seen as part of a larger philosophy of biocen-

trism[106] that informed many of the works of the period: their paintings and poems

tend to explore the human being's intimate kinship with the world and its pheno-

mena.

III: Biomorphic Modernism and the "Scientific Attitude(s)" of Montreal's Little Magazines

A number of Scott's paintings, as well as many poems published in *Pre-*

view and *Northern Review*, are exemplary of a biocentric modernist art form

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[106] Oliver Árpád István Botar explains that biocentrism is an "attitude" that "rejected anthropocen-
trism, decentering the human species. . . . In place of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Enlightenment call
for a 'return to nature,' which implied a dualistic division between the 'human' and the 'natural,'
humans—rather than as producers of culture, nature's 'other'—were now seen to be part of this
larger whole of 'nature.' Everything humans did and produced was now seen as part of nature, and
hence explicable in its terms" (7).

known as biomorphism. Essentially, biomorphism is abstract art or poetry that "represents vital forces and natural processes" (Botar 54). It is an idiom that combines biological (sometimes microscopic) and organic forms or natural imagery—often of the internal body, but sometimes of other natural matter such as plants, single-celled organisms, or crystals[107]—with the underlying themes of genesis, metamorphosis, and flux.[108] For Scott and a number of little magazine poets, biomorphism helped them illustrate, at a time when humanity's significance and even its continued existence were called into question, the inherent mutability and reproductivity of the human being and his or her unique significance in and relationship with the natural world.

Biomorphism does not always carry positive connotations. In fact, it rose to popularity in Europe during the 1930s at the height of Surrealism, when the Nazis, along with other Fascist regimes with racist policies, advocated that a new technology—biotechnology—could help them create the perfect, Aryan "new man" (Clair, "Crowds" 18). Biomorphism was useful to both sides of the debate: it characterized the propagandistic art supporting the belief that science could as-

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[107] In the 1930s, Geoffrey Grigson initiated a binary between geometric abstraction and biomorphic abstraction that was reinforced by Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in his catalogue for the museum's *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition (Botar 52; Barr 19). Consequently, Barr defined biomorphism as a style of art that is exclusively curvilinear. Although many artists and art historians interpreted biomorphism as curvilinear form, which has become a popular understanding of the term, it is too narrow a definition. As Botar explains, the misguided exclusion of geometric forms from biomorphism is the result of an "old prejudice. . ." that considers the "ideal shape of living things. . . [to be] the sphere" (59). While the curve and the sphere are certainly prominent forms in biomorphic art, orthogonal and rigid structures also have a place in biomorphic modernism. In fact, the crystal is arguably as iconographic as the egg in biomorphic art. See, for example, Marian Scott's painting *Cell and Crystal* (1945).

[108] Examples of biomorphic art by famous modernists include Jean (Hans) Arp's sculpture *Human Concretion* (1934); Joan Miró's painting *Persons in the Presence of a Metamorphosis* (1936); and Carl Strüwe's photograph *Nutrient Uptake to the Human Circulatory System (Intestinal Villi with Blood Vessels)* (1930). By the 1950s, biomorphism had infiltrated popular culture in the form of kidney-shaped swimming pools and amoeboid coffee tables (Eidelberg 91). Famous architect Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal at New York's Kennedy Airport has also been described as biomorphic (Eidelberg 91).

sist totalitarian governments in creating a perfect, model human being; but many

Surrealists opposed to such racist ideals also experimented with biomorphism in

protest.[109] For this reason, biomorphism is often identified with the strain of Sur-

realism known as automatism;[110] this inaccurate identification arises in part from

a conflation of the organic images and forms common to biomorphism with the

concept of organic composition that is fundamental to Surrealist automatism.[111]

Biomorphism is in no way limited to Surrealism and is observable within a variety

of artistic styles. Lawrence Alloway clarifies this misconception by calling Sur-

realism a "stimulus" to biomorphic art (22), and by asserting that biomorphism

"cannot be restricted to a Surrealist ambience" (3).

CAS member Marian Scott became interested in biomorphism around

1940, when she was no longer content with the direction in which her painting

was headed and expressed in her journal the feeling that she wanted to "find a

greater link with life" (Journal 2 [of 2], 1940).[112] She turned, shortly thereafter, to

science for inspiration. Her mural, *Endocrinology* (Fig. 15), painted directly on

the surface of an office wall in McGill University's Strathcona building,[113] was

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[109] For example, see Salvador Dali's painting *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943), in which a man emerges from an egg: his struggle, and the emaciated, Eve-like figure with child pointing to him, evoke a despair mirrored in the gloomy canopy hovering above the egg.

[110] See Grigson and Barr.

[111] See Parker Tyler and William Rubin, who both identify biomorphism as a strain of Surrealism.

[112] Scott may have been exposed to biomorphic modernism through the CAS's "Art of Our Day" exhibition (May 1939). It featured works by artist Wassily Kandinsky, who worked with biomorphism in the 1930s (see *Environment* [1936] and *Succession* [1935]). Of course, given Scott's dense knowledge of contemporary European art, and the fact that she traveled to England in 1935, it is possible that she was exposed to biomorphism as early as the 1930s (Trépanier 98, 199).

[113] The mural occupies a faculty office wall in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology at McGill—a space that was originally public. Hans Selye, the professor who commissioned the mural, wrote about it in the first issue of *Canadian Art* (1943) and noted that it was painted on the wall of a newly constructed "conference and reading room for the research staff of our department, the Department of Histology in the School of Medicine at McGill University" (17).

commissioned by the department of Histology. It is the first fruit of Scott's new

artistic direction. Writing in her journal, she commented that

> The chance to paint this mural coincided with the deep wish on my part
>
> for just such a chance. I, like so many painters[,] was feeling disturbed and
>
> restless in the isolation of the studio. No doubt, the war is partly responsi-
>
> ble for this wish to leave the studios; but perhaps the real cause is even
>
> deeper and wider. Perhaps it is all part of the struggling death of the old
>
> era[,] the birth of the new. (Journal 1 [of 2], 1941)[114]

For Scott, *Endocrinology* embodied more than just a way for her to connect with

an audience and actively participate in a world disrupted by warfare; the throwing

away of picture frames and easels also meant a new way of seeing. She believed

that this new vision could communicate humanity's revitalized significance in an

altered world.

 Endocrinology proposed a new vision of the world not only because of its

less traditional artistic medium, but also because of its presentation of biomorphic

imagery: namely images of the internal body—including organs, microscopic

cells, and nuclei—scattered across the mural. In addition to these biomorphic

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[114] Brian Trehearne notes that Scott may be borrowing this phrasing from her husband's poem "Overture" (Personal Communication). The poem's third stanza is remarkably similar to Marian Scott's discussion:

> But how shall I hear old music? This is an hour
> Of new beginnings, concepts warring for power,
> Decay of systems—the tissue of art is torn
> With overtures of an era being born.

Although this poem was first published four years after Scott's journal entry in Frank Scott's collection of poems by the same name, *Overture* (1945), Marian Scott likely saw an earlier draft of the poem, which was probably written in the 1930s. *Overture* also includes a poem uncannily evocative of *Endocrinology*'s content entitled "Mural." The poem, which may be an ekphrastic poem of Marian Scott's mural, reflects on the impact of scientific advances—such as "microscopic means" and "Geneticists [who] control the genes" (60)—on human life.

elements, the themes of flux, genesis, and reproduction are integral to the painting.[115]

Fig. 15. Marian Scott, *Endocrinology*, 1943, mural. McGill University, Montreal. (photograph by the author)

The central spiral, as an organic symbol of movement and flux, ties the entire composition together under these thematic motifs. The mural's images, however, are not entirely generative and organic: Scott contrasts healthy bodies with diseased bodies, the organic with the inorganic. As she remarks in her journal, the male "Dancer," from whose hand emanates the dominant spiral, is meant "to symbolize balance (health) among grotesque abnormalities" ("September 1941"). In fact, the majority of the other human figures in the painting exhibit biological deformations of some kind, such as emaciation, "toxic goitre," "myxedema," and dwarfism (Scott, M., "Explanatory Key" 18). Two inorganic images are also

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[115] The image of a baby encased in an amniotic sac occupying the lower left corner of the mural is exemplary of *Endocrinology*'s themes of gestation and generation.

present: Scott's "Explanatory Key" to the mural, published in the 1943 issue of *Canadian Art*, identifies these two images as a "library file with 'Why' in many languages" written on it (meant to symbolize, perhaps, scientists' global quest for knowledge), and a microscope ("Explanatory Key" 18). This scientific tool (enabling the eye to perceive what standard vision cannot) symbolizes the new perspective of the world that the painting represents, activates, motivates, and re-commends. As a mechanical instrument, the microscope's presence is particularly jarring alongside the mural's overwhelming abundance of organic images. It reads as an unneeded explanation of how the many biomorphic images in Scott's paint-ing can be perceived by human beings, signaling, perhaps, that Scott was still un-sure of this new artistic subject matter and the degree to which it could (or should) be abstracted.

 Atom, Bone and Embryo (Fig. 16), included in the first series of paintings that Scott created after completing *Endocrinology*, is a testament to the artist's progress with biomorphism. In fact, the painting's impression of anti-mimeticism is so forceful that a friend of the artist's once queried "[w]hy not just call it ab-straction?" ("January 7th, 1943").[116] Ironically, many of the painting's images are not entirely abstract but simply unfamiliar to the naked eye: they are all biological forms and elements. Most notably, there is the iconic egg form, so central to bio-morphism, that occupies the centre of her composition, and the faint, overlapping

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[116] In her journal entry for 7 January 1943, Scott writes of the public's reaction to *Atom, Bone, and Embryo* at the opening of the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition in Toronto: "Some said they liked it but I feel they only like it in an old way[,] a part way. My experiment with another kind of meaning does not reach them. Penna said 'Why not just call it abstraction?' That is like saying I like your force[,] I like the words, their shape. It has a universal feeling. Have I found a new direc-tion or is it too much of a compromise with symbol?" ("January 7th, 1943").

oval patterns in the background that represent (if we refer to the painting's title) atoms. There are also a number of curved elements resembling bones. The painting offers a glimpse at the internal body, its elements rearranged and juxtaposed on different scales of magnification. Unlike *Endocrinology*, *Atom, Bone and Embryo* does not juxtapose these internal body parts with inorganic elements (such as the microscope) or images of the external body: its subject matter is entirely biomorphic. Nevertheless, Scott's depiction of these images is, like *Endocrinology*, not realistic. She has aggregated a number of corporeal elements that would not necessarily be seen so close together inside the body, and the bright colouration of these elements is hardly representative of their actual colours.

Significantly, *Atom, Bone and Embryo* offers no direct relation of its biomorphic representations to humanity: even its title is evasive on this point. The painting reflects the living being's relationship with the natural world—not just, or even centrally, the human being—through the corporeal (internal) congruence of form and colour between a variety of life forms. The egg, the atom (common to all forms of matter), and the bone are not exclusively human elements, and the blue, red, and green hues that dominate the painting conjure up botanical associations. In this way, the painting is consistent with the biocentric attitude underpinning both biomorphic art and Scott's desire in the early forties to connect her art with "life" (M. Scott, Journal 2 [of 2], 1940).

Fig. 16. Marian Scott, *Atom, Bone and Embryo*, 1943, oil on canvas. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (image from the Art Gallery of Ontario)

Although the painting does not overtly depict images of humanity, the familiarity of the bone and embryo as human structures may naturally provoke the viewer to associate these images with the human body. Given *Atom, Bone, and Embryo*'s historical context and its status as Scott's self-proclaimed "war painting," a human connection to these images may be inferred (qtd. in Luckyj 20).[117]

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[117] The work was Scott's contribution to an exhibition on war paintings held at the Art Gallery of Toronto (Ontario) in 1944, organized by the CGP. The CGP "considered asking all their members to produce a war painting" for this exhibition, "but met with some resistance from Marian Dale Scott, who resented being told what to paint" (Meadowcroft 156). Of course, Scott was an ardent pacifist (Trépanier 170), and her resentment was further promoted by the idea of creating a painting in support of the war, which was the underlying message of the CGP's request. Ultimately, the CGP allowed its artists to interpret the subject of war "freely" (Meadowcroft 156; Trépanier 170), and Marian Scott exhibited *Atom, Bone and Embryo*.

Perhaps following the lead of European painters of the 1930s who used biomor-

phism as a means of protesting racial policies, Scott appropriated the subject mat-

ter to protest the war and its acceptance of "barbarism" and destruction (Trépanier

192n20).[118] In the midst of a war that seemed to promise only the extinction of the

human species, with its mass genocide and the introduction of the atom bomb (al-

though these came later), Scott's painting asks its viewers to consider the excep-

tional significance of the living being and its mysterious, almost mystical inner

workings.

The *Preview* poets—most of them familiar with Scott's paintings (some

Preview meetings were held at her house) and national and international modern-

ist painting (through attendance at CAS exhibitions and events)—also experi-

mented with biomorphism in the early 1940s. We have already seen a vision of

the internal human body in Ruddick's poem "#25," where an autopsy reveals a

labourer's veins that have become "thoroughfares of blood," and his "cells" that

have transformed into "cities" inside him: his body has turned into a system of

"channel and tract," of "pulley and hinge." While Ruddick's poem makes gestures

towards biomorphic content, as it invites the reader to look inside the human body

and insinuates that the internal human body is intimately connected with the ex-

ternal world, it cannot be qualified as "biomorphic" poetry *per se*. The fact that

the internal body described in the poem is dead works against the biomorphic de-

sire for a representation of genesis and flux. The poem's image of the internal

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[118] According to Trépanier, Scott's painting exemplifies a "progressive vision where science, knowledge and the experience of the creative harmony inherent in the living being could be considered a response to barbarism and ignorance, as well as representing a new path for humanity" ("une vision progressiste où science, connaissance et expérience créatrice de l'harmonie inhérente au vivant peuvent être considérées comme une réponse à la barbarie et à l'ignorance et représentent bien une voie nouvelle pour l'humanité") (192n20, my translation).

body, furthermore, appears to be a hold-over from the "mechanomorphic" style that characterized works of earlier modernists, such as Futurists and Dadaists (Clair, "Crowds" 18).[119] For this reason, Ruddick's poem is precariously perched between an older, mechanomorphic vision of the human body and a newer, biomorphic one.

Nevertheless, there are a number of *Preview* poems that can be qualified as biomorphic. Cynthia Messenger has already commented on the biomorphic modernism observable in P.K. Page's artwork in an essay in which she compares Page's post-war paintings to the 1930s biomorphic photographs of John Vanderpant.[120] But no one has yet mentioned the biomorphic qualities of Page's early poetry, such as the poem "Desiring Only," her first poem published in *Preview*, in the April 1942 issue (n. pag.). The poem's first two stanzas demonstrate Page's combination of natural, biomorphic imagery with themes of genesis and flux:

> Desiring only the lean sides of the stomach
>
> sagging towards each other, unupholstered. . .
>
> pass me nothing of love done up in chocolates
>
> or the fat first fruits of the tree
>
> you planted from seed.

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[119] "#25" presents the popular motif of the body as machine and / or factory, which had its roots in the Industrial Revolution and remained popular through the twentieth century (Birke 56). According to Lynda Birke, this mechanistic vision of the internal body is tied up with issues of management and "control" (99); it is an image of a human body that is "carefully regulated, almost against our will, and seems to change little" (Birke 135). Ruddick's poem disrupts this narrative only insofar as it intimates that the body can change according to its environment.

[120] Messenger might have found a more direct and coherent link between Page and biomorphism had she considered Scott's 1940s paintings. In *Hand Luggage* (2006), Page's poetic memoir published a few years after Messenger's essay, Page writes of the forties artists, "Jori Smith, Philip Surrey and Marian Scott / Gertrude Hermes and Goodridge and Grier and Muhlstock— / I respected their work and I bought when I could" (19).

> Desiring only the bone on the Mount of Venus
>
> and the death rattle caught in the musical powder box . . .

The speaker initially presents the image of a stomach, which may be an image of the external body (i.e. referring to the abdomen), but it could also be interpreted as the internal organ. The poet invokes the internal stomach through the symbolic associations of appetite (the speaker resists the "chocolate" that could expand her abdomen if ingested) and fertility, which she establishes in the subsequent biomorphic images: the ". . . fat first fruits," the "tree," and the "seed." The abdomen gains significance through these generative symbols as a marker of the pregnant body, the potential home of the fetus. All of these images are biomorphic in both form and content.

The speaker, however, appears to want to deny the generative potential of the human body, "desiring" not the full, rounded, pregnant belly, but rather the ". . . lean sides of the stomach." In fact, she rejects the symbols of fertility mentioned in the last lines of the stanza: the fruit, the tree, and the seed. His or her desire is only for "the bone on the Mount of Venus," a slang term for the 'mons veneris' or the pubic bone of a woman's body ("Mount of Venus, n."): like Scott's *Atom, Bone, and Embryo*, then, "Desiring Only" features biomorphism's osseous imagery. We might interpret the speaker's desire for "bone" in the poem to be twofold—a bone on top of the bone that is the "Mount of Venus." This desire has obvious phallic associations; however, the image may be Sapphic (the bone simply referring to another female pubic bone). In either case—but perhaps more forcefully in the latter—the image implies mutual genital stimulation without penetration, and thus denies the possibility of conception or reproduction, a denial

that would put an end to the generative power of the human body. At the same time, the speaker's anaphora affirms this inherent ability: that is, if the speaker desires and insists upon only non-reproductive sexual pleasure, she must be highly aware of the life-defining power of her body's generative / regenerative capabilities. Her use of the imperative command "pass me," furthermore, offers a model of sexual autonomy for the reader. Unlike *Atom, Bone, and Embryo*, "Desiring Only" relates its reproductive imagery explicitly to the human body to underscore the inherent powers of the female body and women's sovereignty over them.

Miriam Waddington's poem "The Crystal," in the August 1943 issue of *Preview* (4), presents similar biomorphic imagery. "The Crystal" does not, however, focus explicitly on the internal human body but on an internal, biological space, with the dominant image of the chrysalis as a symbol for the human being's harmony within the natural world:

When I step out and feel the green world,

Its concave walls must cup my summer coming

And curving, hold me

Beyond all geography in a transparent place

Where water images cling to the inside sphere,

Move and distend as rainbows in a mirror

Cast out of focus.

And this crystal chrysallis [*sic*]

Shapes to green rhythms to long ocean flowings

> Rolls towards the sun with sure and spinning speed,
>
> And under the intensely golden point
>
> Warms, expands,
>
> Until walls crack suddenly
>
> Uncup me into large and windy space

The poem includes biomorphic images not yet seen in other *Preview* poems: the sun, the "green world," and / or the chrysalis, all spherical forms popular in biomorphic modernism. The speaker also describes the chrysalis as a "crystal," which is an angular form. All of these images, with their predominantly green and yellow hues, bear a striking affinity with the spherical forms found in Scott's *Atom, Bone and Embryo*. Waddington's images are also full of gestative associations. The "crystal chrysallis [*sic*]" embodies metamorphosis, since a chrysalis is the casing or sheath into which the larvae of most insects retreat and transform into fully-formed adults. In "The Crystal," the assumption that the speaker—who is encased in the chrysalis—is human implicates the human being in this process of transition. In fact, Laura Jane McLauchlan compares Waddington's chrysalis to a "child's first landscape: the mother's body" (118) and argues that "this enclosed space is as close to a womb as language can bring us" (119). Waddington's chrysalis, then, is not only comparable to the egg in Scott's painting, but also to Page's abdomen in "Desiring Only": all three images are chambers of metamorphosis.

Waddington's metamorphic image is similar to the "becoming-insect" scenario in Franz Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis." The chrysalis is unmistakably a symbol of the insect-world: a world that both fascinates and repels. According to Rosi Braidotti, insects "pose the question of radical otherness not in

metaphorical but in bio-morphic terms, that is to say as a metamorphosis of the sensory and cognitive apparatus. . . .[,]" by providing "a new paradigm for discontinuous transmutations without major disruptions" (149). The primary element of this paradigm is their "larval metamorphoses" (Braidotti 149), which form the topic of "The Crystal." Waddington's use of the first person pronoun "I" further implicates the human being in this metamorphosis and implies an inherent mutability on the part of the speaker and / or all human beings comparable to that of the insect. The flexibility of the human being's identity may not necessarily be a physical one (as it is for the insect): it may be an internal, spiritual, or psychological adaptability suggesting that the image of becoming-insect is symbolic of humanity's revitalization in a new, modern world.

The becoming-insect of "The Crystal," moreover, extends humanity's abilities beyond metamorphosis. Braidotti adds that "[o]ther qualities that make insects paradigmatic are. . . the power of mimetism or blending with their territory and environment" (149). We see this unity in Waddington's poem, where the larval subject is comfortably contained within its chrysalis, whose "concave walls must cup [his / her] summer coming" and "hold" the speaker "Beyond all geography," a phrase that mirrors a rejection of landscape's ability to define the human being that we have seen in other *Preview* poems, such as Wreford's "Identity." The chrysalis conforms to the shape of the speaker's body, and it is in complete harmony with the rest of the world, as it "Shapes to green rhythms to long ocean flowings." This is truly a perfect biocentric image: all elements depicted in the poem seem to be in complete balance with the universe. Although the chrysalis may imply a kind of escapism on the part of the speaker—she encloses herself in

a shelter that holds her "Beyond all geography"—the fact that the chrysalis bursts in the final line indicates that escape is not a solution. Rather, the speaker demonstrates her ability to blend in with the environment on her own terms, whether from within the chrysalis or from without.

"The Crystal," re-titled "Green World," became the titular poem of Waddington's first collection, which was published by Sutherland's First Statement Press. Waddington's poems published in *First Statement*, more numerous than those she published in *Preview*, however, are less abstract and more characteristic of a social realist strain of modernism in both content and aesthetic. Her *First Statement* poems "Social Worker" and "Investigator," in which the poet explores the "Slums in odd corners of cities" ("Social Worker" [February 1943]: 10) and the "tangle of hot streets behind the poorhouse" ("Investigator" [April 1943]: 5), are exemplary of the content and social themes of social realist poetry. Not only are few if any biomorphic poems by Waddington published in *First Statement*, there are few biomorphic poems at all in the publication; moreover, as is the case with the body-as-landscape poetry in the little magazine, those biomorphic poems that are included were written by poets who also published in *Preview*. For example, Alice Eedy, who has multiple poems in *Preview*, also has a short poem called "Growing" that is part of her "Two Poems" published in the May 1943 issue of *First Statement* (1.19: 8). Eedy compares the human body to trees that grow tall in the forest through the biomorphic image of "bones in my fingers / cold with the lean growing ache." This, however, is a very rare example of biomorphic content in *First Statement*, a little magazine that typically published poems too apocalyptic—not to mention geometric, as in Kay Smith's poem "Nothing is Plumed" (1.6

[October 1942]: 1), in which "everything" is "at angles, / sharp shadows in back-

yards / of jutting roof the neglected garden seat and toothpick fences"—to suggest

the flowing rhythms or metamorphosis of biomorphism.

Those familiar with *First Statement* will argue, rightly, that many of Louis

Dudek's poems that focus on problems of human agency feature similar images to

those in the biomorphic poems of *Preview* poets; while his poems in *First State-

ment* sometimes include a similar iconography, however, they do not yet support

biomorphic modernism's abstraction and underlying themes of genesis or meta-

morphosis. The poet's "In Praise of Sunrise," published as part of his "Five

Poems" in the January 1943 issue of *First Statement* (10-12), illustrates the way in

which the poet draws on imagery familiar to biomorphism but uses it to very dif-

ferent ends. As the poem's title suggests, the dominant image of the poem is the

sun, common to biomorphism; however, where Waddington's sun is an organic

ball of energy, Dudek's is a "bronze brazen bauble in an inky sky": an inorganic

metal alloy. While the first section of the poem is fairly abstract, the second sec-

tion of the poem—an end-rhymed quasi-sonnet of twelve lines about the poet-

persona's meeting and shared kiss with a young woman—is narrative in form,

which is at odds with the abstraction of biomorphic modernism. The final section

of the poem, which is more abstract, features crystal, botanical, and celestial im-

ages commonly invoked by biomorphic poets: the "stars" that shine like "cold

crystals," and the "rose tree / with glass flowers" in the poet's eye. These images,

however, leave the persona "[c]orpse-cold," and "[i]cicled among the stars / [he]

sleeps," as Eliot would say, "like a patient etherized upon a table." There is no

indication of transformation or regeneration in these lines; nor is there any attempt

to suggest that human agency may combat the terrifying "surgeon's needle" that pierces the persona and puts him to sleep.

Another Dudek poem in *First Statement*, "A White Paper" (2.1 [August 1943]: 8), also features a number of images typical of biomorphic modernism: the "[b]utterly wing" of the first line, the "delicate ribs / and bones" and the ocean imagery of "dalmanites" and "corals / in a green sea" that dance in "sunbeams." These bones, however, are of a "dancer / who died in the sea / and buried his body in stone"; the "dalmanites" are not a thriving organism either, but an extinct fossil the poet observes in "a museum" as a "record" of its former existence. The poet invokes these images to describe the "white paper" of the poem's title, on which the poet has written, presumably, a poem. Although the paper is a document or "record" of the poet's creativity, Dudek describes this creativity as a *fait accompli*—not as a continuing process. His images are neither generative nor transformative; they point, instead, to fatigue or death, which is certainly unlike the biomorphic paintings by Scott and poems by Waddington and Page.

Dudek's implication of fatigue leading to death in creative / life processes is illuminated by an article in the October 1943 issue of *First Statement*. Written by Geoffrey Ashe—the little magazine's Vancouver "agent"—the piece describes "A Scientific Attitude in Poetry" (2.3: 8-9), which is its title. Ashe suggests that

> [t]he scientific world-process may be regarded, without loss of objectivity, as an inconceivably exalted tragedy. Unfriendly, impartial, the giant interplay of forces pursues its evolution, and we as poets can only contemplate it as it grinds men and nations and species and systems into nothingness. (8)

This quite pessimistic and apocalyptic view of the world, humanity, and science certainly leaves little room for the idea of human agency. Although Ashe suggests that this "contemplative attitude" in poetry "does not preclude joy or love or hopefulness" (8), he adds that scientific poetry should

> act as a counterweight, a corrective, to the spirit of inflated confidence and wishful thinking which tends to be evolved by active science—the sort of banality we find in the Victorian optimists; it will serve constantly to set all men, scientists particularly, in their true perspective to a universe in which they are as molecules in the ocean. (9)

For Ashe, scientific contemplation illuminates the power of the universe over the human and his or her insignificance in a world that will evolve and transform regardless of his actions. His "scientific attitude" presupposes a rejection of biomorphic modernism, which includes the human being in the processes of the universe and implies his or her *significance* and ability to influence the world, whether positively or negatively.

Ashe's comments reflect an attitude towards science and the universe that is typical of *First Statement* verse. A number of Dudek's poems, like "In Praise of Sunrise," similarly contemplate the world and its processes (although indirectly) as a threat to human existence. It is certainly significant, moreover, that the editors chose to publish Paul Halley's poem "Apocalypse" on the same page as Ashe's article. Halley's use of the sun to foreground the poet-persona as "a skull" reminds the reader of impending death instead of living potential, which is reduced in the poem from human to a chiroptera: "we," along with the persona, are compared to "bats deep down a well." Unlike Waddington's human-insect im-

agery in "The Crystal," Halley's bats are not capable of metamorphosis and they symbolize doom and death, not generation. "Apocalypse" and *First Statement* poems in general rarely invoke scientific imagery or a scientific perspective to demonstrate directly the significance of the human being in the natural world, as do Scott's paintings and many poems in *Preview*; rather, they often illustrate the insignificance of the human being in a massive world that operates without regard for the human's "life-sized life" (Halley, "Apocalypse").

Northern Review includes biomorphic poems not only by former *Preview* poets, but also by new contributors and former *First Statement* poets. Anne Wilkinson, who published neither in *Preview* nor in *First Statement*, made a biomorphic contribution to *Northern Review* in the 1940s. As the title of Wilkinson's "Climate of the Brain," one of her "Two Poems" published in the October-November 1949 issue*,* suggests*,* the poet explores the internal body—primarily through the osseous image of the "skull." Unlike Halley's "skull" in "Apocalypse," however, Wilkinson's cranium is fertile and "ablaze with golden flowers." Meanwhile, the speaker of the poem resembles that of Page's "Desiring Only" in the way she insists upon non-generative images, but in doing so calls attention to the fertile powers of the natural world and human being. In the first stanza, the poet commands the "Climate of the brain" to "convert your Africas; / In weather white with Christmas stall creation." In the second stanza, she speaks to the abstract "Hot hasty seed," a germinative image, and explains that she would "cover every sprouting one of you / With winter!" Although she initially wishes she could evade the generative powers of these images by shrouding them with winter, it is clear that the poet cannot overcome the brain's creative ability that is

integral to her humanity. By the final stanza she appears to accept and embrace this power when she commands the "sap" of the world to "Run free at the big blessing of the sun!" The poem, evidently, expresses through abstract language a biocentric attitude and presents imagery of the internal body similar to the bio-morphic poetry in *Preview* and Scott's painting *Atom, Bone, and Embryo.*

Interestingly, and somewhat ironically, *First Statement* alum Louis Dudek published multiple poems in *Northern Review* reflecting the biocentric philoso-phy, interest in perception and microscopic imagery, and painterly aesthetic of Scott's paintings *Atom, Bone, and Embryo* and *Endocrinology*. His poem "Flow-ers on Windows," in *Northern Review*'s October-November 1947 issue, features not simply the botanical colours of Scott's painting, but actual botanical images of "waves of violets, / stiff chrysanthemums, bugles, bells of red" that are ". . . the life that answers" to the seemingly dead world of the city. These botanical images lead the poet to contemplate not the external urban space, but rather "the city built within. . . that moves a man." He concludes that "All moves with a hidden mean-ing" that the poet searches for, and while he has "ravaged the womb, and the planted seed, / and moved mountains of knowledge for this gold," the only thing he can assert with certainty is the generative power of the natural world evident on "the surface—how these flowers unfold!" As he connects the image of the flowers to the internal workings of man ("the city built within"), Dudek proffers the human being a considerable amount of inherent power over the external world.

In Dudek's "O Clever Sight" in *Northern Review*'s December-January 1946-7 issue, the poet picks up the topic of perception and addresses it in biomor-

phic terms. Dudek even brings his investigation to a molecular level, as he considers "[a] photon of light" as it strikes his "blooded half-closed eye." This photon provides the speaker the ability to "unravel, / pink from violet, / petal from petal in a rose," which we might interpret as an exceptional and poetic power of perception, or even a painterly power of perception. In spite of this ability, however, the speaker claims that he remains "ignorant" at least of the "seam between the eye and the mind," the space where his poetic / painterly thoughts are born. Nevertheless, this poem is considerably more positive and empowering than Dudek's "scientific" poems in *First Statement,* and his biomorphic imagery offers the individual powers of perception previously unavailable to the speaker and reader, even if it admits to a continued ignorance.

Poets who knew Marian Scott and were familiar with her work, as well as many poets who published in *Preview* and in *Northern Review,* experimented with biomorphic modernism in the early 1940s. Poems by P.K. Page and Miriam Waddington explore the human being's relationship with the natural world through organic imagery, especially of the egg or cocoon, and themes of genesis and flux. Perhaps the reproductive symbolism, imagery, and themes of biomorphic modernism justified its popularity among female CAS artists and Montreal poets, particularly Scott, Page, Waddington, and Wilkinson.[121] As he began to publish in *Northern Review,* however, Dudek also began to use this imagery to reflect upon

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[121] Based on her journal, it is clear that Scott was searching for a subject matter that could communicate the beauty and wonder of maternal generative powers. Writing about her botanical paintings in 1939, she commented on this very goal: "Yes there is room for my growing pictures[.] [H]ow wrong these men are when they lable [*sic*] them phalic [*sic*], don't they know the maternal instinct is the strongest instinct in woman—these are maternal pictures[,] pictures trying to express the wonder of growth" ("February 24, 1939").

the inherent mutability of the human being and his mystical inner workings. In these biomorphic poems by forties poets, the depiction of the speaker's intimate communion with the natural world often serves as an example for the reader, as something he or she may want to emulate.

IV: A Total Revolt:
The Agency of *Preview*'s and *Northern Review*'s Automatist Poetics

CAS artists and Montreal poets of the early 1940s rarely created works in the biomorphic strain of automatism; however, a number of artists and poets did experiment with Surrealist automatism throughout the decade. In Montreal, the broader automatist conversation was among *Preview* poets, a few *Northern Review* poets including some who had published in *First Statement*, and francophone CAS painters who formed the group "Les Automatistes," led by Paul-Emile Borduas. Some forties poems published in *Preview* and *Northern Review* reflect the automatist mannerisms of this band of Québécois painters: the introduction of abstract and "potential" images, the subversion of formal principles, and the representation of "experience dredged more deeply from the unconscious than prevailing art-making practices seemed to allow" (W. Rubin 41), which often resulted in a blurring of the lines between reality and imagination.

Certainly, the little magazine poets and "Les Automatistes" differed in their membership and specific motivations—the little magazines were composed of Anglophone poets, many of whom were middle-class and well-educated, united generally in a leftist cause, whereas "Les Automatistes" consisted of French, working-class painters, writers, actors, and dancers who advocated a culturally

specific refusal to comply with the dictates of church and state.[122] Nevertheless, both the poets and "Les Automatistes" painters whose works exhibit these automatist effects employed them to a similar end: to challenge the perceptions of reader or viewer and enable them, along with the poet or artist, to recover what André Breton calls their "psychic force" ("Second Manifesto" 137), or the imaginative powers of the unconscious.

The Surrealist qualities of *Preview* and *Northern Review* poetry still represent a dark corner in the study of the periodicals. By contrast, there has been significant interest in Page's Surrealist and automatist tendencies in both her artwork and poetry. Barbara Godard writes in her essay for the P.K. Irwin[123] catalogue of Page's "automatic drawing in the Surrealist mode of *le hasard objectif*" in Brazil (6); and in *The Montreal Forties*, Trehearne discusses the "Surrealism of effect" in Page's *Preview* poem "Some There Are Fearless," which the poet achieves through her "painterly imagination" by "producing juxtapositions of the Bréton or Salvador Dali flavour" (76).[124] In a later essay on Page's Surrealist poetry, Trehearne provides a cogent analysis of the surreal in another *Preview* poem by Page, "Panorama" ("P.K. Page and Surrealism" 50). Trehearne contends, how-

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[122] In the 1948 manifesto "Refus Global," Borduas wrote that the "established order" can only be "transform[ed]" through total refusal of artistic and societal conventions ("Refus" 39): "We must break with the conventions of society once and for all, and reject its utilitarian spirit. We must refuse to function knowingly at less than our physical and mental potential; refuse to close our eyes to vice and fraud perpetrated in the name of knowledge or favo[u]rs or due respect. We refuse to be confined to the barracks of plastic arts—it's a fortress, but easy enough to avoid. We refuse to keep silent. Do what you want with us, but you must hear us out. We will not accept your fame or attendant honors. They are the stigmata of shame, silliness and servility. We refuse to serve, or to be used for such purposes. We reject all forms of INTENTION, the two-edged, perilous sword of REASON. Down with both of them, back they go!" (37).

[123] P.K. Irwin is Page's painting alias.

[124] Trehearne returns to "Some There Are Fearless" in his essay "P.K. Page and Surrealism" and argues that the "indefinitely bizarre landscape or atmosphere" that opens the poem is part of what characterizes it as Surreal (48).

ever, that until more evidence of *Preview* poets' interest in and experimentation

with automatism becomes available, we must call Surrealist and automatist quali-

ties of Page's writing and their historical relation to Surrealism ". . . a fascinating

coincidence" ("P.K. Page and Surrealism" 59). He adds that the *Preview* group

does not "appear to have been familiar with the early exhibitions and student pub-

lications of the later-named Montreal 'Automatistes,' the group of artists gathered

around the painter Paul-Émile Borduas, whose *Refus global* was to shake the

complacencies of Quebec's cultural establishment four years after Page's depar-

ture from Montreal in 1944" ("P.K. Page and Surrealism" 49-50). Trehearne's

comment, ironically, is the closest anyone has come to considering *Preview*'s (not

just Page's) Surrealism.

　　　In her forthcoming biography of P.K. Page, Sandra Djwa remarks that

Page and the *Preview* poets were, in fact, quite familiar with the automatist

gouaches of Paul-Émile Borduas. In an email to the author, Djwa notes that

> On a beautiful spring day in 1942, the whole *Preview* group trailed up to
>
> the Théatre de l'Ermitage for an exhibition of Paul-Émile Borduas's Sur-
>
> realist paintings. (Borduas exhibited between April 25 and May 2).[125]
>
> They would have seen forty-five paintings, all numbered. Most were
>
> gouaches, a medium which Page herself was later to favour, and brilliantly
>
> coloured, like the crimson and maroon No. 6, the abstracted head of a
>
> rooster (later called "Chantecler") or No. 12 (later "The Bottled Condor")
>
> a surreal head of a bird in a bottle in splashes of grey, black and yellow.

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[125] The *Preview* poets attended the show shortly after they started the little magazine: the first issue
of *Preview* was published in March 1942.

No. 28 is again a gouache in yellow, lime, orange and maroon: it could be

a fish on a line, or an eye or indeed two eyes. ("Re: P.K. Page and Art")

It may not be possible to say who influenced whom, but (as Djwa's discussion

indicates), *pace* Trehearne, the *Preview* group was absolutely familiar with the

work of the painters who later identified themselves as "Les Automatistes." *Pre-*

view's interest in and familiarity with the automatists' work, and their attendance

at Borduas's show, are unsurprising given that many of the automatist painters,

including Borduas, were also CAS members.[126] Borduas's paintings undoubtedly

influenced Page's poetry, if not early on, then at least in her later work.[127] As for

the other members of *Preview*, Shaw's promotion of the November 1942 CAS

show in "Wasteland" is evidence that *Preview* members who attended the show

were exposed to Borduas's paintings, including *Still Life (Fruit and Leaves)*

(1941), *Airman's Helmeted Head at Night* (1941), *Woman with a Mandoline*

(1941), and *gouache 48* (1942), which Borduas presented there (Gagnon 139-40).

Evidently, both Page and other *Preview* members were familiar with Borduas's

work and Montreal automatism during the early 1940s.

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[126] Borduas was a member of the CAS from its inception in 1939 until it disbanded in 1948, and he exhibited at every CAS group show except for the 1941 show, "Drawings, Prints, Sculpture." The other painters of the later-named "Les Automatistes" became members of the CAS as early as 1943. Pierre Gauvreau exhibited at the CAS's 1943 fall show at the Dominion Gallery and is listed, along with Jean-Paul Mousseau, Fernand Leduc, and Louise Renaud, as a "Junior Artist" in the CAS's fall show of the following year. Marcel Barbeau and Jean-Paul Riopelle first exhibited with the CAS in February of 1946, at the Seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings held at the Art Association of Montreal (Varley 42). The only painter of the original group of "Les Automatistes" for whom there is no record of membership or participation with the CAS is Marcelle Ferron-Hamelin.

[127] Page indicates her interest in Borduas's paintings before her move to Canberra in the 1950s and the inspirational force of his canvases in her memoir (published after Trehearne's article): "But Borduas's canvases commented on / a world overturned. With his *Refus Global*, / which later proclaimed what his paintings portrayed, / church and state, the Establishment, shuddered and shook. / (I little then knew that one day I would choose / *Cathédrale Engloutie* for a Canberra house)" (*Hand Luggage* 19).

Although these painters were not recognized as members of the interartistic collective "Les Automatistes" until 1947, *Preview* poets had been exposed to their paintings around the time the painters of the later-named group first came together in 1943.[128] It was at this point that ". . . Borduas, Lyman, and Maurice Gagnon were putting pressure on the C.A.S. to admit these young people as members and [that] many of them exhibited together in the exhibition called 'Les Sagittaires'" (Ellenwood 21). In fact, if we are to speak of automatism as an artistic style that emerged in Montreal during the 1940s, then we should travel as far back in time as 1942, when Borduas held his first solo show at the Foyer du Théâtre de l'Ermitage that the *Preview* poets attended. The show comprised forty-nine gouaches by Borduas, which include his very first experiments with automatism (Gagnon 103).

The impact of Borduas's gouaches on the Montreal art scene should not be underestimated: François-Marc Gagnon notes that reviewers of the 1942 show had been "struck . . . by the novelty of the gouaches and by the break they seemed to represent in Borduas's development" (105). Borduas's subsequent solo exhibition in 1943, which included a large number of oil paintings, did not have the same effect: "In moving from gouache to oils," Gagnon remarks, "Borduas ran into the classic problem of Surrealist painting. . . . In trying to achieve with oils the effect obtained with gouache, he must soon have realized that the oils allowed him nothing like the same freedom" (108). For this reason, Borduas's gouaches have generally been understood as exemplary of his automatist tech-

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[128] These painters included students from the École des Beaux-Arts, and Borduas and his students from the École du Meuble.

nique. It is not surprising, then, that Borduas exhibited at least one of these gouaches at almost every show of "Les Automatistes," including the representative show in Paris at the Galerie Luxembourg in July 1947 (Gagnon 123-4).[129]

The painting *Marine Cemetery*, or gouache *No. 11* (Fig. 17), is a perfect example of the way these automatist paintings attempted to recover a "psychic force" for the painter and the viewer (Breton, "Second Manifesto" 137). The sinuous lines of this abstract painting, and the feathery details of its surface, are the marks of a spontaneous act of creation confirmed by Borduas in a recorded conversation with Maurice Gagnon in 1942:

> I have no preconceived idea. Facing the blank paper with my mind empty
> of any literary ideas, I obey whatever impulse comes first. . . . A first
> stroke is thus drawn, dividing the sheet of paper. The division of the paper
> unleashes a whole series of thoughts which are always automatically car-
> ried out. (qtd. in Gagnon 103)

From these unconscious thoughts, a series of images takes shape on the canvas that denies any logical association. The many titles of the painting—including *Small Bird Candy Cane*, *The Blue Bird*, and *Marine Cemetery*—allude to these multifarious images barely representative of anything, as they hover between figurative depiction and total abstraction (Gagnon 176).

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[129] The only "Automatistes" show at which, it appears, Borduas did not exhibit a gouache was the March 1947 show at the home of Pierre and Claude Gauvreau's mother. At this show, Borduas presented only new works (Gagnon 120-1).

Fig. 17. Paul-Émile Borduas, *Marine Cemeterey,* 1942, oil on canvas. Private Collection (Gagnon 177)

These images resemble what Dario Gamboni calls "potential images": images ". . . established—in the realm of the virtual—by the artist but dependent on the beholder for their realization, and their property is to make the beholder aware—either painfully or enjoyably—of the active, subjective nature of seeing" (18). They are images that "become actual during the act of contemplation in a creative way; they are not predetermined" (Gamboni 19). For instance, as I look at the painting, I might identify in the red shape with the white circle (in the painting's upper right corner) the head of an alligator or a bird; someone else might look at this same spot and see instead a fish or a turtle. In this way, the images validate the imagination and the realm of possibility as an element of reality, and they engage the perceptions of their audience as part of the act of artistic creation. In turn, the audience ideally becomes aware of this imaginative freedom they pos-

sess and will exercise it in extra-artistic contexts.[130]

Although Trehearne notes there is no evidence that *Preview* poets "experimented with automatic writing. . . [or] played Surrealist games like 'The Exquisite Corpse,' designed to liberate the unconscious" ("P.K. Page and Surrealism" 49), he nevertheless suggests that these unknowns do not impede a consideration of such poets' experimentation with automatism or Surrealism more generally: Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, citing Michael Riffaterre, asserts that when considering texts as automatist, one should "speak only of the 'effect of automatism'. . . to avoid an indefinite and unproductive quarrel about the authenticity or the psychological conditions of their production" (84, qtd. in Trehearne, "P.K. Page and Surrealism" 50, my translation).[131] It is the effect of automatism that engages an audience and inspires them to action—not the creative process, which only really affects the artist.

A number of poems in *Preview* display the effect of automatism by working towards a validation of experiences seemingly beyond reality as *part* of reality and by presenting an abundance of images—many of which are potential, like those in *Marine Cemetery*—that complicate the distinction between the figurative and the abstract. In Bruce Ruddick's poem "Fever," published in *Preview*'s sixteenth issue of October 1943 (10), the persona proposes hallucination as a gateway to a flurry of images in the first two stanzas:

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[130] Similar automatist qualities are visible in a number of Borduas's paintings. For example, in *Bombing Submarine* (1948), there is a central potential image of either a ship or fish, and in *Mexican Climate* (1946), the right side of the canvas features what might be a bird, a woman wearing a dress or skirt, or a totem pole with feathers at its base. These potential images are also present in the work of other Montreal automatists, such as Pierre Gauvreau's *The Star-footed Skeleton* (1949), in which the skeletal image can just as easily be interpreted as a butterfly.

[131] "A ne parler que d''effet automatisme'. . . pour éviter une querelle indéfinie et improductive sur l'authenticité ou les conditions psychologiques de leur production" (Chénieux-Gendron 84).

Hey—in my delirium I saw

fat bodies rocked on loded [*sic*?] feet and brown

heads grinning from the withered vines;

fishes in cutlery;

and the streets of Europe sour with weather

sweet with peace;

and hollow dogs

scooting flat-eared down the roads;

the children, plump,

astride giraffes and casual does.

And every day the laughing poor and I

scooped dimes and nuggets

from the city dump.

Spent from the poppy tumult

I lay, rubbed my beard and spat

the scales of fever from my teeth and tongue

while starched girls bated me

and gave me love.

The context is characteristically Surrealist: the state of "delirium" or illness lead-

ing to a kind of "profane illumination," to use Walter Benjamin's term (49). That

is, the poem presents the experience of intoxication—the pharmacokinetic variety

implied in the double meaning of Ruddick's "poppy tumult"—as a way of yield-

ing both a surplus of imagery and a pathway to "a materialistic, anthropological

inspiration" (Benjamin 49). Interestingly, in his glossary of automatism written in 1948, Borduas lists "Delirium" as a new term and offers the following definition: "[d]isorientation caused by fever or sickness. Great upheaval in the soul caused by the passions: delusions of grandeur. Enthusiasm, fits" ("Comments" 47).

Indeed, the psychological experience of delirium as avenue towards artistic creation is a thoroughly automatist concept (Gibson). Not only does it appear in Ruddick's "Fever," but also in Page's "Waking," of *Preview*'s May 1943 issue (5), which creates a similar context for the persona, who is "crippled by sleep's illness": a hallucinatory state that rhythmically engenders what Trehearne describes as ". . . the crowding of incidental syllables. . . mirroring the flurry of mental and sensory activity after waking" (*Montreal Forties* 85). "Waking" does not achieve the same kind of social illumination Ruddick's "Fever" aspires to, perhaps because Page's poem teeters on the edge of the "solipsistic" (Trehearne, *Montreal Forties* 85). In "Fever," the city's social problems are brought to ironic clarity through the speaker's personal experience of delusion, characterized by the illogical association of images: the "brown / heads grinning from the withered vines; fishes in cutlery. . . . hollow dogs / scooting flat-eared down the roads; the children, plump, astride giraffes and casual does." These painterly images crowd Ruddick's lines before his first period and are connected only by a semi-colon; in effect, they evoke the dizzying restlessness of the city and embody the grotesqueness of poverty, in which the "poor / scooped dimes and nuggets from the city dump," tossed there (presumably) by the wasteful and unappreciative wealthy.

Like those of Borduas's painting, Ruddick's painterly images in "Fever" become, at times, "potential images" (Gamboni 18): they verge on blending to-

gether through the poet's suppression of connections between them and his choice of diction. The image of "fishes in cutlery" is exemplary, as it anticipates the persona's "scales of fever" and his being "bated" (or baited) by the "starched girls" in the subsequent stanza. These separate images may fuse into a single image only if the reader wills them to come together, like Borduas's images of blue birds or a cemetery that appear through the assistance of the artist, but are willed into his paintings by the viewer. Another image, that of "the children plump / astride giraffes and casual does," has a slightly different effect: a typically Surrealist image, it is whimsical, implausible, and irrational, and it confuses the boundaries between the real and the imaginary. Ruddick's poem, evidently, provides an abundance of painterly images that confuse the reader's sense of reality and encourage him or her to imagine new realities.

Ruddick's "Fear," published in the March 1944 issue of *Preview* (6-7), employs another automatist technique to facilitate the creation of images that frustrate rational logic. Trehearne cites Page's ". . . tendency to juxtapose two nouns around 'of'," a habit that he calls the "*a* of *b* formula" (*Montreal Forties* 84; "P.K. Page and Surrealism" 47), and which J.H. Matthews has shown to be a typical Surrealist gesture enabling the juxtaposition of disparate, irrational images (Matthews , *Surrealism* 91, qtd. in Trehearne, "P.K. Page and Surrealism" 47). Ruddick engages various prepositions to this same end: the first and third stanzas of "Fear" are exemplary of this prepositional technique:

Buried O easily in hint

to the sole, and the hand

told by a rosy threat,

in eyelid quick to a blast

or, passive to penny

when pain's ultimate sends

death to the burning nerve

and fear goes.

These are accomodated [*sic*],

the easy, and the final fall.

. . . .

Take any city, say

in mind or innocuous on map

See in the geometry

arrows and blades of it

clipping the edges of hope,

the tendrils of wonder.

. . . .

In these lines, we find the same "*a* of *b*" formula used by Page with Ruddick's

"edges of hope" or "the tendrils of wonder." There is a more dominant preposi-

tion, however, that facilitates Surrealist imagery in the poem: the repetitive use of

the preposition "to" between adjective, verb, or noun to create a verbal image that

would appear to be irrational yet grammatically correct—also a typical Surrealist

technique.[132] Thus, Ruddick can describe fear, an abstract feeling, as "Buried. . .

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[132] Matthews discusses Surrealist experimentation with grammatical structure, noting "the role
played by prescribed linguistic form in bringing to light images that can excite the imagination
while frustrating reason" (*Surrealism* 91). Grammatical correctness in Surrealist poetry often has a
defamiliarizing effect because it leads the reader to expect other rational and orderly content,
which he or she is ultimately denied.

in hint / **to** the sole. . .” or “in eyelid quick **to** a blast / or, passive **to** penny.” Evidently, the prepositions “in” can be seen to play a similar role. Unlike the suppression of “like” or “as” in Surrealist verse, these prepositions are an obvious—and in some instances the *only*—link between images; however, their overemphasis highlights the absence of other connective words, such as “like” and “as,” which are common to traditional poetry and which we have seen in Dudek’s, Souster’s, and Layton’s *First Statement* poems. The almost manic repetition of “to” in Ruddick’s lines, furthermore, leaves the impression that its appearance is beyond the control of the author—that is, automatic.

Ruddick’s poem is abstract and automatist because it engenders ambiguity of imagery through a number of other Surrealist techniques. His frequent use of the neutral pronoun “it”—“it trapezes in brain,” “it curls over the sills,” “it stays, it stays”—as a stand-in for the titular “Fear” may support an automatist effect: it is not anaphoric but exophoric, and thus loses sight of its referent. Along with his prepositional constructions, the exophoric noun phrases leave the impression of “language moving forward under its own momentum” rather than by the author’s conscious decisions (Matthews, *Surrealism* 91). As a result, Ruddick’s images are neither crisp nor contrived, but proliferate; they are multifarious and potential, much like the images found in Borduas’s *Marine Cemetery.* Significantly, in his suppression of formulaic connections between images and the choice of an abstract title for his poem, Ruddick clearly wants to give the *effect* of automatist composition; conversely, Borduas does not seem to be concerned with displaying this effect. Although he describes the painting’s automatic process in an interview (qtd. in Gagnon 103), Borduas’s final decision to name the painting *Marine Cem-*

etery (a fitting title given that the collection of his "potential" images seems to have an aquatic theme) intimates that, eventually, he was intending to make the automatically composed painting into a representation. Nevertheless, both Borduas's painting and Ruddick's poem exhibit a Surrealist abundance and juxtaposition of imagery that emerge from their bending the rules of artistic or poetic composition.

Kit Shaw, a *Preview* member rarely mentioned except as the wife of co-editor Neufville Shaw, published only one poem in the little magazine, and it also displays some of the automatist qualities of Borduas's painting. With "Lost Identity," her prose-poem in *Preview*'s June 1942 issue, published very soon after Borduas's April-May exhibition, Shaw incorporates a number of characteristically Surrealist images while undermining traditional poetic form to confuse and push her readers away from a reliance on rational expectations:

> Said the man in the cutaway. . . 'But do they know who I am? I mean is there the slightest doubt as to my identity? Or would they take me for a glass blower, a muffin-man or a broker? Now see with my hat on. . . if I tilt it ever so ever so [*sic*] slightly over one eye and hold my gloves so with the fingers downward, then would they know? Or suppose I buttered my hair and tied my coat by the sleeves around my belly—or even killed a man! I mean ripped him all apart and hid the cadaver inside my coat like a walking charnel house. Everything that is but the head. . . Mother of God, its [*sic*] too big for my pocket! (no point in rousing an unsuspecting tailor's suspicion) maybe a fence paling or a hat box- a hat box full of juicy Yorick[. . . .] THEN by God they'd know me!. . . . (n. pag.)

Shaw's "Lost Identity" is apparently self-conscious about its Surrealist status: the hat and gloves, the hat box, the cadaver, and the cricket bat, are practically iconic images from paintings by Rene Magritte and Salvador Dali. The poem's climactic event, furthermore, is the speaker's suggestion that he could spontaneously commit homicide, recalling André Breton's notorious comment in the "Second Surrealist Manifesto" of 1930 that "[t]he simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd" ("Second Manifesto" 125). Shaw's potentially homicidal speaker is really a metaphor for the idea of "total revolt" and "complete insubordination" in the face of social and artistic conventions (Breton, "Second Manifesto" 125). In its sheer teetering on the fence between poem and prose, like Breton's *Nadja* (a poem often mistaken for a novel), "Lost Identity" defies generic classification.

Its lengthy, so-called "lines" of verse are the poetic transposition of Borduas's over-flowing gouaches, which break the basic rules of composition. The title and horizontal orientation of *Marine Cemetery* are said to be suggestive of a landscape composition (Gagnon 176). If the painting is a landscape, *Marine Cemetery*'s artist has broken with the tradition of linear perspective in landscape painting and filled the painting instead with images focusing the viewer's attention on objects within the landscape rather than the landscape itself. Consequently, there is no clear foreground, middle ground, or background; in fact, what might be expected to represent the background—the blue elements of the canvas—are simultaneously presented as objects or images in the painting (like the blue bird of one of the painting's titles). "Lost Identity," similarly, breaks with poetic tradition by

avoiding any kind of stanza structure, metre, rhythm, or concept of line length. Furthermore, as a prose-poem, "Lost Identity" breaks with prose tradition by establishing a narrative frame for its central event—"Said the man in the cutaway . . ."—to which it never returns: like Borduas's painting, the poem lacks a foreground, middle ground, and background. In fact, the poem does not have an official "end," in that the quotation marks of its speaker are never closed, and its terminal punctuation mark is an ellipsis. This open status of the poem subverts the formal standards of grammar and poetry and invites the reader to complete or continue the artistic creation.[133]

Shaw's poem also achieves a validation of hypothetical meanings in its transitions between grammatical moods. It presents a conditional mood with the clause ". . . if I tilt it ever so ever so [*sic*] slightly. . ." and the opening phrase "Or suppose . . ." as the context for the homicidal act. This conditional mood is sustained only temporarily; the poem turns on the line "Mother of God, its [*sic*] too big for my pocket!" to the indicative mood, where what was surreal—the homicidal act—turns real. In effect, the poem enacts the recovery of Breton's "psychic force" by demonstrating a refusal to distinguish between the conscious and the unconscious, the potential and the actual. The Surrealist confusion between the real and the unreal can alienate the reader as it defers the poem's meaning; however, it can also inspire in him or her greater concentration and awareness of the imaginative capabilities of the unconscious. Evidently, *Preview* poets, and not just

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[133] It is true that the omission of the closing quotation mark may have been a typographical error and not the poet's design. Even if it were not Shaw who omitted the quotation mark, its exclusion by someone else would only demonstrate the ways in which the reader could become a kind of author as the poem's automatist effects confound rational ordering and engage his or her imagination.

P.K. Page among them, experimented with automatist techniques in their early forties poems as a way of testing the waters of their own artistic freedom.

The automatist effect is also observable in a few poems published in *Northern Review.* For example, in "The Eye of Humility," Kay Smith explores typical Surrealist imagery and establishes potential images through an abundance of prepositions linking nouns and commas or semi-colons linking clauses. In fact, the entire twenty-line poem consists of two stanzas but only three sentences in total; its syntax supports an impression of language propelled forward by the imagination. In the first stanza, the poet establishes a dream context, typical of Surrealism, in which the reader is implicated through the ambiguous pronoun "we." The speaker informs the reader that "we" are "flying" in this realm "not as a kite held at the other end by hand of flesh"—note the "*a* of *b*" formula foregrounding the Surrealist image of a hand without its owner—but rather "with the limbs and torso webbed with a metal boldness." The metallic torso and limbs, moreover, characterize a fragmented and mechanized body in the poem, an image typical of Surrealist art and poetry.[134] The poem's setting, imagery, and syntax establish its abstraction and its representation of unconscious experience.

In the second stanza, Smith creates a new, but still characteristically Surrealist, context: "awakening"—the process of emerging from sleep to wakefulness that we saw in Page's *Preview* poem "Waking." According to Rosalind E. Krauss, in his *First Manifesto* Breton "locates the very invention of psychic automatism

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[134] The fragmented and mechanized body is one aspect of the mechanomorphic body, which I discuss on page 182 (see footnote 119). For Surrealists, the mechanized body, whether fragmented or not, represented a "confusion between the animate and the inanimate, between life and death, a confusion which the Surrealists sought to exploit" (Foster 160).

within the experience of hypnogogic [*sic*] images—that is, of half-waking, half-dreaming, visual experience" (94). In this new context, the strangeness of the dream world clashes with the speaker's reality in the poem, establishing a tension between the abstract and the real, between the unconscious and the conscious. Smith engenders a pull between these poles through an automatist proliferation of imagery:

> In the awakening, in the crash of awakening,
>
> the heart is jolted into its eye,
>
> the ancient oak in the dream an acorn
>
> crowds into the eye,
>
> the seed of Adam enters, Man of Sorrows,
>
> with the eternal stars of wounds in His thigh;
>
> in the dream, in the charmed dream we were flying
>
> out of mind, who now are grounded with the slow root
>
> in the invaded womb of time.

As the speaker awakens, fragmented body parts collide when "the heart is jolted into its eye": the use of the possessive pronoun further confounds the image, as it suggests—but leaves open to interpretation, as do the suggestive forms of Borduas's *Marine Cemetery*—that the heart has an eye of "its" own that is different from the poet's eye. Further crowding of imagery occurs in the third line of the stanza, when the poet metaphorically compares the "ancient oak in the dream" to "an acorn" that "crowds into the eye." As irrationality seeps into her images, the poet relies on typical Surrealist techniques: the "*a* of *b* formula" in the lines "stars of wounds" and "womb of time," with the phonetic similarity between "wounds"

and "womb" adding another layer of association to the poem. Smith's crowding of imagery, use of metaphor, and linking of nouns through prepositions in this poem from *Northern Review* engender the automatist effect seen in many *Preview* poems, an effect that is not characteristic of poems by most *First Statement* poets, such as Dudek, Layton, and Souster.

There are a number of other poems in *Northern Review* that engage with Surrealist tropes and automatist techniques, such as Guy Glover's "The Lunatic" and A.G. Bailey's "Vertical Segment of Journey"—both published in the same issue as Smith's "The Eye of Humility." Although it is not officially stated in the publication, one wonders if the editors envisioned this particular issue of *Northern Review*, October-November 1946, as a "Surrealist-Automatist" issue. In addition to Smith, Glover, and Bailey's poems, Page's "Subjective Eye," which engages a number of Surrealist techniques, was also published in the issue. As Glover's title suggests, "Lunatic" invokes the Surrealist context of delirium to launch its automatist effects, evident in the poet's abstract images, language, and use of the "*a* of *b* formula." In the first stanza, for example, Glover writes of a man whose ". . . capacity for pain had narrowed to the heart / where the ground-glass of love etched allegories," and in the second stanza, Glover describes "The short circuit of desire snapping its flare / [that] Glared the scarred blackness of his loneliness." While the abstract language of "love," "allegories," "desire," and "loneliness" might thwart readers' ability to visualize any image, the vivid nouns such as "heart," "ground-glass," "flare," and "blackness" invite potential images to form in the mind: images that hover on the edge of iconicity and abstraction as in *Marine Cemetery*.

Bailey's "Vertical Segment of Journey," meanwhile, engenders a similar potentiality of imagery through the omission of punctuation. The first nine lines of the poem lack any punctuation marks, while the tenth line includes a semi-colon to connect clauses that seem to proliferate. Each of these lines, moreover, is teeming with images linked by prepositions. Consider a few lines from the poem's first stanza:

> Clawing we climbed the flank of despair
>
> of seeing the gulf of our heartsland [*sic*] open before us
>
> for the great days of the frank and gentle hand in hand
>
> with the stars in the eyes and the feet on the cloud of all names
>
> we had fought (we thought) we were fighting still
>
> for the sail in the eye of the wind and the heaven beyond us. . .
>
> . . . .
>
> would it be heartbeat for answer of what just as real
>
> was clamour of heaven around us, the node and the spell
>
> like as pines below in the valley as sea-shells or ears
>
> that carry the drum of the blood in the spirit's tight fastness.

Bailey's use of prepositions to complicate images is evident in phrases such as "flank of despair" and "stars in the eyes" and "feet on the cloud of all names"; moreover, his use of simile and conjunctions emphasizes the potential of these images to transform into new images, as in the "valley as sea-shells or ears." The impression of corporeal fragmentation, characteristic of Surrealist art, is evident in the disembodied "eyes," "feet," "heart" and "ears" that appear throughout his lines. Although Bailey had published in *Preview*, his contributions to both *Pre-*

view and *First Statement* were nearly equal in number, while Glover only published in *Northern Review*. Both Glover's and Bailey's poems, however, display an automatist effect present primarily hitherto in *Preview*.

The poetry published in *First Statement* in the early 1940s rarely displays automatist or Surrealist qualities; instead, it frequently engages with problems of human agency through a realist mode. For those familiar with *First Statement*'s editorials, the dearth of Surrealist poetics in the little magazine will not be surprising. In his "A Note on Metaphor," published in the little magazine's February 1944 issue (9-10), John Sutherland explicitly criticized the Surrealist poet's use of metaphor, which he felt was "being employed as a poetic standard rather than as an instrument of technique" (9). According to Sutherland, the Surrealists' overuse of metaphor sacrificed "the unity of the poem. . . . [t]he emphasis on the metaphor can be so great that a metaphorical pattern of words is substituted for the initial content" (10). In the subsequent issue of March 1944, *First Statement*'s editors hinted again at a distaste for Surrealist poetry in an editorial arguing that "a fundamental realism is lacking in Canadian writing" (1). In an earlier essay on "Politics and Poetry," Layton admired the "clearness and intelligibility" that the Apocalyptic poets—Layton lists Alan Rook, Henry Treece, M.J. Tambimittu, and H.R. Rodgers as examples—had "restored to English poetry" (19); like these poets, *First Statement*'s editors were reacting against the British Surrealist poetics of the thirties, which they typically associated with *Preview*.[135]

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[135]See Trehearne's "Critical Episodes" for a nuanced discussion of John Sutherland's association of Patrick Anderson's Surrealist poetry with that of Dylan Thomas (39-40). While the "New Apocalypse" movement grew out of Surrealism, its poets were was simultaneously reacting against Surrealist "over-indulgence" (Jackaman 151). They opposed automatist poetics because "material drawn from the unconscious had to be subjected to conscious artistic shaping" (Goodby 860).

In keeping with the editorial comments disparaging Surrealism, or hinting at a disapproval of a Surrealist mode developing in Canadian poetry in the 1940s, the poetry in *First Statement* rarely exhibits the Surrealist-automatist qualities observable in *Preview* and *Northern Review* poems. With the exception of the ironic case of Sutherland[136] and poems by Page or other poets associated primarily with *Preview*, it is uncommon to observe in *First Statement* poems an abundance of prepositions linking nouns, the suppression of "like" or "as" and a corresponding propensity for metaphor to engender irrational, illogical, or potential images, the alternation between grammatical moods or tenses to establish multiple meanings, and an interest in contexts of delirium or altered states of consciousness. Consider the bold, terrible realism of Souster's "The Hunter," published in the eleventh issue in January 1943 (1.11: 3), in which the speaker walks "through fields steaming / after rain" and recalls the cruel but "proud" way his friend held his gun "[u]p to the hog caught in the trap and blew his head in." The violence of Souster's poem is shocking; the visual jolt of its imagery, however, is entirely conscious, stable, logical, and real.

Other *First Statement* poems display an urban realist mode, clearly neither abstract nor Surrealist, and often focus on the human being's sense of helplessness or inability to act during a time of war. Dorothy C. Herriman's poem "Woman on

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[136] Trehearne has noted that in Sutherland's "Triumph," published in the May 1944 issue of *First Statement* (16), the poet employs the "*a of b* formula" and crowds his lines with metaphorical imagery in a Surrealist manner. He admits, however, that Sutherland's Surrealist comparisons are "not as difficult as Anderson's can be" (*Montreal* 35). I would add, moreover, that while Sutherland employs the "*a of b* formula" and explores a Surrealist context—the dream—in "Triumph," the speaker is ironically distrustful of the potential for this context to engender strange or surreal images: he is "Not lulled by sleep's pretenses," he tells us, and is "Glad as I walk to feel my blundering form / Trample on shapes of things that, during day, / Like snakes raise threatening heads to strike, and now / drop their defenceless shadows on the floor." Might Sutherland's poem be an unsuccessful satire of the *Preview* poets' Surrealist mode? If not, it would appear to be a weak attempt by Sutherland at apocalyptic wholeness.

the Curb," in the October 1943 issue (2.4: 11), captures the emotional experience of women during war who watch their husbands and brothers march off to battle through the direct image of "the tight heart / Beating under flowered rayon" that "Times itself with the accuracy of a metronome / To the stride of service boots / slogging deathward." There is nothing illogical or surreal about Herriman's depiction, nor does she experiment with the techniques of automatism we have seen in *Preview* poems. Similarly, *First Statement* editor Audrey Aikman's poem "At the Fall of Jerusalem" describes the sentiments felt by people sitting in the mundane setting of the Café Royal, at a distance from the titular event. As the poet and her companion(s) ". . . sit, and the clock ticks, / The bracelets of the Babylonians jangle faintly outside—Listen—now, as we sit—now, listen. . . ." Besides perhaps their super-sensory ability to hear the "jangle" of the Babylonians' bracelets outside the bar at such a long distance from the actual event—which, of course, is conflated with the very real events of World War II—there is little that is surreal or illogical about the circumstances and images Aikman describes. These poems are typical of the urban realist aesthetic of many *First Statement* poems, which examine the often gritty and unforgiving atmosphere of urban life through colloquial language and modernist tropes that describe the conscious reality of the human, not the potential of unconscious experience.

There are a number of *First Statement* poems, admittedly, that present typically Surrealist scenarios or imagery; these poems do not exhibit the automatist effect, however, nor do they display the various Surrealist techniques that would generate potential or illogical images or scenarios. Irving Layton's poem "Say It Again, Brother" (1.19 [May 1943]: 7-8) is exemplary of a *First Statement* poem

that may, at first glance, appear to include Surrealist-automatist content. The speaker begins by asking the rather violent and decontextualized question, "What can I cut from your heart and from mine. . .?" and suggests that he "must be nuts, loco, clean off my mind" to ask such a question. The very fact that he is able to reflect on his sanity, though, belies the suggestion of insanity or delirium favoured by Surrealist poets; moreover, the speaker launches a rather lengthy and—although expressed colloquially—lucid diatribe on the recent political events in Europe and posits "Joe," the everyman figure he addresses throughout the poem, as the answer to Fascism. Layton's rhyme and structured tercets suggest that the poem was not spontaneously composed. Besides the speaker's initial, shocking request, there is nothing about the poem's effect that is automatist: no abundance of prepositional phrases linking nouns, no juxtaposition of irrational imagery, and no tinkering with verb tense or mood to create hypothetical contexts or alternate meanings.

Evidently, *First Statement* poets shared an interest in the human being and human agency with *Preview* poets and CAS artists, but they rarely explored these issues through an automatist mode of composition in the early 1940s. Both *Preview* and *Northern Review* poets, and not just P.K. Page among them, experimented with automatist techniques in their forties poems as a way of testing the waters of their own artistic freedom. For both the automatist artists and the poets, this new Surrealist style offered an avenue away from realism towards a more abstract art they hoped would stimulate their audience's perceptions. The gap between *First Statement* and these other little magazines of the forties in their adoption of a Surrealist poetics reflects the social and personal interactions *Preview*

and *Northern Review* poets had with visual artists in Montreal and their related exposure to the automatist visual art of Paul-Émile Borduas; until *First Statement* merged with *Northern Review*, its poets were not involved in this artistic circle of influence and did not appreciate its aesthetics, as is evident from *First Statement* editorials and essays. Through research into the historical and social connections between these artistic groups, the coincidences in painterly and poetic style—or lack thereof—become more obvious and significant, as they demonstrate common goals or interests between artistic communities at a particular moment in Canadian cultural history.

V: The Transition of Montreal's Interartistic Modernisms

The many commonalities between CAS art and the poetry in *Preview* and *Northern Review* are not likely coincidental. The marital relationships between members of these groups, the evidence that they engaged in conversations and debates about the role of the artist and art in the modern world, and the fact that Philip Surrey, Peggy Anderson, and later Betty Sutherland actively participated in projects for both groups suggest that a kind of mutual artistic fecundation or stimulation occurred, whether directly or indirectly, between poets and editors of the little magazines and CAS artists. As we have seen, a number of poems published in *Preview* and *Northern Review* and Scott and Surrey's CAS paintings evince concerted attempts to bring back and focus on the human being as the subject and agent of their works. In the spirit of extending the various abilities and possibilities presented in their works to viewers and readers, the artists and poets made their paintings and poems challenging enough to require thorough concentration

and an unconventional sense of perception, and abstract enough to encourage multiple interpretations.

It is equally clear from the many essays and editorials in *First Statement* that the little magazine's editors and its main poets were not initially interested in or experimenting with abstraction and the idioms or modes seen in *Preview* and exemplified in Scott and Surrey's paintings. Through their eventual involvement with and exposure to both the *Preview* poets and the CAS artists, however, a number of *First Statement* poets began to write poems more closely resembling Scott and Surrey's abstract aesthetics. Their poems in *Northern Review*, in fact, demonstrate an emergent interest in biomorphic and body-as-landscape images embracing the motifs of generation, flux, and renewal that their realistic and apocalyptic poetics in *First Statement* rarely explored. Together, the poets and artists of the 1940s in Montreal addressed problems of human agency and restored the human being to the art of Canada; eventually, their efforts to rehumanize Canadian culture and to deal with problems of agency were consolidated through abstraction, biomorphism, and automatism.

Dudek and Layton's exposure to and eventual adoption of the abstract modernist aesthetics seen in *Preview* and CAS paintings, in fact, had a significant impact on their 1950s poetics: vestiges of the imagery, themes, and modes of the 1940s painterly poetics continued to appear in their poems. As they passed through Canadian modernism's "forties-to-fifties transition" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 229), which (briefly summarized) Trehearne has shown to involve a movement towards greater personalism, lyricism, and *integritas*, the body-as-landscape trope, Biomorphism, and Surrealism continued to hold artistic significance for

these poets.[137] For example, Layton's poem "Metamorphosis," in *A Red Carpet*

for the Sun (1959) features a male subject paralyzed by the movement of "New

butterflies"—symbolic of metamorphosis—and "Hypnotized by the sun." The

transformative potential of these images overpowered him and his ". . . limbs

grew mould, / Grew stems and grass": his body morphed into landscape. In "The

Poet Entertains Several Ladies" in the same collection (79), the poet writes of ". . .

the driftwood I perceive / in the spray and lifting mist, twisting tongues / licking

the shore. . . ." Layton metaphorically connects a landscape element, the drift-

wood, to a human body part, the twisting tongues. The poet, evidently, continued

to use the forties abstraction of land and body and the theme of metamorphosis in

a fifties poetics with greater personality and lyricism.

Dudek, meanwhile, continued to experiment with the images and themes

of biomorphism he had begun to employ in his *Northern Review* poems. His well-

known poem "The Pomegranate," meanwhile, offers a glimpse of the dark, inside

realm of the fruit before it is eaten. Dudek writes of the "Jewelled mine of the

pomegranate, whose hexagons of honey / The mouth would soon devour but the

eyes eat like a poem" and compares it to ". . . a diamond of dark cells / Nourished

by tiny streams which crystallized into gems." The organicism of Dudek's subject

and his description of the cells being "crystallized" are characteristic of the bio-

morphic idiom. He goes on to describe the ". . . tender roots / And branches

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[137] In *The Montreal Forties,* Trehearne explains that the term *integritas* comes from Joyce's Ste-
phen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen, who appropriates the term from
Aquinas, translates *integritas* as "wholeness," but Trehearne notes that "one may add other
nuances of connotation, such as 'completeness, soundness,' as well as 'purity, correctness,' all
more or less pertinent to the kind of structural firmness the poets were after" (68). *Integritas* de-
scribes, therefore, "the structural energy that makes aleatory or image-accumulative modernist
poems forcibly complete" (Trehearne 67).

dreaming in the cell-walled hearts of plants," which establishes a connection between the plant / fruit and the internal human body. The "hidden" internal workings of the pomegranate, in fact, may be an abstract metaphor for "the woman grown in secret," presumably a pregnant woman, whose marriage we learn of in a subsequent stanza. Although Dudek's final images are violent and destructive as the pomegranate lies "in ruin" at the hands of the speaker who eats it, the poet explains that the pomegranate "with a mighty grin / Conquers the room" and "Laughs at the light that wounds it." The strange, personified reaction of the fruit and its "awful beauty" are suggestive of its organic powers, which could, like "the world that starts to life / . . . send the pulse pounding on like the bursting of meteors." Ultimately, the poem presents an unresolved tension between the dying pomegranate and the images suggestive of fertility and his language of "recreat[ion]" and "flow[ing]" organicism. Biomorphic icons and abstractions along with metaphoric comparisons of nature and the human body, evidently, continued to appear in Dudek's poetry of the 1950s.

Although Dudek and Layton publicly denounced Surrealist techniques in their essays and editorials in *First Statement*, their interest in Surrealism, automatic composition, and the irrational aesthetics of the automatist effect intensified following their involvement with *Northern Review* and into the early 1950s. The publication of *Refus Global* in 1948 and the subsequent dismantling of the CAS were significant cultural events in Montreal: it would have been difficult for these poets to ignore or dismiss the occurrences given that their friends and colleagues were involved. A subsequent revived and revised interest in Surrealism on the part of the poets associated with *First Statement* is evident in the pages of the little

magazines of the fifties, particularly in *Contact*. In May-August 1953, *Contact* published an article by Richard B. Vowels (an American professor of Swedish poetry) about the Swedish Surrealist theorist and poet Artur Lundkvist entitled "Poetry and the Fevered Vision" (16). Commending Lundkvist's "vivid iconography" and the "exciting power of his language" (16), Vowels's article complemented his translation of two Lundkvist poems published in the same issue. *Contact* also published translations of poems by Surrealists Jacques Prévert and Octavio Paz, as well as Jean Cocteau (who denied being a Surrealist but is often associated with the movement). These Surrealist inclusions in the periodical evince, at the very least, Souster's curiosity about and interest in Surrealist poetics in the 1950s, since he was the little magazine's editor.

Although Souster himself rarely (if ever) wrote poems with a Surrealist flair, many of his colleagues did in the 1950s. Their engagement with Surrealism, however, represents something of a departure from the forties focus on agency towards a primary interest in the energy of irrationality that could be unleashed from Surrealist contexts and accumulative imagery. Dudek's poem "Dawn," published in his *Twenty-Four Poems* (1952: 1), is similar to Page's "Waking" and Smith's "Eye of Humility" in its use of the premise of waking up as a springboard to Surrealist imagery "for which rational logic or past experience has not prepared us" (Matthews, *Imagery* 4). It is difficult to rationalize the image of a dawn-fly whose wings "roared like dreams / and fought with two suns on a pin, changing colour" (1). Avi Boxer's poems of the decade, such as "Disarmament" in *Contact* or "Saturday Night" in *CIV/n* 4 of October 1953 (7), exhibit jarring juxtaposition of nouns through the "*a* of *b* formula" typical of automatist poetry.

Beyond Dudek and Boxer, Layton's 1950s poetics, as Trehearne has shown, are also partially based in "Surrealist free association" (*Montreal* 233). Trehearne identifies "The Cold Green Element" as a poem with a Surrealist visual atmosphere (*Montreal* 223). His "In the Midst of My Fever" invokes the same context as Ruddick's "Fever" to explore irrational images of the speaker's corporeal fragmentation. "Composition in Late Spring," with assimilative triangulation of the second last line—"Where poems like angels like flakes of powder"—that works to "expand sense" (Matthews, *Imagery* 8), is also loaded with Surrealist images.[138] For Dudek and Layton in the fifties, Surrealism's ability to access a subconscious, non-rational aspect of the human imagination was essential to the "wholeness" or *integritas* they desired in their poems.

The Surrealism and biomorphic modernism of forties poetics had a lasting impact on the poets of the fifties, even if its role in the later decade was revised and adapted. It was through the little magazines of the forties that many poets were first exposed to these new modernist modes and idioms, but this exposure went beyond the poems published therein: they learned of these innovations through the visual art the little magazines reproduced, through the notices of art exhibitions the publications printed and the poets subsequently attended, or the interviews with painters the poets and editors conducted. The personal relationships between the poets and artists of the decade played a major role in the discursive and creative interactions between the CAS and little magazine poets and

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[138] The "associative" energy of Layton's penultimate line was first identified by Trehearne, who explains that Layton presents "an initial likeness between imminent poems and hovering angels" that "serves as a bridge to a less intuitive comparison of poems to 'flakes of powder,' a tongue-in-cheek vision of composition as a soothing talcum for the irritated flesh of the inspired poet" (227).

would continue to influence modernist poetry and visual art into the 1950s.

Chapter Three:

"LET A- / TOMIC UNSPLITTABLE reality / NOW AT LAST /

BE EXPLODED TO HELL":

THE ENERGY OF CANADIAN MODERNIST POETRY AND VISUAL ART

IN THE FIFTIES

It flew from my hand like a crow.
   A pane splintered in the night,
making a noise that set the stars ringing
like Munch's picture of hysteria.

—Irving Layton, "Me, the P.M., and the Stars," in *The Cold Green Element*

On either side the even expensive
Sod; the bungalow with the red border
Of roses; the woman past her middle years
In gaberdine [*sic*] shorts, and her hard fists
That held in place over her suntanned knee
A book, half-shut, in spectacular covers.

 —Irving Layton, "Summer Idyll (For William Goodwin)" in *The Cold Green Element*

I. Introduction: Interartistic Tensions of the 1950s

Earle Birney's accusation that "the two worlds" of painting and poetry "have never united" in North America is particularly perplexing, coming (as it did) at the height of the fifties ("Poets and Painters" 77): a decade during which Canadian Anglophone poets consistently invoked painting and the visual arts in their poetry and a revival of the "ancient and honorable union between the two arts within the covers of the same book" that Birney had called for was well under way with the small press movement ("Poets and Painters" 78). It is difficult to imagine a sudden estrangement of painters and poets following the collaborative and interartis-

tic activity of the forties that had flourished in Montreal. Instead, the 1950s witnessed a greater role for visual artists in the design and publication of little magazines and books of poetry and the expansion of interartistic activity to other parts of the country and to different venues, such as the art gallery.

Even a perfunctory survey of the decade's poetry reveals, furthermore, that Canadian modernist poets exhibited an exceptional interest in contemporary visual art. Like Miriam Waddington, who in 1956 wrote an article for the *Canadian Forum* detailing her regular visits to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts during the fall and winter seasons, these poets were not just "Looking at Painting"—as the title of Waddington's article suggests—but looking particularly at modernist visual art. From the internationally-renowned sculptures of Henry Moore, with their "unfailing energetic faith in mankind" (Waddington 58), to the lesser-known, local paintings of Ghitta Caiserman, which Waddington declares "involve [her] in their meditations without struggle" (59), Canadian poets of the 1950s immersed themselves in the diversity of modernist art, its artists, media, and aesthetics. Poems of the decade document a fascination with modernist artists, paintings, sculptures, and exhibitions, even in their titles: consider, for example, Dorothy Livesay's famous poem "On Looking into Henry Moore," or Eldon Grier's "Marino Marini" (*Ring of Ice* 25), which look to contemporary sculptors and sculpture for inspiration; Layton's "Maurer: Twin Heads" (*Bull Calf* 29) and O. Tucker's "Give My Regards to Wyndham," on the other hand, feature modernist painting and / or the modernist painter. Miriam Waddington's "The Exhibition: David Milne," and "Looking at Paintings (Louis Muhlstock's)," Eldon Grier's "Moe Reinblatt (Painter)" (*Ring of Ice* 67-9), and Louis Dudek's "A Charcoal Sketch

(Betty Sutherland)," moreover, represent the Canadian modernist poet's particular interest in Canadian modernist visual art and artists throughout the decade.

The poets' interest in Canadian modernist visual art, in particular, was neither passive nor detached. Like the poets of the forties, they had both personal and professional relationships with Canadian artists: Irving Layton had married the painter Betty Sutherland in 1946; Sutherland's cousin, a young Canadian painter named Louise Scott, moved to Montreal to study at the École des Beaux-Arts and lived with Layton and Sutherland for a short interval (Scott is, of course, the subject of Layton's poem "For Louise, Age 17"); the poet D.G. Jones, also an artist,[139] was married to the visual artist Kim Jones; Eldon Grier was a poet and a successful visual artist who taught at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and his student at the time, Sylvia Tait (whom Grier later married), provided Rorschach-like graphics for his 1957 publication *The Ring of Ice*; Leonard Cohen's childhood friend, Morton Rosengarten (Krantz of *The Favourite* Game), opened The Four Penny Art Gallery—"a meeting place for younger artists and art students" ("Betty Sutherland")—in a boarding house on Stanley Street with Cohen and their friend, Lenore Schwartzman; and Louis Dudek's younger cousin, Stanley Rozynski, was an emerging painter and sculptor. These are only a few of the close, personal relationships between artists and poets of the decade facilitating numerous interartistic projects.

In their poetry and prose, Canadian modernist poets openly admired a new

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[139] E.D. Blodgett suggests that "[b]ecause of their effect on his poetry, it cannot be overlooked that Jones's hobbies are painting and gardening" (2). Recently, Jones has become a digital artist: on an iMac, using a paint program, he creates prints that blend the gestural output of the mouse with text ("D.G. Jones").

kind of energy that they saw emerging in Canadian and contemporary visual art of the decade, one that moved away from the "psychic force" advocated by André Breton and sought by forties surrealist poets ("Second Manifesto" 137), towards an energy created through tensions and paradoxes activated in Expressionist and Abstract Expressionist styles, as well as in contemporary abstract sculpture. These modernist styles and media engendered forceful tensions between complementary colours and between contrasting tones, between abstraction and iconicity, and between the impression of stability and the impression of movement, tensions that are consistent with Theodor Adorno's theories about the energetic possibilities of a work of art: "[F]or Adorno," Max Paddison explains, ". . . [p]art of the dynamic tension which characterizes artworks is. . . the tension between the conscious and the unconscious, between for example, calculation of construction and the spontaneity of expression" (129). By incorporating visual art by Canadian artists and colleagues in their publications, and by experimenting with painterly and sculptural analogues, Canadian modernist poets attempted to translate these tensions into their poems and publications as a way of combating a collective mental, spiritual, and cultural lethargy they perceived as a threat to artistic expression in postwar Canada.

II. Postwar Calls for "Energy"

Following the Second World War in Canada, notes Leonard B. Kuffert, "critical observers perceived an environment that, though more prosperous and ostensibly more carefree, accommodated an abandonment of the mental and spiritual engagement of wartime in favour of passive entertainment, material comfort,

and social status based on consumption" (135). The impression of increasing af-

fluence[140] and the new confidence of the nation fostered a more carefree Canadian

populace than in the pre-war era—or so was the consensus among contemporary

critics. The general complaint was that Canadians were abandoning the active ci-

tizenship displayed during the war years and assuming a passive role in civic life

by retreating to a private world of wealth, leisure, and complacency.[141]

Cultural critics in Canada were particularly nervous about the effects such

torpor would have on the arts. Kuffert offers examples of submissions to the Mas-

sey Commission in 1949 reflecting postwar cultural critics' perceptions of a "fati-

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[140] Although Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie have argued against the common belief that,
like Americans, Canadians became affluent in the postwar era (suggesting instead that a period of
prosperity did not arrive above the 49th parallel until after 1955), evidence of an ethos of prosperity
in Canada directly following the war is abundant. The perception of affluence was nurtured during
the reconstruction period in particular by public institutions and social organizations. For example,
the *Design and Industry* exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1945 and the *Design in the
Household* show at the Toronto Art Gallery in 1946 "asked visitors to reconsider what household
furnishings and equipment should be like in the context of plans to rebuild the nation's industry"
(Parr 41). The shows displayed consumer goods and appliances, now so common to everyday Ca-
nadian living (but new at the time), as *objets d'art*, and asked the public to envision how these
products might improve everyday living as well as national industry and the economy. "Both
shows were designed to soothe longings too long deferred for household goods. . . ," notes Parr
(41), and each show assumed that a period of individual and national prosperity was underway. As
for the private sector, as Donica Belisle notes, "the literature and events of the Eaton Drive," a
failed attempt by the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) to unionize the famous retail establish-
ment from 1948-1952, "do indicate that some social organizations made increased consumption an
immediate postwar objective. During the Drive the CCL asserted that all working people deserved
better living standards; specifically, each working family was entitled to a detached dwelling,
household appliances, medical services, new electronic entertainments, and fashionable clothing
and accessories" (644). Belisle's example of the Eaton Drive is compellingly at odds with Christie
and Gauvreau's assertions and suggests (as she duly remarks) that while revisionist approaches to
the period are important, "historians should not completely 're-cast' our understandings of postwar
life" (644).

[141] Kuffert provides the example of Acadia University President Watson Kirkconnell, who la-
mented that the "masses of mankind in our age have been too preoccupied with the material
wealth and industrial achievements of the day to have any philosophy of life at all" (qtd. in Kuffert
143). Kuffert also notes that the principal of Victoria College in Victoria, B.C., J.M. Ewing, deli-
vered a radio series in 1948 called *Our Changing Values*, in which he discussed the "new leisure"
of Canadians, which he blamed for the decline of culture (144). There is also the example of Car-
dinal McGuigan, the Archbishop of Toronto at the end of the forties, who called for Catholics and
"all who cherish the liberty of which we boast so much" to "wake from their lethargy." He argued
that "vigilance" was the best defence against Communism and that "our own complacency" would
ensure that the ideology spread ("Enlightened").

gue[d]" and "frustrat[ed]" Canadian public posing a roadblock to the country's

cultural "independence and maturity" (147).[142] The common belief, as Kuffert

later points out, was that mass media and entertainment drew people "away from

activities somehow representative of their own identities" (147). The lethargy ac-

commodated (if not produced) by "low culture"—part of the rising suburban cul-

ture of the 1950s—made self-expression a challenge. Consequently, many be-

lieved, some artists were becoming dependent on traditional or formulaic ap-

proaches to their work. They were too willing to accept or adhere to standard co-

difications and artistic orientations, it was argued, rather than experiment or probe

the limits of possibility for their medium.

A number of Canadian poets of the decade expressed similar concerns

about the effects of Canada's new consumer and suburban cultures on Canadians

in general.[143] "A dull people," Layton called Canadians in 1956, in his poem

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[142] The artist Charles Comfort, for example, "cautioned his comrades in concern that the modern cultural system operated to restrict creative and 'active' leisure. . ." in his brief to the Massey Commission (Kuffert 149). Canadians' passivity required state intervention in cultural affairs, argued Comfort, which would assist in the nation's "spiritual regeneration" (qtd. In Kuffert 149). One brief in particular, from the Discussion Group of Hamilton, claims that the draining modern environment has forced Canadians to "seek escape in mass entertainment which also does nothing to satisfy creative instincts, stimulate the imagination, or cultivate the mind. . . . The result is mental and spiritual lethargy" (qtd. in Kuffert 147). In this account, modern life itself is to blame for a fatigued citizenry, while mass culture perpetuates the cycle of lassitude.

[143] The fifties poets' critique of suburban culture resembles Earle Birney's "Anglosaxon Street" of the 1940s, a poem that views the growing conformity of the city negatively. Birney's poem, however, is exceptional for the 1940s, when poets generally directed their attention at the urban, not the suburban, environment. Consider, for example, Bruce Ruddick's "Brother, You of the City" in *Preview*'s March 1942 issue (n. pag.), or Patrick Anderson's "In the City" of *Preview*'s February 1943 issue (n. pag.), and Layton's well-known "De Bullion Street" in *First Statement* (2.5 [March 1944]: 3), which examine the modern, urban environment. Even in Mary Miller's poem "Fall Morning in a Silent Suburb," published in *First Statement* in September 1942 (1.3: 3)*,* the "suburb" she depicts does not resemble the Canadian suburb we think of today—the "corporate, packaged suburb… designed, financed and built in an increasingly standard way," composed of bungalows and single family homes in a pleasant residential area, which Robert Harris notes only emerged in Canada following the Second World War (132). Her "suburb" resembles a wealthy urban enclave, with its "tall apartment house" and "glinting windows." The poets of the fifties, including Souster, Dudek, and Layton, focused directly on the post-war development of the suburban environment and its culture.

"From Colony to Nation," first published in *Music on a Kazoo*: "A dull people, without charm / or ideas," who are "given over to horseplay, the making of money" (45). For Layton, Canadians lacked vital creative energy: they submitted too easily to the pull of consumer and suburban culture and, as Layton remarks in "The Fertile Muck," the poet's "irregular footprint horrifies them" (*Bull Calf* 36-7). Raymond Souster took direct aim at television, new to Canada in 1952 and quickly becoming part of suburban life. His poem "TV or Not TV," published in the inaugural issue of *CIV*/n in 1953, declared that "You don't have to get them / in the Coliseum /. . . to be torn / more or less apart // Just sit them down in their front parlours / turn out the lights // And they can see / on the magic screen / what it looks like / to live and laugh and die." Accompanied by Rozynski's sketch of a man lounging slackly on a sofa in front of a television, Souster's poem ironizes alongside the sketch television's illusory promises of *real* experience. Instead, Souster and Rozynski present television as one of the "life-destroying forces of modern life" that Dudek cites in his "Preface to *Cerberus*."[144] Among his poems in this collection, a three-man publication with Layton and Souster and the first for Contact Press, Dudek's "Suburban Prospect" is critical of "houses—no cottage hanging with vine / and with time overgrown, but a Disney / design for living. . ."; but the "fidgety sparrow, like a child at a funeral / is too much alive to know" this scene. While the sparrow, symbol of freedom, is living life in the real world, suburbanites are slowly dying in the false, "picture postcard" world filled only with "a scent of cement and tiles" (*Selected Essays* 26). These Canadian modernist

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[144] Souster's negative depiction of television as "antilife" force would also place it in opposition to poetry, which, Frank Davey has noted, Souster "usually associated… with 'prolife' forces—with spontaneity, biological process, love and fertility" (102).

poets, among others, frequently criticized suburban and consumer culture for draining the life out of Canadians.

These poets, however, were also quick to assess Canada's cultural situation and attempt to counter the postwar atmosphere of fatigue and cultural climate of hebetude with a healthy dose of energy. As the titles of the little magazines *Combustion* and *Delta*[145] suggest, the nation's modernist poets became preoccupied throughout the 1950s with the idea that poetry needed to be more energetic. "Let there be energy," declared Dudek in his editorial for *Contact* magazine, "Où sont les jeunes": "There is no time to waste. It's beginning to rain bombs. Let us at least receive them in the present tense when they fall on us; or the poetry will be in the pity" (*Selected Essays* 25-26). The comment alludes to Wilfrid Owen's famous statement in the preface to his *Poems*, published posthumously, that his "subject is War, and the pity of War. The poetry is in the pity" (31). Dudek, however, urges young poets to embrace not the pity of the Great War, or the more recent Second World War, but rather the "atomic" energy—presumably a nervous or anxious energy—specific to their time: the Cold War of the 1950s.

CIV/n editor Aileen Collins renewed Dudek's call for an energetic poetry in 1954 when she wrote of the need for a poetry of "vital representation" that ". . . will rouse the reader to see just what the world around him is like" ("Canadian Culture"). The cover of *CIV*/n displays a kind of destructive energy. "It's like a tearing apart," explains Rozynski of his design for the cover of the little magazine (Personal interview). The design, which was reproduced for all subsequent issues

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[145] Among the many meanings of the word "Delta," one involves a type of electrical equipment where three windings in a series are arranged in a triangle. Also known as a "Delta Connection."

except the last two, features the letters of the title *CIV/n* split by jagged edges of

black paint rather suggestive of ripped metal after a bomb blast (Fig. 18).
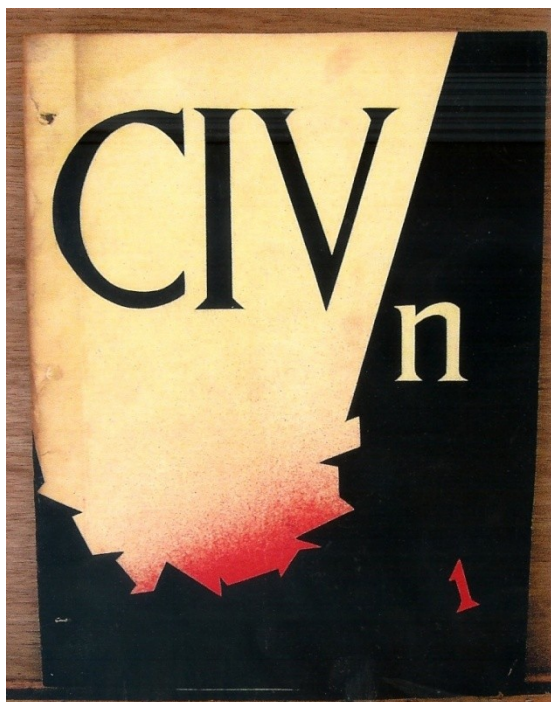
Fig. 18. Stanley Rozynski's cover of *CIV/n* 1, January 1943 (image courtesy of Rozynski)

These editorial comments and visual codes in Canadian publications of the

fifties, along with poems such as Peter Miller's "Explosion!" in *Meditation at*

Noon and Kenneth McRobbie's broadsheet *Jupiter C: 4 Poems for the Missile*

Age (both 1958), indicate that the historical situation of the Cold War and the cir-

cumstances of "the atomic age" also made prominent the theme of energy in the

decade's critical discourses and poetry. Of course, Bruce Clarke and Lynda Da-

lrymple Henderson have already noted the "centrality of the theme of energy in

modernist discourse" (1). Ezra Pound, for example, had referred to the image as

"a vortex" that is "endowed with energy," as early as 1915 ("Affirmations" 375).

But, as Clarke and Henderson explain, "[w]ith the explosion of the atomic bomb

in 1945, a renewed postwar interest in Einstein and relativity theory. . . as well as

a number of other articles linking art to science during the 1940s, the concept of

energy continued to inform contemporary writing" (4). The significance of modernist invocations of energy, moreover, had altered following the Second World War: the creation and rise of nuclear energy, both the threat it posed and the possibilities it presented to civilization, meant that there was a new urgency attached to the theme. It would appear that Canadian poets thought they could fight fire with fire: they invoked the metaphor of destructive energy in their poems as a promise of renewal, as a promise of the possibility of self-expression and autonomy in a draining modern environment.

The poets and critics were rather vague, however, in their discussions about how energy might be represented aesthetically. Nevertheless, we can observe in the decade's modernist poetry a number of strategies, many also exemplified in works by Canadian visual artists, that the poets deployed to make their poems more dynamic and forceful. The idea that modern art was "energetic," after all, came to be thought of as a truism by art historians and cultural critics of the 1950s. This was the assertion, for example, that the famous Canadian art critic Walter Abell made in an article for *Canadian Art* in 1954: "Modern art, over and above its aesthetic appeal, has a similar and equally vital task to perform for our society. In confronting the public with new forms of imagery, it exposes cultural inertia to energizing waves of cultural vitality" (66). One aspect of the "new forms of imagery" energizing modern visual art in Canada was the dramatization of forceful tensions—opposing or unresolved images, colours, and formal properties. Tensions between colours and between tones, between the abstract and the iconic, and between the impression of movement against that of stasis that the poets observed in modernist Canadian visual art of the decade exemplified the

ways in which energy could be conveyed aesthetically; the poets included these visual works in their poetry publications and developed poetic analogues to the tensions they displayed to create the impression of energy and rouse their readers from a generally passive complacency with Canadian poetry.

III. "The Red and the Green":
Layton, Souster, and Wilkinson's Painterly Expressionism of the 1950s

A number of fifties poets, including Raymond Souster, Anne Wilkinson, and Irving Layton, explored the energizing potential of what Sherrill E. Grace identifies as the tensions between apocalypse and regression that all Expressionist art "displays and argues out" (39). The iconography, colouration, and distortion of form characteristic of the Expressionist paintings, book covers, and illustrations done by the poets' peers—Louise Scott, Betty Sutherland, and Stanley Rozyns-ki[146]—also evoked these tensions. While the poets intensified their verse through the literary techniques of Expressionism, such as frequent rhetorical inversion or seemingly ungrammatical phrasing, anaphora, catalexis, and an imperative tone,[147] they also regularly incorporated the images and colour schemes reflected or mirrored in the artists' designs and illustrations of the books in which the

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[146] Of the three artists, Louise Scott is most readily identified with Expressionism. In fact, it was Irving Layton who "encouraged" Scott to go to Austria in 1958 "to study in Salzburg with Expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka" (Hustak).

[147] Christopher Waller lists many of these techniques as part of August Stramm's Expressionist poetics: "Intensity and tension are vital components of much Expressionist poetry. Stramm's method of introducing them into his poetry rests on many linguistic devices – unusual neologisms *and* the mining of traditional deposits around words, omission of pronouns, apparently 'wrong' grammar, catalexis and aphesis, anaphora and parallelism, compulsively rapid rhythm, orchestration of sounds and particles, an urgent rhetorical tone, an abundance of infinitives which read like imperatives, heavily accented and quickfire sentence units and the frequent use of hard consonants. All these unsettle the reader, dislocating his preconceptions and expectations, and creating an atmosphere of anxious movement and diffuse energy" (41).

poems were published. For both poets and artists, colour and visual contrasts of tone became significant vehicles of emotional tension and energy.

According to Grace, the tension between apocalypse and regression is predominant in Expressionist poetry and art and is often left unresolved.[148] Ulrich H.J. Körtner suggests that the apocalyptic mode "aids the imagination in reflecting on the end by offering images of horror. . . ." (4). Such images include blood, birds of death, funeral processions, the morgue, graveyards, and worms. William Virgil Davis identifies, furthermore, such techniques and themes as chiaroscuro (63) and a predominance of black or "pervasive darkness" (150) as characteristics of the apocalyptic mode. For Expressionist artists, Grace notes, "apocalypse signifies a cataclysmic, purgative destruction that should lead to regeneration and spiritual rebirth for mankind as well as the individual" (38). Regression, by contrast, is characterized by Rhys W. Williams as a "thematic motif" (85) that encompasses a return to "a pre-civilized mode of vision (linked to a non-rational mode of apprehending the world and implying a rejection of what are deemed 'bourgeois' values of conformism, capitalism and social leveling)" (86). But regression is more than a motif: it is, like apocalypse, a mode encompassing a particular subject matter, mood, and aesthetics. Grace argues that regression ". . . articulates the profoundly atavistic desire to be reunited with primitive, instinctual forces. . . . In a less extreme form, regression images a joyful human identification with nature" (38). Both regression and apocalypse engender a renewed energy—one through primitivism and the other through violent destruction. The interplay between these

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[148] In her study *Regression and Apocalypse* (1989), Grace revises Worringer's binary of the art of empathy and abstraction to suggest a "vacillation between extremes of regression and apocalypse" that accounts for Expressionism (36), which includes elements of both empathy and abstraction.

modes in Expressionist art only heightens their energetic potential.

Expressionist art also displays a tension between the rational and the irrational, particularly through the poet's or artist's treatment of the subject. The fundamental effect of Expressionism, after all, is distortion through exaggeration or simplification.[149] Both methods engender a movement away from representation, reality, and the rational without necessarily abandoning representation altogether; that is, both methods engender a movement in the direction of abstraction. "The Expressionist simplification," notes Paul Hadermann, ". . . is a means of aggression. Shock effects, surprises, violent contrasts are, according to Kandinsky, the main characteristic of the "new aesthetics" (133). The affect / effects of simplification, then, are somewhat irrational. Exaggeration, in particular, intentionally or passionately oversteps the boundaries of what is real or truthful, which suggests it is guided by the irrational. But as Christopher Waller notes of the poetry, Expressionism "champion[s] irrationality and passionate feeling as against rationality and temperate thinking, spontaneity and heedlessness as against deliberation and sobriety. . . the excessive and the sensational as against the orthodox and the soft-hued, the fragmentary and the shapeless as against the self-contained and the coherent" (3). Waller's words easily characterize the Nietzschean and Apocalyptic poetry of Layton in the fifties. Ultimately, Expressionism is neither wholly rational nor wholly irrational; it visually or conceptually displays an ongoing conflict between these two forces.

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[149] While the term "Expressionism" carries a surplus of meaning, I locate a general consensus among most critics that the key stylistic approach of Expressionism is distortion through simplification or exaggeration (Sotriffer 5; Weisstein 23; Grace 30; Ragon 13). These methods imply a conscious manipulation of reality on the part of the artists. My argument, therefore, shares the fundamental assumption with Grace, and in opposition to Christopher Waller, that "Expressionism was more than an exclusively German development" (Grace 4).

Betty Sutherland's cover for Layton's *The Bull Calf and Other Poems*
(Fig. 19) is a perfect example of the artist's simplified, Expressionist abstraction
and colouration, which work in tandem with Layton's poems to generate an emo-
tional response from the reader. The cover appears to be a coloured woodcut
print,[150] a medium that was revived by German artists such as Edvard Munch and
members of Die Brücke for its primitive aesthetics (Carey and Griffiths 14), and
that is typical of modern graphic art (Bucheim 65). As Williams points out, primi-
tivism is a particular form of the regressive mode. For Expressionist artists,
"[p]rimitive art seemed to embody a flight from technology, a Luddite rejection of
machines and a regression to a world of simple values where religious observance
was still alive" (Williams 85). Modernist artists and poets often appropriated the
imagery, colours, and aesthetics of African or other ethnic art as an expression of
their rejection of the modern. Like the Die Brücke painters who, "in order to pre-
serve the severity of the woodcut technique" and its primitive associations, "li-
mited" their coloured woodcuts "to two or three colours" (Bucheim 72), Suther-
land restricts her palette to red, black, and white on the cover. Furthermore, she
depicts the bull calf of the title not in a realistic picture, but in a simplified, primi-
tive abstraction saturated in red. In his seminal study of *The Graphic Art of Ex-
pressionism*, Lothar-Günther Bucheim notes that "In Expressionism colo[u]r is
dissociated from the local tone of the object and from atmospheric phenomena; it
becomes a vehicle of communication which serves to convey and to stimulate

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[150] According to Layton, Sutherland was working with the woodcut medium around this time,
creating prints for possible inclusion in his *The Blue Propeller*: "I've decided to add nine more
poems to the books. . . . Now the book will have thirty-five poems, will I think pack more of a
wallop. Betty is doing a couple of woodcuts" (Letter to Robert Creeley, Faas and Reed 237).

emotions; it becomes an expressive element" (12). Sutherland's bull calf features

colour in this expressive manner: a realistic depiction of a bull calf, after all,

would not be bright red. The prominent red colour foreshadows the blood-spilling

depicted in the slaughtering of the animal in Layton's poem "The Bull Calf" and

the violent energy and brutality of other poems in the volume. Sutherland's primi-

tive aesthetics of the bull calf, which resembles a pictograph or cave drawing,

meanwhile, presage the longing the reader will encounter as he or she turns each

page of the collection.
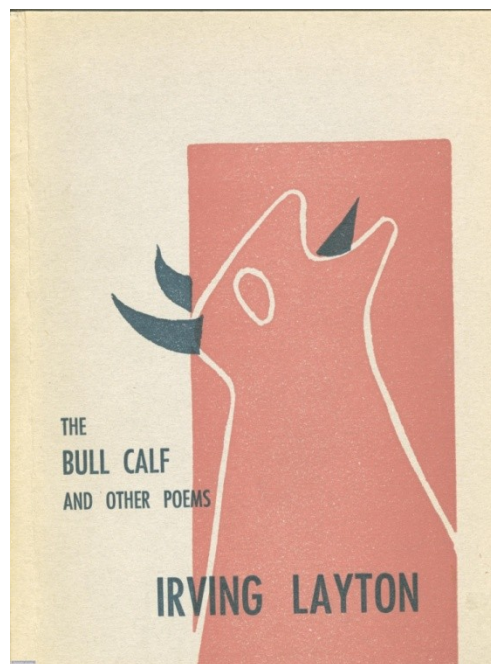
Fig. 19. Betty Sutherland's cover of *The Bull Calf and Other Poems.*
Toronto: Contact Press, 1956 (photograph courtesy of Rare Books and
Special Collections, McGill University Library)

While the cover is predominantly primitivist, *The Bull Calf* as a collection

works through the Expressionist tension between the regressive and the apocalyp-

tic. The cataclysmic, yet purgative destruction of the bull calf in the titular poem,

in which the corpse of the innocent animal brings the speaker to tears, sets the

apocalyptic tone of the book. This tenor is echoed in poems like "The Mosquito" (11), where the pesky insect carries threateningly "his inflated sac / a miniscule bomb, / a dark capsule"; however, the speaker's hand soon crashes down violently on the mosquito, crippling it. There are also poems in the collection in which themes of destruction and death are central, like "Letter From a Straw Man" (32-3) or "One View of a Dead Fish" (45). The final poem, "Sacrament by the Water" (49), with its verdant setting and the speaker's longing to be united with an earthly goddess whose "exact beauty in a wave of tumult / Drops an Eden about [her] thighs," conversely displays the regressive pull woven into the poems, such as "First Walk in Spring" (14), "Chokecherries" (12), "Halos at Lac Marie Louise" (18), and "Earth Goddess" (46-7). The pull between violence, destruction, and sacrifice, and renewal, regeneration, and rebirth is, evidently, built into the collection.

These dynamic polarities in the *Bull Calf* are certainly part of the Nietzschean philosophy of Layton's poetics that a number of critics have discussed in detail. Kurt Van Wilt has argued cogently that "The necessity for overcoming man to integrate within himself the Dionysian qualities of energy and passion with the Apollonian qualities of form and reason is axiomatic in the work of Layton and Nietzsche" (23). Wynne Francis similarly suggests that the tensions between "the good and the bad, the noble and the base, the life-giving and life-denying qualities of human conduct" are Layton's concern, and she identifies this concern in Nietzschean terms by calling Layton an "immoral moralist" (46). Later, Francis identifies the puma, in Layton's poem "The Tamed Puma," as a symbol of "not only the powers of darkness, of chaos, the abyss and nothingness, but

also the source of all unharnessed energy and vitality, Eros rampant. . . .” and

“Dionysus yoked to Apollo” (49). These thematic and philosophical concerns are

given aesthetic weight and expression in Layton’s poems, however, partly through

the inclusion of Sutherland’s designs and illustrations. The images and colours he

invokes in *The Bull Calf*, in particular, are clearly analogues to her Expressionist

vision and vice versa.

The entire collection, in fact, is saturated in the colour red, and mirrors the

aesthetics of Sutherland’s bull calf on the cover. The vigour and intensity that

Kandinsky identified with the colour red in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* are

launched immediately in Layton’s first poem, “The Bull Calf” (9-10): the reader

must confront the animal’s “bleeding ear” before visualizing its lifeless body,

which the speaker compares to “a block of wood”—a striking index of the wood-

cut medium of the cover’s bull calf. In “The Mosquito” (11), the “circle of blood”

on the speaker’s “palm” repeats the sanguine imagery of the previous poem but

becomes “a red flag of protest” for the mosquito that clings to life. Later, it is the

chokecherries, “deep red. . . . / like clusters of red jewels” and “small rubies,” that

become sacrificial victims to “the bold maggot-making sun” in “Red Chokecher-

ries” (26). In “Fiat Lux” (24), Layton reduces the father’s image to just “lips. . .

red, red and full, / and the beard black,” a visual abstraction that yokes the father

to the simplified, red bull calf with black antlers and tongue on the cover. Both the

poems and the cover design of *The Bull Calf*, therefore, work concurrently to

build emotional tension and energy in the work through distorted, simplified

forms and an emphatic application of the colours red and black.

At least one poem in *The Bull Calf* is a direct translation of Sutherland’s

painting into poetry. Excited by the belief that he had successfully replicated a portrait by Sutherland of Aileen Collins, Layton wrote to Dudek on 19 July 1955 about the poem "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C." (20-1):

> Perhaps I shd [*sic*] say a few words about SUTHERLAND: Portrait of A.C. You know, of course, the portrait that Betty did of Aileen; it's that which started me on the poem. I see Aileen as someone who has abandoned the Catholic Faith of her adolescence, but who has not been able to replace it by anything else. Hence her rigidity, and the occasional wistfulness which comes into her face like a look of pain. . . . The poem moves me a great deal, and I hope that will also move you in the same way [*sic*]. When you are here, I'll trot out the picture for you, and I think you will be struck by the poem's fidelity to it.

Layton's comments to Dudek are telling: first, they confirm (as the poem's title suggests), that there is an ekphrastic element to "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C.," which was inspired by a specific Sutherland painting; second, they suggest that Layton consciously worked to replicate the effective / affective elements of the painting into a poem that would equally "move" him.

It is uncertain if Sutherland's painting of Collins still exists today. A portrait by Sutherland that Collins owns is not likely the one referred to in the letter, after which Layton modeled his poem (Fig. 20);[151] regardless, the painting typifies Sutherland's interest in Expressionist portraiture throughout the 1950s, in which

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[151] Collins is uncertain that the portrait she owns is of her, and notes that Sutherland "had done some early paintings of [her]," one of which may be the painting referred to in Layton's poem (Personal interview). Layton's description of Collins in the letter does not match the painting Collins owns, in which the sitter's hands, so prominent in Layton's poem, are completely absent.

she distorts figures through simplification and / or exaggeration of form, and in which she uses forceful colour to communicate the emotional or spiritual intensity of the sitter. [152]

One thing is clear: whoever the sitter may be in this portrait (whether Collins or someone else), this is not a realistic representation of her. The sitter's features, with the exception of her ear, lack detail. Overall, she appears rigid and flat. The mass of orange hair atop her head, for example, looks stiff; her blunt profile has a sharp, two-dimensional quality against the orange backdrop; and her bulky, vague arms have a flat presence. The predominantly warm palette of red, orange, and pink is unsettling and adds to this impression of flatness in the painting: it also communicates the intensity and internal conflict of the sitter. The dominant red hue, at full saturation in the sitter's sweater, represents her youthful energy, vibrancy, and intensity; meanwhile her wan, pale face and splotches of green paint in the background and hair create a sickly, pallid atmosphere complementing a stern, serious countenance. The sitter's head, moreover, has a death's head quality, which is unsettling. The simplified forms and disruptive colour scheme, evidently, are not meant to create a realistic portrait, but rather to express certain metaphysical qualities of the sitter. They are also meant to agitate the viewer and shake them from any sense of comfort or lethargy in approaching the artwork.

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[152] Grace has identified among Expressionist painters an "obsession with portraiture" (4). A catalogue of an exhibition of Sutherland paintings in the 1950s indicates a similar obsession (*Elizabeth Sutherland*).

Fig. 20. Betty Sutherland, Untitled 1, [c.1950-60], oil. Aileen Collins's Private Collection (photograph by the author)

Neither is Layton's "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C." a realistic depiction of the sitter: it is an abstract, exaggerated representation of Collins's spiritual and emotional states as Layton perceives them. Consider the poem's first stanza, which relies on both literary and painterly Expressionist techniques to communicate the internal spiritual struggle he has perceived in the subject:

Move, mademoiselle, with the wind,

move with the rivers: under

the clean sun the two keep fresh forever

and you pitching like a gull's wide wing

　　　　rise white and fathomless. Do not sit, pray,

　　ever, as you do now, rigid, head

shoved forward and hands to one side

in a clasp of prayer: so, they

cannot unclose to feel the sudden gusts of wind

or glide their eight good arches

of bone and blood for the rushing tides.

Layton employs literary devices typical of Expressionist poetry to enhance, through exaggeration, the affective potential of his portrait. The first word of the poem, for example, is the imperative of the verb "to move," repeated in the second line. The choice of verb—indicating action—its mood and anaphoric phrasing, all characteristic elements of German writer August Stramm's poetry for example (Waller 41), convey the urgent tone of the speaker and the anxious tension in the sitter. The repetition of the command to "move" in the first stanza is more than just an exaggeration of the speaker's tone: it is quite ironic in this case as it is directed at a figure immobilized in a painting, which establishes a tension between mobility and immobility. As the speaker utters the command he may be acknowledging a gulf between painting and the other arts, such as dance, film, and poetry, that have richer ways of suggesting motion. He may also be referring to Sutherland's Expressionist use of colour to imply movement and dynamic energy.

In addition to poetic devices, Layton carefully structures the poem around painterly Expressionist tropes to maximize visually the emotional tension and energy of the portrait. The colours in the poem, at the very least, communicate the internal struggle of the sitter by using a similar palette to that of Sutherland's untitled portrait. Collins is "white and fathomless." Her hands are made of the typical Expressionist icons, "bone and blood." White and red, a simplified palette consistent with the cover of *The Bull Calf*, dominate the poetic portrait and symbolize an internal struggle between innocence and experience. Later, Layton com-

pares Collins's arms to "two lilies," common Christian symbols for purity,

"grown dry": the image evokes the pure white of the flower, but also suggests the

colours of a dying or decaying plant, such as brown or grey. Thus, her arms have

a pale but heterogeneous, sickly colour, like the wan complexion of the sitter's

arms in Sutherland's untitled portrait. These colours, along with the poet's em-

phasis on "bone and blood," are suggestively apocalyptic.

In addition to these icons and colours, Layton exaggerates a number of his

sitter's physical features in an Expressionist manner. Collins's hands are clearly

exaggerated in the first and second stanza. Initially, her hands are "in a clasp of

prayer," and symbolize what Layton refers to in his letter to Dudek as "the Catho-

lic Faith of her adolescence"; in the second stanza, however, they become "beg-

ging hands" that "stir / each other to a bliss the face being sad / declines," a phrase

that embodies the exaggerated tensions of the portrait through its rhetorical anti-

thesis and dense syntax. The hands come to represent the emotional desperation

and tumult of the sitter, whom Layton perceives as struggling for spiritual signi-

ficance in a secularized world. This bloated presentation of the hands is a popular

visual Expressionist trope (consider, for example, the Expressionist film *The

Hands of Orlec* [1924]),[153] especially in the paintings of Oskar Kokoschka, in

which, Grace has noted, "hands are a striking feature" and "the retention of fig-

ure-ground distinction, and the distortion of specific features. . . are indexical

signs that express the subject's inner being" (26-7). This kind of exaggeration of

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[153] An Austrian silent film directed by Robert Wiene in 1924, *The Hands of Orlec* is the story of a concert pianist who loses his hands in a railway accident. The pianist receives a hand transplant through an experimental surgical procedure, but the donor-hands happen to be those of a recently-executed murderer. The pianist struggles to accept his new hands, which he suspects, and which the audience is led to believe, are predispositioned to kill.

physical features and Layton's use of contrastive colours, such as white and red, combined with his borrowing of Expressionist poetic techniques and devices—anaphoric imperatives, irony, rhetorical antithesis, catalexis, density of syntax—assist him in recreating Sutherland's painting into a poem without compromising the energetic tensions of the original painting. While the speaker may hope to stir the sitter by urging her to "move," his images and implications of death and decay may actually agitate the reader.

We find a similar exaggeration of corporeal features through the combination of literary and painterly Expressionist techniques in Souster's poem "Drummer Man," first published in *Walking Death* (1955) and later collected in his *Selected Poems* (1956). As with Layton's depiction of Collins's arms in the Expressionist manner, Souster similarly exaggerates the subject's hands in his poem while building intensity through catalexis, grammatical ambiguity, and visual contrasts of black and white. Both exaggeration and simplification dominate the poetic portrait, as the subject's body becomes the drums on which he makes his music:

/ ˘ ˘| / ˘ ˘ ˘ | / ˘ | / ˘ | / /

Sooner or later he was bound to put his sticks by,

/ ˘ | / / | / ˘| / ˘ |˘ /

Bring the two dark hands at touch with the drums,

˘ / | ˘

The cymbals[. . .]

˘ ˘ / | / /

And the dead-pan look

/   / | ˘

came slowly

/ ˘ ˘ | / ˘ ˘ | / / | / \ | /

Out of the face and the wide smile showed white teeth:

˘   ˘ / | ˘ ˘ / | /

while the sweat on his forehead

/   ˘ | /˘ ˘| /˘˘|˘ / | ˘   / |˘ /

Could have risen as easily a hundred years before

/ ˘ ˘| / ˘ ˘ | / ˘ ˘ | /   ˘ | / ˘ | /

Under an African sky, as beneath the smoky glare

˘ |˘ / \ | / ˘

Of this band-stand's spotlight.

˘ / |˘ / |˘ /

And all the time the hands

/   /

tom-toms. . . (97)

At first, the subject's "two dark hands" replace his drumsticks and he is united

with the music that "got in his blood"; later the music literally "flow[s] from his

hands," which become the source of sound and rhythm. This is not a realistic de-

piction of the subject, then, since his hands are disproportionate to the rest of his

body. Eventually, the hands become "tom-toms" and Souster omits clarifying

punctuation—such as a comma, colon, or apostrophe—to sharpen the metaphoric

likeness between the two. Such grammatical ambiguity, a method of abstraction,

is typical of Expressionist poets, who, Waller observes, often omit punctuation or

words to "unsettle the reader, dislocat[e] his preconceptions and expectations, and create an atmosphere of anxious movement and diffuse energy" (41). Souster consciously builds this anxious energy by concentrating catalexis in lines, seven, nine, and ten, creating a strong masculine ending repeated in the majority of lines. The truncated lines are particularly striking because the metre is typically falling, which establishes a musical flow to the verse; the abrupt, sudden endings on stressed syllables (the catalectic falling feet) create a forceful counterpoint to the expected flow of the poem and generate dynamic energy in otherwise stable lines of verse. The poem's metrical patterns mirror the building energy of the subject, whose drumming intensifies to release the sweat from his forehead, as the verse moves from very irregular lines, mixing duple and triple feet freely, to the only line with a consistent metrical pattern in the poem: the second last line of iambic trimetre, which is shorter and crisper and leads to the final, exaggerated spondaic close.

At the same time, Souster's use of colour serves the simplified aesthetics of the portrait. While the subject's hands are exaggerated and the rhythm builds in the poem, Souster depicts the sitter through black and white contrasts and very basic forms. Like a number of portraits Rozynski painted in the early 1950s composed only of black and white paint (Fig. 21 & 22), and the cover Betty Sutherland made for Souster's *The Selected Poems* (Fig. 23) featuring a primeval, totemic woodcut figure printed in black and white, Souster's drummer man is more or less composed of starkly contrasting tones.

Fig. 21. Stanley Rozynski, Untitled 1, [c.1950-60]. Artist's Private Collection, Way's Mills, QC (image courtesy of Rozynski)

Fig. 22. Stanley Rozynski, Untitled 2, [c. 1950-60]. Artist's Private Collection, Way's Mills, QC (image courtesy of Rozynski)

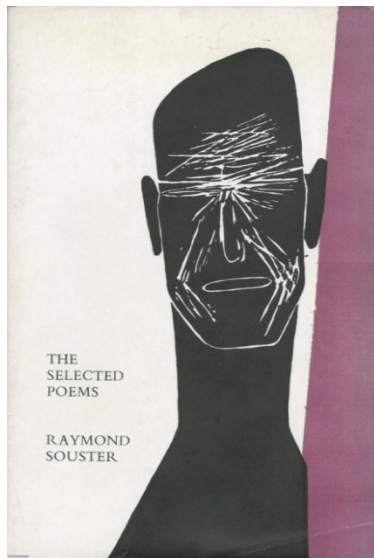Fig. 23. Betty Sutherland, Cover of Raymond Souster's *The Selected Poems*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956 (image courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library)

With the exception of the mention of his "blood," which mildly calls to mind the colour red, the drummer is reduced to his "dark hands" and a "wide smile" of "white teeth." Souster creates the impression of a woodcut figure, in which "[t]he

absence of colour, the simplification of planes and lines, the sharp contrasts, all minimize any nisus [tendency] toward a reproduction of reality" (Waller 40). There are even primordial implications in Souster's depiction of the "Drummer Man," when we are told that the "Sweat on his forehead / Could have risen as easily a hundred years before / Under an African sky. . . ." The suggestions of primitivism and a foreign geographical setting with common tribal associations for the figure corroborate the poem's regressive, modernist aesthetics.

Of course, there are serious implications to Souster's primitivism: Victoria Pitts acknowledges, for example, that "primitivism is deeply problematic in its Othering of cultural groups for its own use. . . . Even while it valorizes other cultures, modern primitivism circulates essentialist views of them as more sexual, natural, and 'closer to the earth' than Westerners. . ." (136). Souster's depiction of the drummer, "at one" with the music he creates organically on his drum, is not exempt from such associations. His lack of identity and Souster's emphasis on his "dark" skin and "white teeth" are literally an essentialization of the man that is faintly racist. Writing in the pre-civil rights era, however, the author was probably not as concerned as we are today about the essentialist and racist implications of his portrait. Instead, these primitivist, Expressionist aesthetics were carefully attended to by Souster in order to communicate what he perceived as the spiritual passion and concentration of the ethnic subject. The powerful, painterly contrasts between black and white and the exaggerated images combine with the poem's falling rhythm punctuated by strong, masculine endings to establish a contrapuntal energy in Souster's portrait.

Like Souster's poem, which mimics the aesthetics displayed on the cover

of his *Selected Poems*, Layton's poems in *The Cold Green Element* exhibit the monochromatic and simplified aesthetics of the Expressionist woodcut illustrations inside the book (Fig. 24 & 25) and displayed on its cover (Fig. 26).[154] The abstract, black heart on the cover has valves that look like broken tree trunks (calling to mind Phyllis Webb's "valvular forest" in "Sprouts the Bitter Grain"). Trees, in fact, are a recurring image in the *Cold Green Element*: perhaps the most renowned tree image is in "The Cold Green Element" when the speaker ". . . embrace[s] like a lover / the trunk of a tree, one of those / for whom the lightning was too much / and grew a brilliant / hunchback with a crown of leaves." The image of the poet embracing the tree trunk is not only emblematic of his love of nature and regressive longing for a simpler past expressed throughout the collection, but also his respect for and identification with the brokenness or deformity of a tree that endures long enough to wear a crown of leaves, the same crown of leaves worn by prize-winning classic poets. The tree / heart on the book's cover reflects these motifs of deformity and destruction as it contains a hanging figure at its core—an apocalyptic image that is evidently an illustration or interpretation of the titular poem. "The Cold Green Element" describes a "black-hatted undertaker," a popular Expressionist icon, who observed the poet's "heart beating in the grass." Layton multiplies the image of the hanging figure in the poem: the "dead poet /. . . who now hangs from the city's gates," and the poet's "murdered selves" that hang "from ancient twigs." The dominance of the heart on the cover, its dramatic scale

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[154] Layton wrote Creeley in March of 1955 suggesting the significance of the book's cover to the collection: "Am still getting the runaround with the Cold Green Element, but I've decided to go ahead with it anyway. Betty has finished such a wonderful cover for it, that I simply can't pull out or away" (Faas and Reed 224). Sutherland's cover for *The Cold Green Element* (Fig. 26) was one reason Layton proceeded with publication, despite limited funds.

and bold black colour, encapsulates the tensions between exaggeration and simpli-

fication, between life and death, that Layton explores throughout the collection.
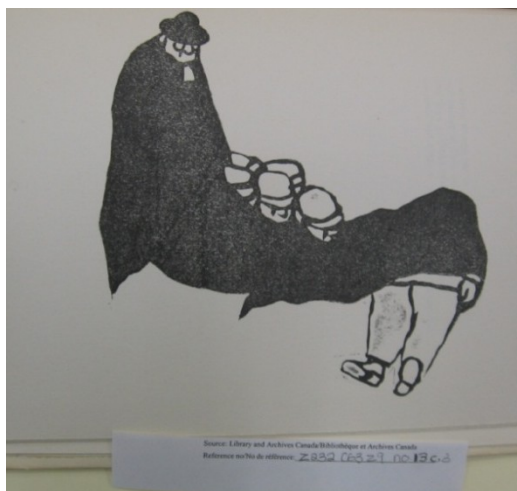
Fig. 24. Betty Sutherland, Untitled 2, in Irving Layton's
The Cold Green Element. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956
(photograph by the author)

Fig. 25. Betty Sutherland, Untitled 3, in Irving Lay-
ton's *The Cold Green Element*. Toronto: Contact Press,
1956 (photgraph by the author)
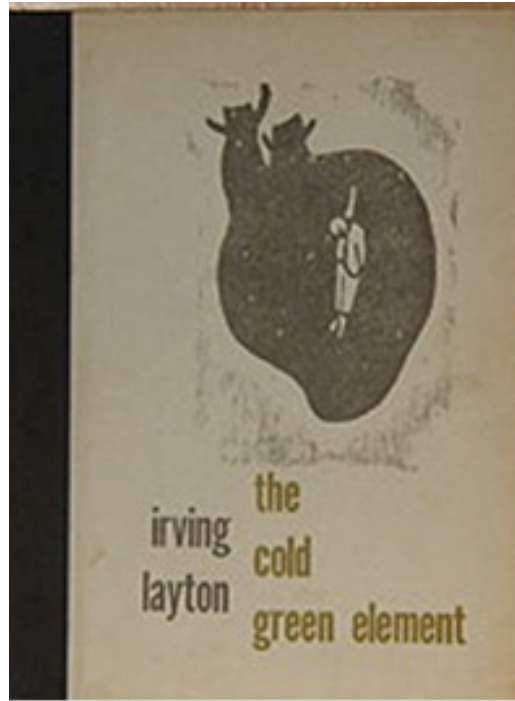
Fig. 26. Betty Sutherland, cover of *The Cold Green Element*. By Irving Layton. Toronto: Contact Press, 1955 (photograph by the author)

Trehearne has already identified the "apocalyptic" mood of the abovementioned poem, and its "nightmarish" imagery (*Montreal* 217-219);[155] but we might observe throughout *The Cold Green Element* a pull between apocalypse and regression that Layton develops through imagery and colourful or tonal contrasts. The colourful tensions in the poem "The Red and the Black" and the similar red-black dichotomy depicted in "Enemies" evoke this movement between opposing poles. The former poem features the "silky devouring ravens" and the reappearance of the destructive mosquito from *The Bull Calf* who draws red blood. In "Enemies," "the sunlight / which glints rosily" from a carpenter's hammer visually represents

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[155] See Chapter Two, page 146-7, for a discussion of the Apocalyptic poetry of *First Statement* poets, including Layton. Trehearne argues that "[t]he Apocalyptic insistence that a renewal of aesthetics must be grounded in a renewal of artistic selfhood" has a "powerful fruition in Layton's reconstitutions of the early 1950s" (*Montreal* 182).

the irony of the scene as the carpenter builds coffins "robed in black" (one of which will be his own). In Kandinsky's terms, the red / black dynamic arises from a contrast between the warmth of red and the coldness of black. We see this dynamic suggested, for example, in Rozynski's cover of *CIV/n* (Fig. 18: p. 233).

"Death of a Construction Worker," by contrast, asserts the apocalyptic atmosphere of the collection through its theme, but evokes the tension between death and birth, between future and past, with monochromatic imagery mirroring the black and white woodcut aesthetics of Sutherland's cover and illustrations for the book:

> Over the shoulder
>
> of the sun
>
> throw, March wind,
>
> a ragged coat of cloud.
>
>
> Gather
>
> at the temples, blood,
>
> and fall dropwise [*sic*]
>
> on the frozen ground,
>
> splintering the windows
>
> in their mourning shadows.
>
>
> Flap your booted feet
>
> on mud and stone
>
> like a fat penguin,

priest

And shine, officer,

your bright badge

on the cooling corpse

Like a long, black nail

the morgue's polished

limousine

holds this day together

In true Expressionist fashion, the speaker communicates the urgency and intensity

of the titular event through the imperative mood, as he barks orders—"throw,"

"Gather," "fall," "flap," and "shine"—at the March wind, blood, a priest, and a

police officer. Layton also maximizes the emotional impact of the event—the

death of a construction worker—by shrouding the poem primarily in black. We

cannot ignore the implied red bloodshed in the second stanza: this red is a source

of violent energy, part of the poem's apocalyptic force. As the speaker affirms,

however, it is "the long, black nail / [of] the morgue's polished / limousine" that

"holds this day," and evidently the poem, "together." In addition to the typically

Expressionist imagery (the morgue, of course, immortalized in Gottfried Benn's

book of the same title), the dominant visual aesthetic of the poem is black and

white. Each stanza offers iconic images encapsulating the tonal dynamics: in the

first stanza, the brilliance of the sun is darkened by a "ragged cloud"; in the

second stanza, the "frozen ground" calls to mind a blanket of white frost or snow

juxtaposed against the dark "mourning shadows" of the windows; in the third stanza, the black-white duality intensifies with the introduction of a "priest," no doubt wearing the traditional black and white garb, who resembles a "fat penguin"; and the "bright badge" of the officer is finally subdued by the black limousine in the final two stanzas.

Following the poem, and after turning the page, is Sutherland's woodcut illustration in isolation on the verso side (Fig. 24), apparently depicting in flat, abstracted form the fat priest and the corpse of the poem, and highlighting the stark tonal contrasts Layton establishes through his images. Furthermore, Sutherland's woodcut stretches the meaning of Layton's poem: her exaggerated extension of the priest's robe, the skull-like objects sitting on top of it, and the way it blends into the shroud covering the corpse, suggest (as the tone of Layton's poem does) that the priest, like the officer, is complicit in the man's death. Here, as in the poem, the emotional energy and apocalyptic mood of the main event are underscored through the inclusion of Expressionist imagery and a calculated, carefully established, dramatic and energetic interplay between black and white.

Death, destruction, and apocalypse, while dominant, are not the only motifs and moods tying *The Cold Green Element* together: we can also observe an Expressionist regressive desire for natural simplicity, which Layton develops through lyric, pastoral scenes, a tone of longing for the past and the innocence of youth, and the dominant colour green. The book opens, for example, with the lush, verdant pastures of "Song for Naomi," in which the poet's young daughter is pursued by "Time." She grows almost as tall as the "tall grasses" in which she plays over a single summer. The lyric, lamenting voice of the poet prays to "Sa-

viours that over / all things have power / Make Time himself grow kind" to his daughter as she, inevitably, ages. In "The Satyr," the speaker longs not for the innocence of the romance of "a lane in Kishinev / Three hundred years ago [*sic*]." In this lane, a blind "old Greek with light green eyes" sees nothing beyond his historical moment, even though "The years fall before him like a decayed wall." At the heart of the collection, the speaker of "The Cold Green Element," who sees himself "lately in the eyes / of old women," expresses a desire to recover a youthful innocence that he has lost. In the final stanza, he is "misled by the cries of young boys" and becomes "a breathless swimmer in that cold green element," a kind of primordial life force or energy. The closing poem "La Minerve" weaves the last elements of green in the collection with the "frogs," their "green fables," and the "clean forest." Like the speaker in Layton's "Sacrament by Water," the persona of "La Minerve" yearns for an Edenic past as his "ribs most unpaganlike ache / With foolstruck Adam in his first wonder" at seeing the naked body of his lover. A regressive mood is evidently laced throughout the collection, signified by the colour green (as represented in the green typography of the title on the book's cover) and forming a counterpoint to the book's forceful, apocalyptic mood.

Layton's contrasting iconography of death and lush, verdant growth, along with his penchant for limited colour palettes, are typical of Expressionist painters. A similar tension is evident in the work of Sutherland and Rozynski, who designed a number of paintings and book covers around impactful dynamics between similar images and colour relationships. As these dynamics are recreated on the cover and in the illustrations of Layton's *The Cold Green Element* and *The Bull Calf*, moreover, Sutherland's designs are complicit in provoking thought and

developing the meaning of some of Layton's poems and the collection as a whole.

Unlike Layton's and Souster's books from this period, Anne Wilkinson's collection *The Hangman Ties the Holly* (1955) was not published by Contact Press, or another small press, but rather by the larger publishing house, Macmillan.[156] Not surprisingly, there is little about the plain, classic design and typography of the publication that resonates with the modernist poetry inside. Nevertheless, Wilkinson's imagery and attention to colour in the collection resemble the painterly Expressionist aesthetics in both Layton and Souster's poems of the decade and in some of the paintings and book designs by Contact Press's Sutherland and Rozynski.[157] "Mrs. Wilkinson sees nature in sharp outlines. . . ," wrote Northrop Frye in reaction to *Hangman*, and like the modernist poets and artists, "she has a liking for clear colours and conventionalizing forms" (50).

Although Wilkinson has been described as a "relatively isolated writer" and "unattached to contemporary literary coteries" (Armitage 4, 5), she made contact with the Montreal poets and some of the city's visual artists in the 1950s. We know from her journals that Wilkinson traveled to Montreal in February 1950 and met with F.R. Scott, Marian Scott, and Phyllis Webb ("The Journals" 164); in May of 1954, she "had dinner and spent the evening with Dudek" on a trip to the

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[156] Wilkinson submitted the typescript to Dudek to have it considered for publication by Contact Press: "[w]hile Dudek never committed to publishing the collection with Contact, his editorial comments on this early Hangman typescript would prove influential in the final shape of the book" (Irvine, "Introduction" 32).

[157] Wilkinson identifies in her journal at least one other Canadian painter as a source of inspiration for her painterly Expressionism: Lawren Harris. A visit to the [Toronto] Art Gallery in 1948, where a "Big exhibition of Lawren Harris" was on display, left Wilkinson in awe of Harris's later abstract paintings. "Was so impressed," wrote Wilkinson, "I almost felt that the only art that will arouse my curiosity in future will be abstract" ("The Journals" 27). This prediction would come to fruition in relation to her poetry, which grew more abstract through distortion and simplification in the 1950s. But Wilkinson's poetry of the 1950s also became more macabre, and focused more on the human figure than Harris's paintings ever did.

city ("The Journals" 130); and a letter Layton wrote to Creeley indicates that Wilkinson returned once more to visit the Montreal group of poets—whose gatherings at this point usually included Sutherland and Rozynski—in October of 1954 (Faas and Reed 162). A few of the poems in *Hangman*, moreover, were first published in *CIV/n*. That these poems should reflect a similar Expressionist aesthetic to that of poems by members of *CIV/n*'s editorial board is not surprising. Wilkinson's keen ability to translate painterly effects and the visual tensions between colours and imagery in her poetry, however, also suggests an affinity with the paintings, cover designs, and illustrations by the little magazine's art directors.

Much has been made of the primitive and regressive elements in Wilkinson's poetry, though few critics have connected these components to an Expressionist aesthetic. It was, in fact, Wilkinson who first identified her impulse towards a "Green Order," in which "[e]motions that might have found an outlet in religion expressed themselves in a kind of nature worship" ("The Autobiography" 178). Joan Coldwell wrote about the role of the "Green Order" in Wilkinson's poetry, the "most passionate" of which "celebrates communion with nature, whether in the green world [similar to that of Waddington's "The Crystal" discussed in Chapter Two] of the sensuous and erotic 'In June and Gentle Oven', or the pagan primitivism of 'The Red and the Green'" (xvi). Robert Lecker writes of the "primitive" and "phenomenological perspective[s]" in Wilkinson's poetry, in which children are often depicted as "noble savages. . . innocently at one with nature" (2). Wilkinson's modernism, Coldwell and Lecker suggest, is predominantly primitive and regressive because of its natural, organic subject matter and themes. Neither critic mentions the relation of these perspectives and theme of regression

to Expressionism; nor do they discuss the poet's emphasis on the colour green as anything other than a symbol of her "nature worship."

The imagery and references to colour in *Hangman*, however, generate an Expressionist energy.[158] Indeed, the idea of regression to a "Green Order" is profuse in *Hangman*;[159] but one cannot deny the overwhelming sense of hysteria (the sound of "terror's tin scream" that "rises / Not from the throat / But from the key that locks / The sickness in the mouth," in "Daily the Drum" [43-4]), disease, destruction, and death in the collection. "Mrs. Wilkinson is much possessed by death," Northrop Frye concludes (49). Her tendency towards the macabre, moreover, engenders the appearance of what Vivian Liska calls an "Expressionist iconography of doom" (197). Such an iconography includes the prominence of bones, as seen in "Topsoil to the Wind" (31), "I Am So Tired" (36), "Miser's Grace" (30), "Virginia Woolf" (51), and in "On a Bench in a Park" (33-4), in which "death" sits next to the speaker and with "His cunning hand / explore[s] [her] skeleton"; it also consists of such items as the coffins in "Dirge" (28-9) and "I Am So Tired," the "tombstone" or "graves" in "Little Men Slip Into Death" (40) and "Topsoil to the Wind," and the worm in "Alleluia" (15), "To A Sleep Addict" (55), and "Carol" (39). Considering this iconography, not to mention the image of the "nuclear Sun" and the post-apocalyptic predictions of the two men in "Twilight of the Gods" (54), I must disagree with Northrop Frye's pronouncement

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[158] Lecker comes closest to making this connection when he argues that the "lived moment of sensual phenomenal experience," or "the quick" in Wilkinson's poems, "arises from and is sustained by her anxious recognition of the dead" (1): essentially the pull between regression and apocalypse.

[159] Poems such as "Pastoral" (32), "Alleluia" (15), "In June and Gentle Oven" (17-8), "Italian Primitive" (19), "Swimming Lesson" (9-11), and "Poem in Three Parts" (52-3) exemplify the primitivism and even biomorphic tendencies of the poet.

in *The Bush Garden* that "[w]hat [Wilkinson] emphatically is not is apocalyptic"

(50). She is not simply an apocalyptic poet, no; but her poetry in *The Hangman*

Ties the Holly is carefully composed around a tension between "The Red [apoca-

lypse] and the Green [regression]," a tension metaphorized by the fruitful holly

that is simultaneously a noose around the neck.

The poem "The Red and the Green" (21) clearly displays Expressionist

tensions through imagery and colour, which charge the poem with an emotional

intensity. The poet's distortion of familiar nursery rhymes and inclusion of the

trope of corporeal fragmentation further intensify the poem's irony. In fact, the

subject of the poem is completely distorted: her human figure is not whole, since

its elements are divided and scattered about, and she must "put on [her] body and

go forth / to seek [her] blood." The path she takes is "the hollow subway / Of the

ear," a body part of exaggerated dimensions, as she looks for "the lost red sylla-

ble"—a perfect complement to her burgeoning greenness:

> But the quest turns round, the goal,
>
> My human red centre
>
> Goes whey in the wind,
>
> Mislaid in the curd and why of memory.
>
>
> Confused, I gather rosemary
>
> And stitch the leaves
>
> To green hearts on my sleeve;
>
> My new green arteries

> Fly streamers from the maypole of my arms,
>
> From head to toe
>
> My blood sings green,
>
> From every heart a green amnesia rings.

The corporeal distortion and fragmentation in "The Red and the Green" is typical of a "revolutionary and avant-garde impulse within [E]xpressionism" (Murphy 61). It is similar to that of Layton's "The Cold Green Element," where the speaker's heart is found "beating in the grass." As Richard Murphy explains, these images are part of an Expressionist impulse that "not only reverses traditional hierarchies but subverts those conventional values associated with nature. . . which appear to be held in place by nature's unarguable 'givenness.' As nature's human counterpart, the body too is subject to a similar re-coding" (61). Wilkinson recodes the human body through fragmentation and Expressionist colouration. The speaker has lost the ability to follow tradition and the status quo blindly: her "human red centre" cannot hold, as Yeats would say. By the end of the poem, she abandons her quest for her "red centre," and replaces the typical red blood with blood that "sings green" and stitches leaves to "green hearts on [her] sleeve" that match her "new green arteries." Wilkinson's language and imagery suggest metamorphosis and an energetic revitalization for the speaker. The poet's colours, meanwhile, are not faithful to the realistic colour of objects, but are rather meant to "stimulate the emotions" (Bucheim 12). The colour green connects the body to a new "Green Order" and represents a regression to nature. The new connection to the green world, however, is only achieved through the fragmentation—not the destruction or elimination—of its complement: the red order. The violent energy

of fragmentation meets and plays against the vital power of renewal through re-

gression in the poem.

A similar tension is achieved through Wilkinson's distortion of the nursery

rhyme "Little Miss Muffet" in the fifth stanza, through which she recodes not just

the female body, but also the female subject by invoking and then subverting the

verse that models "proper" female behavior so entrenched in public memory. Her

speaker cannot recall this model: it still exists, but it is "[m]islaid in the curd and

why of memory." In keeping with the Apocalyptic mode, the poem resolves itself

through "a renewal of aesthetics" that is "grounded in a renewal of artistic self-

hood" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 182). Although the colour green appears to prevail,

the poem is about the struggle between red and green, between the old and the

new; through this struggle, the poem builds energy towards the promise of change

and renewal that can only be achieved through death and destruction.

The tensions of Expressionist art became potent models of energy for the

poets of the fifties who were concerned with combatting the lethargy they per-

ceived in the traditions and complacency of an old cultural order and poetics. Su-

therland's book designs for Contact Press publications were one way to invest the

poetry with this kind of energy. Another way was to include the painterly tropes

and techniques of paintings in the poems themselves. The colourful dichotomies

and the images of doom and death juxtaposed against verdant or primitive icons

threaded throughout the decade's poems demonstrate the poets' attempts to

charge their poems with Expressionist force.

We see these colourful dynamics and both apocalyptic and regressive im-

ages in the work of other poets of the decade, as in Gael Turnbull's poem "Post-

Mortem," which begins with the typically Expressionist morgue setting, and Daryl Hine's poem "Eclogue Nine," in which the speaker proclaims he is "painted to [his] death" and surrounded by "skulls" and "shattered trees." D.G. Jones's "Soliloquy" displays a similar Expressionist iconography and insistence on an unresolved life-death dichotomy: "Let the bones dance / having flesh upon them / Let the fins grow / and swim in the sea / know that you go / in a single ocean / from sun down to tomb / and a diatom ooze." Each of these poems invokes typical Expressionist icons to emphasize an ironic tension between growth and decay, the living and the dead.

Phyllis Webb's poems "Sprouts the Bitter Grain" and "Sacrament of Spring," both published in *Even Your Right Eye* (1956), meanwhile, feature the Expressionist "distortion of specific features" that Grace writes of and that we have seen in Layton's "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C." In "Sprouts the Bitter Grain," it is the poet's "heart" that, radically altered in scale, becomes an index to her emotional state. From a plot in which the "bitter grain" sprouts, to a "valvular forest" in which black crows nest (a forest that mentally depicts tensions between red and green and red and black), the heart's transformation signifies the growing intensity of the poet's heartbreak from the "desperate love" that the crows dispose of to the "glittering fires of [her] hatreds" they collect in the trees. Most readers will recognize the crows and the "vultures" of the poem as apocalyptic birds of death. The poem culminates, however, with a regressive "prayer" for renewal and rebirth, for the "weather of meadows, / the seasons and gardens of children," envisioning some hope for an otherwise desolate scene. In "Sacrament of Spring," we are told that the season begins "with a laying on of hands," a reference to the

priest's role in delivering the sacrament of confirmation that mirrors the Expressionists' interest in exaggerated hands. The powerful sacrament "strips" the speaker "of flesh and," ironically, "leaves [her] living." Nevertheless, the hands reveal the speaker's vulnerability as she "ha[s] left [her] love forever, / but ha[s] locked his bones" inside her. She is at once physically alive but emotionally dead, consumed by heartbreak. The disproportionate role of the hands and the corporeal distortion they help enact in the poem initiates the "[g]rafting [of] the living and the dead," the tension between destruction and renewal expressed throughout the poem and that (the speaker suggests) is endemic to the season of spring.[160] These poems by Webb, Jones, Hine, and Turnbull exemplify the imagery, themes, distortion, or simplification of Expressionism, which became a popular modernist mode among Canada's fifties poets and their artist friends, colleagues, and spouses.

The titles of many of these 1950s poems, such as Wilkinson's "I am so Tired" (36) and "To a Sleep Addict" (55), along with the predominance of the theme of death in them—which we saw in Layton's "Death of a Construction Worker" and which is suggested in the titles of Turnbull's "Post-Mortem" and Hine's "Eclogue Nine"—point to the poets' concerns about spiritual lethargy in the decade. The images of death, the blood and bones so frequently appearing in the poems, however, have an unsettling effect that can agitate the reader; mean-

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[160] This dynamic between destruction and renewal is at the heart of Webb's well-known later poem "Eschatology of Spring," which considers the paradoxical apocalyptic elements of the season most commonly associated with birth and life, such as the "tiny skeletons and bulbs" that "will tell you / how death grows and grows in Chile and Chad." The poet also suggests destructive violence as an answer to lethargy: "And if you catch me resting / beside the stream, sighing against / the headlines of this pastoral, take up your gun, the flowers blossoming from its barrel, and join this grief. . . ."

while, the regressive elements of the poem evoking motifs of regeneration, nature, organicism, and vitality can inspire a similar liveliness and energy in them. It is primarily the tension between these two ideas of apocalypse and regression that challenges readers and demands their active attention. The simplification and exaggeration of themes and images dislocate readers' expectations and perceptions, and the poems frequently work in tandem with book designs and illustrations to create another layer of meaning and significance for the reader to unpack or decode.

IV. Space, Colour, Image:
Abstraction and Iconicity in the Poetry of Jones, Dudek, and Webb

Contrasting and clashing colours and tones in the paintings and poems remained powerful painterly elements in the poetry of the 1950s. Another innovation that emerged at the time was the use of the white space of the page and the layout of the poem to express emotions and generate energy. In Canadian poetry, verse had remained fairly rigid in form and presentation and had maintained the left-hand margin with few exceptions up until the fifties. At this point, a number of Canadian modernist poets began experimenting with the typesetting of their poems. Louis Dudek, Phyllis Webb, and D.G. Jones (not to mention Earle Birney,[161] who had started, albeit less dramatically by comparison, to experiment with the white space of the page a decade earlier in his "Anglosaxon Street"), loosened up margins and used indentation to imply movement or create new kinds of visual impact. This new approach to poetic form was a symbolic expression of

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[161] Interestingly, the frontispieces to Birney's *Collected Poems* vols. 1 and 2 are sketches of the poet by *Painters Eleven* artist Harold Town.

artistic freedom and the non-linear fluidity of consciousness that the poets saw as energetic. The American poets were an important influence on these experiments with the "prosody of the page space," as Eleanor Berry calls Charles Olson's attention to the visual aspects of the text of a poem (51).[162] There are also artistic precedents and exemplars, however, that had an impact on these poets' reconfigurations of poetic space, which works concomitantly with colours and imagery to generate dissonance and energy.

Both Canadian modernist poets and painters were keen to emulate the active, energetic, and expressive qualities of American poetry and painting of the decade. Unlike American modernists, however, a number of Canadian modernists apparently began to doubt that a spontaneous, predominantly abstract aesthetic was a viable way to maximize the energy of their own works.[163] Instead, they sought to heighten structural tension by pitting a spontaneous and abstract aesthetic against a more rational, iconic aesthetic, as an energizing strategy. By including icons or recurrent imagery, the poets and painters brought the disparate elements of their works into formal coherence; for readers and viewers, however, the

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[162] Sabrina Reed has written in great detail about the thematic, formal, and ideological similarities between the work of American and Canadian poets of the decade, through the examples of Souster, Layton, and Dudek; for this reason, and because it is beyond the scope and purpose of this essay, I will not go into much detail here. Briefly, American concepts and ideas that influenced Canadian poetry of the fifties are, for the most part, outlined in Olson's "Projective Verse": for example, the usefulness of the stream-of-consciousness mode to document reality (as per Olson's dictum, "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION" [387-8]), the expanded role of the "self" and the "poet's personality" in the poem (Reed 11), and a greater concern for "the visual aspect of the text" (Berry 51).

[163] Perhaps finding the stream-of-consciousness mode quite similar to the surrealist automatist experiments of the late forties and early fifties, some Canadian modernist poets grew less dependent on this method of composition, which became popular again in the U.S. around this time. They increasingly sought instead to structure subconscious or stream-of-consciousness writing with images established through metaphor and / or simile, which American poets were beginning to distrust. This suspicion was first expressed by Olson in "Projective Verse": "Simile is only one bird who comes down, too easily" (390).

poems and paintings may seem to hover between abstraction and iconicity.[164] The persistence of figuration in these abstract paintings and poems generates a contrapuntal formal energy that asserts the artists' and poets' freedom of expression and encourages vigorous interpretive effort on the part of readers and viewers.

Commonalities between avant-garde painting in Toronto and modernist Canadian poetry of the 1950s are no doubt partially related to their shared geographical and historical contexts. While Montreal was the epicenter for artistic activity in the 1940s, Toronto was becoming a magnet for poets and, in particular, visual artists in the following decade. A 1958 article in *Canadian Art* by Hugo McPherson, in fact, questioned whether Toronto could "Overtake Montreal as an Art Centre."[165] While artists across Canada were finally experimenting with abstraction with greater dedication and in larger numbers,[166] it was in Toronto that abstract art had the most tangible impact on the Canadian public of the 1950s. "In general the public has neither understood nor liked the recent developments of art,

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[164] As Victor Lim Fei notes, "[v]isual images. . . are primarily iconic; that is, they resemble the subjects they represent" (59). Thus, visual images have a "higher degree of iconicity" than language, in which the "typography/graphology" is considered to be an "abstraction" (59). "The opposite end of the scale" to iconicity, according to Fei, is "abstraction." While the term "iconicity" is a semiotic concept introduced by C.S. Pierce that refers to the natural resemblance between a signfier and a signified, thus encompassing the idea of "form miming meaning" (Nöth 18), I consider the idea of "iconicity" in the poems strictly in painterly terms. That is, I am not interested in linguistic iconicity, which is a weak parallel to the idea of iconicity in painting. Rather, I am interested in the way the poets use icons in their poems in painterly terms, as an oppositional force to abstraction. Following Moshe Barasch's discussion of the icon, I consider a poetic (or mental) image to be an icon if it is capable of producing, through introspection, "a concrete appearance that has traceable shapes and specific colors, and is sensually perceived" (273). Barasch explains that "[t]he only difference between the mental image and the material icon is that the former exists only in our mind, while the latter has an 'independent' existence in the outside world" (273).

[165] McPherson concluded that "Toronto shows promising signs not of *over-taking* Montreal as an art centre, but of finding a vigorous new life of its own" (320).

[166] In Montreal, *Les Plasticiens* artists, such as Jauran, Fernand Toupin, and later Guido Molinari and Claude Tousignant, developed a more planned, geometric kind of rational abstraction in reaction to the Surrealist works of *Les Automatistes*. In Vancouver, a more lyrical abstraction was popular among artists like Jack Shadbolt, Gordon Smith, and Don Jarvis. Across the prairies, Alan McKay, Dorothy Knowles, Takao Tanabe, and Don Reichert were also experimenting with abstraction.

nor has it hesitated to make repeated outcries against them," wrote Walter Abell

in 1954 (66), and this was particularly true of the Ontarian and Torontonian pub-

lics up to that point the time. The province and its largest metropolis, for the most

part, were culturally quite conservative.[167] Visual artists experimenting with ab-

straction in Ontario, such as William Ronald and Ray Mead, grew tired of dis-

playing their work commercially "through normal methods" and having it "fail"

(Ronald, "Abstracts" 51). They decided to take a different course, one that would

appropriate the public's attraction to suburban and consumer cultures in order to

alter the way Ontarians, and Canadians in general, felt about abstract painting.

In 1953, Ronald approached his former employer, the Robert Simpson

Company Limited, with the idea of exhibiting his abstract paintings, and those of

fellow Toronto artists Mead, Kazuo Nakamura, Alexandra Luke, Jack Bush, Tom

Hodgson, and Oscar Cahén, as part of the department store's furniture displays.

The Robert Simpson Company agreed to this plan, and they advertised the show

in the local papers as "Abstracts at Home." Significantly, the exhibition led to the

formation of the group known as *Painters Eleven* (*P11*), which included the artists

featured in the show and four new members—Walter Yarwood, Jock MacDonald,

Hortense Gordon, and Harold Town.[168] The presence of these artists' paintings in

the domestic context of the "home," as opposed to the public realm of the gallery,

symbolized a direct injection of the dynamic, original energy of abstract art into

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[167]Graham Broad notes of Toronto that "visitors found [it]. . . dour and churchy. Sidewalk cafes were prohibited, and it was illegal to sell tobacco on Sundays" (20). As for Ontario's artists, J. Russell Harper jokes that "there seemed a set of unwritten rules which dictated that artists should spend summers sketching at Go-Home Bay, Bobcaygeon, and other equally pleasant places" (245). The legacy of the Group of Seven loomed large in the public imagination and continued to mediate taste.

[168] Harold Town went on to design the cover of Leonard Cohen's novel *Beautiful Losers* (1966).

the draining and conformist culture of suburbia. As it connected the Canadian

public with abstract art in a more familiar realm, moreover, "Abstracts at Home"

initiated a shift towards greater acceptance and appreciation of this kind of work.

Generally speaking, paintings by *P11* artists were not entirely "non-

iconic" or abstract. Like the works of Expressionist painters, which "fall midway

between the scale of abstraction and iconicity" (Fei 60), works by *P11* painters

tend to fall somewhere between the two poles; in fact, *P11* paintings can be seen

to fluctuate between abstraction and "predominant representation" or iconicity.

The group's paintings have often been compared to the work of American Ab-

stract Expressionist artists, with whom they exhibited at the American Abstract

Artists exhibition at the Riverside Museum in New York in 1956, and who served

as an "immediate inspiration" to *P11* artists (Fulford, "Artists" 68; see also Harper

347-8).[169] Some *P11* canvases resemble the violent and energetic drip paintings

by American abstract artist Jackson Pollock; others bear striking similarities to

Mark Rothko's rectangular fields of colour. Without a doubt, there are connec-

tions between Canadian and American abstract painting of the decade.

P11 artists, however, were not simply copying New York's Abstract Ex-

pressionists. "In retrospect," writes Joan Murray, we can now see that "*Painters*

Eleven has a specific look" (11-12): "The colour of *Painters Eleven* pictures was

to distinguish it from other work at the time. Often applied at 'full pitch,' it had a

'powerful,' 'rich,' 'brilliant,' even 'edgy' effect on viewers" (11). Murray also

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[169] *P11* members William Ronald and Alexandra Luke studied with Hans Hoffman in New York
in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Reid, *Concise History* 255). Others group members, such as
Jack Bush and Ray Mead, went to New York to see first-hand the new, popular American art.

suggests that *P11* works "tended to have a flat, not too animated surface by com-

parison to American work" (13). The more animated, "all-over" American paint-

ing—Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, for example—often made the surface of

the painting its sole subject and "was thought by some artists like Ray Mead as an

excuse [*sic*] for 'bad shape'" (Murray 13). It is perhaps this concern for "shape"

that explains why *P11* members rarely abandoned the icon or figuration in their

works: "[t]here was little pure abstraction in the work of *Painters Eleven*," Nas-

gaard affirms (97), unlike the work of their American colleagues.

Certainly, both the American and Canadian works were seen as dynamic

and energizing, because they were modern; but the Canadian works presented a

different kind of energy to viewers and to the poets, an energy released through

the dichotomy between highly spontaneous brushwork and a clear design or struc-

ture, between lyrical abstraction and iconicity. Theirs was a kind of "hybrid ab-

straction" (106), as Nasgaard refers to Mead's work, in which a continual move-

ment between predominant abstraction and predominant representation was ex-

ploited for its affective possibilities. Much of the work on display at the "Ab-

stracts at Home" exhibition was of this variety.[170]

While *P11* began by recontextualizing painting beyond the gallery envi-

ronment with "Abstracts at Home," the group's work throughout the fifties drew

"more attention to contemporary art" in the press and, as Denise Leclerc notes,

their work eventually "spawned some new galleries" due to a "[n]ew demand" for

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[170] Nasgaard highlights, for example, Luke's *Golden Glory* (1953), which hung in the show, for its "recognizable still-life base. . . [and] the thick painterly push-pull articulation of objects and spaces. . ." (*Abstract* 95). He notes that Ronald's *Before the Snow* (1953), also in the show, displays a clear "gridded structure and consciousness of surface" (*Abstract* 95). Oscar Cahèn's contribution *Candy Tree*, meanwhile, features "plant-like forms, which have been set in a shallow if indefinite space, [that] seem to be on the verge of metamorphosing into human figures" (*Abstract* 103).

contemporary art (63). McPherson, in fact, indicates in 1958 that Toronto was leading "the nation in the birth-rate of new galleries" (262), many of which became sites of interartistic activity between poets and artists of the decade. For this reason, the particularities of *P11* abstract paintings and the paintings of their colleagues who exhibited with them became significant models of modern art's energetic "new forms of imagery" for the poets who frequented the galleries (Abell 66).

The work of *P11* member William Ronald, paintings by the subsequent generation of the Toronto Abstract Expressionists, and the poetry of Canadian modernists, in fact, all converged on Toronto's new Greenwich Gallery (later the Isaacs Gallery) in the late 1950s. Owned and operated by Avrom Isaacs, the Greenwich Gallery opened in 1956 at 736 Bay Street with the stated aim of becoming "one of the centres of artistic activity in Canada" (Isaacs 177).[171] With regular exhibitions featuring contemporary Canadian art, including works by Ronald and younger abstract artists such as Graham Coughtry and Michael Snow,[172] and a planned programme of discussion evenings, live jazz performances, and similar events, the Greenwich Gallery succeeded in becoming an interartistic hub not just for Toronto, but for all of Canada.

In 1957, the Greenwich Gallery also began to host what came to be known as the Contact Poetry Readings, sponsored by Toronto's Contact Press and initially organized by Raymond Souster, Kenneth McRobbie, Avrom Isaacs, Jack

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[171] Denise Leclerc suggests the Greenwich Gallery opened in 1955 on Hayter Street (63). Denis Reid, however, writes that Isaacs's establishment on Hayter Street was the "Greenwich art shop" and that Isaac later opened the Greenwich Gallery on Bay Street in 1956 ("Meeting Place").

[172] Coughtry and Snow would later provide original art for Kenneth McRobbie's *Eyes Without a Face* (1960) and Souster's *A Place of Meeting* (1962), published by the Isaacs gallery.

Hersh, and Donald Priestman (McRobbie, Letter to P.M. Dwyer). Eventually re-

ceiving funding for its 1960 season from the newly established Canada Council

for the Arts (Souster, Letter to Louis Dudek), the Contact Poetry Readings began

as a modest, self-funded cooperative project between Contact and Isaacs, who

provided his gallery space free of charge (McRobbie, Letter to P.M. Dwyer). The

series featured Canadian poets D.G. Jones, Jay MacPherson, F.R. Scott, Irving

Layton, Louis Dudek, James Reaney, and Leonard Cohen, as well as American

poets Frank O'Hara, Robert Creeley, and Charles Olson, over the course of five

years (Colombo). A summary of the 1959-60 season of the Contact Poetry Read-

ings, found in the Raymond Souster Papers at the Thomas Fisher Library in To-

ronto, points to the significance of the Greenwich Gallery as a site of interartistic

confluence:

> The Gallery where the readings are held has become a focus of communi-
> cation between the arts – particularly between poets, painters, and the pub-
> lic. Its size is sufficiently flexible as comfortably to accommodate large
> and small audiences, while retaining the intimate atmosphere essentially
> [*sic*] for untheatrical readings. The Gallery possesses a permanent stock of
> Canadian poetry. Books are sold during the readings and throughout the
> year, and probably constitute one of the biggest stocks of new and experi-
> mental writing in Canada. ("Contact Poetry Readings")

The intimate and literary-friendly atmosphere of the Greenwich Gallery made it a

fitting venue for readings by Canada's modernist poets from across the country,

some of whom were married to visual artists (Layton, F.R. Scott, Jones), or were

friends and relatives of visual artists (Dudek), or were / became visual artists

themselves (Webb, Jones).

On November 13, 1957, for example, Dudek delivered a live reading of his poems at the Greenwich Gallery in Toronto (McRobbie, Letter to P.M. Dwyer). Which poems he selected to read to a crowd of about fifty or sixty poets, literary critics, artists, and fans, is not known. As he read to the assembled group, he must have observed recent oils and watercolours by William Ronald, which were on display in the gallery from 9 November to 29 November, 1957, as part of Ronald's second one-man-show ("William Ronald"). Ronald's *The Hero* (Fig. 27), completed that same year, is exemplary of the emotional violence and energy that characterized his work of this period.

Fig. 27. William Ronald, *The Hero*, 1957, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON (Image from *Cybermuse*, National Gallery Canada, 2010)

David Burnett notes that "Ronald's paintings of the earlier 1950s reflected the

'all-over' gestural surfaces that marked the work of Jackson Pollock. . . . By the mid-fifties, he was reacting against this with the development of his 'central-image' pictures" (Burnett 158). I doubt Burnett suggests here that by the mid-fifties Ronald altogether abandons gestural surfaces in his painting: much of the surface of *The Hero*, evidently, is gestural, since the paint was applied swiftly to form the massive head of the central figure in one full movement. The interior of this outline is an amalgam of spontaneous, at times broad, brush strokes and quick globs of paint (probably applied to the canvas using a palette knife); the thin, sharp, white lines that radiate outwards from the central figure, moreover, imply action and force. The dynamic, somewhat violent, application of paint and the dramatic use of space and scale stand out in this work.

Nevertheless, one cannot deny that Ronald's spontaneous, gestural application of paint is confined to and restricted by the central image of the figure's head, which lends the painting structure and keeps it from becoming too introspective or tilting too far towards the pole of non-iconicity or predominant abstraction.[173] Here, perhaps, is evidence of what Burnett suggests is Ronald's reaction against "all-over" composition, a term that refers to a compositional approach in which (unlike the more traditional relational composition where artists adjust relationships among pictorial elements), the artist disperses the focus of the painting by "overwhelming the field of vision" (J. Rubin 138). *The Hero*, while it resembles the "all-over" compositional methods of a Pollock in its gestural application

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[173] When asked in a questionnaire administered by the National Gallery of Canada in 1956 if he believed "that the non-figurative has inaugurated a new form of painting in which a picture would no longer have to do with the visible aspects of nature. . . ," Ronald replied that "Non-figurative art is non-existent. A literary cliche [*sic*] adopted by befuddled critics" (Ronald, "Biographical Material"). Earlier in the questionnaire he also asserted that "non-objective" art was "non-existent" (Ronald, "Biographical Material").

of paint, which one might describe in this case as "overwhelming the field of vision," has a specific focal point: the massive head. The painting's title, moreover, plays a role in anchoring our perceptions around the figurative implications of the work. Inspired by a black-and-white movie poster of the actor George Raft (Burnett 158), *The Hero* presents an abstracted version of the individual, his or her identity effaced in the process. In effect, the figure can be thought of as a symbol of "everyman," even as the figure swells to mythic proportions in the painting, almost bursting out of the picture frame. It is an image that anyone can connect with—paradoxical in its impersonal appearance and personal creation through the gestural technique. The figure gives form and structure to these techniques and brings a communicative simplicity to the painting: qualities absent, for example, in the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock.

Ronald's painting bears a number of striking similarities to the poetry of D.G. Jones, which I will take up shortly. First, however, I will point out that D.G. Jones was the first poet to read at the Greenwich Gallery, on April 23, 1957. The month before his reading, from 8 March to 28 March, the gallery featured a group exhibition of works by young Toronto artists ("Group Exhibition"). Michael Snow, a local filmmaker, painter, and graduate of the Ontario College of Art, was among the artists exhibiting. Snow's paintings of the late 1950s and early 1960, like those of his co-exhibitors, were very much influenced by the work of *P11* artists, such as Ronald and Bush, and "continued to pay homage to the Abstract Expressionists" (Nasgaard 232). His *Self-Centered* of 1960 (Fig. 28) is remarkably similar to *P11* member Jack Bush's *Spot on Red* (© Jack Bush Estate / SODRAC [2012] Fig. 29) of the same year.

Fig. 28. Michael Snow, *Self-Centered*, 1960, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON (Nasgaard, *Abstract* 230, fig. 108)

Fig. 29. Jack Bush, *Spot on Red,* 1960, oil on canvas. Collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, 05-025. © Estate of Jack Bush / SODRAC (2012) (Nasgaard, *Abstract* 121, fig. 50)

Roald Nasgaard pointed out the affinity between *Self-Centered* and *Spot on Red* in his *Abstract Painting in Canada*, noting that both are "much alike compositionally and both have speedy applications and some luscious paint handling" (235). There is evidence of spontaneous, gestural painting in each work: in *Self-Centered*, there are traces of a drip technique, where green paint exceeds the black horizontal lines that outline it, and streaks of white paint have dribbled against the orange plane to the right; in *Spot on Red*, the central thick, red brushwork was

quickly and randomly applied, and the brushwork within each of the coloured sections is similarly random and painterly (especially in the yellow quadrant). These brushstrokes engender an active, lively quality in the paintings, which appear imprecise and impromptu, and which are suggestive of a refusal to be bound by rationality.

The bright juxtapositions of colour in Snow and Bush's paintings are also quite dynamic. The design and colouration of these works resemble what Karen Wilkin terms the "anti-*Malerische* Abstract Expressionist" paintings (45), and / or Colour Field paintings, a type of post-painterly abstract art characterized by flat expanses of colour on large-scale canvases.[174] Similarly, Bush and Snow's paintings feature large, flat blocks of colour juxtaposed to create tension between the impression of rigidity, stability, and immobility and fluidity, instability, and movement. *Spot on Red's* four quarters are strategically placed so as to maximize their intensity. Reflecting Kandinsky's theories on the expressive power of colour relationships and the "horizontal movement" of warm and cold colours (36), warm colours (yellow and red) occupy the left half of the canvas, while cool colours (green and blue) occupy the right side. The interplay between these colours

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[174] The term *Malerische* comes from art historian Heinrich Wölfflin: it is the German word for "painterly," which Wölfflin first used to describe Baroque art (Wilkin 44). "For the Anti-*Malerische* Abstract Expressionists," writes Wilkin, "overt gesture was largely expendable. Expansiveness, clarity, and all-overness were more crucial than evidence of past and future change" (45). The "hovering rectangle" paintings by Mark Rothko and the flat "sheets of colour" that characterize early works by Barnett Newman are examples of this type of Abstract Expressionism (44). Colour Field paintings built on the flat and expansive colour combinations of the anti-*Malerische* abstract expressionists. What sets the Colour Field paintings apart, however, is their "extraordinary economy of means. . .": Wilkin explains that "[d]iscrete shapes, dynamic imbalances, cursive drawing, and even elliptical suggestions of narrative were largely jettisoned. The single indispensible element was color—in generous amounts—which, paradoxically, both emphasized the painting's presence as an object and suggested vast, ambiguous spaces that one saw into but could not, even metaphorically, enter" (45). Examples of Colour Field Paintings are Kenneth Noland's *Beginning* (1958); Barnett Newman's later work, such as *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?* (1966); and Morris Louis's *Where* (1960).

creates compositional tension and contrasting physical sensations in the viewer. Red and green, moreover, are diagonally positioned across from one another, which has a mobilizing effect on the viewer's eye that scans across the picture plane to unite the two complements. *Self-Centered*'s colour scheme is quite different: warm, high-keyed colours (red and orange) dominate the large canvas; but dissonance is introduced in the "odd colours" that separate quadrants (Nasgaard 235). The layering of blues and greens between the red and orange quadrants creates complements that have gone awry: the effect is that the painting's elements seem unsettled. The eye, not knowing where to rest or how to read these colour combinations, cannot be lethargic: it is compelled to scan and move across the expanse of canvas.

Unlike the anti-*Malerische* Abstract Expressionists and Colour Field painters, however, Bush and Snow do not entirely purge imagery from their works, but rather incorporate the image into the whole of the composition. Both *Spot on Red* and *Self-Centered* include one of the most basic icons as part of their design: the cross. In *Spot on Red*, also known as *The White Cross* (Reid, *Concise History* 269), the icon is symbolic: the broad, red brushstrokes that appear to be nailed to the centre of the cross by the black spot carry biblical associations and are suggestive of a poppy on a white cross in Flanders Fields.[175] The violence with which the red brushwork is applied to the canvas only heightens the emotional impact of the symbol and implies a critique of either war itself or the inadequacy of our ce-

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[175] Michael Burtch explains that while it is well-known that Bush was a devout Anglican, "what Bush had kept discrete [*sic*] from most people was his 'inclination' to the priesthood" (55). Bush often explored religious themes, which Burtch notes emerge in his painting "in 1947 in a very personal manner. However, Bush's work does not appear to be profoundly influenced by earlier painters who depicted religious themes. These religiously inspired works emerge from the same unconscious recess as his 'mood' paintings and exhibit the same internal conflicts" (55).

remonies commemorating those lost in battle. At the same time, the loose, spontaneous brushwork contrasts with the linearity of the iconic cross, concentrating these formal tensions at the centre of the painting. Snow's cross in *Self-Centered*, unlike Bush's cross, does not appear religious or historically specific in its connotations. Nevertheless, it offers viewers a point of entry: at its most basic level, the entirety of Snow's painting resembles a window frame. The window is a symbol of perception, both internal and external, and it often represents consciousness (Cirlot 373). The title of Snow's painting suggests solipsism or egotism: but the painting itself offers a broader conception of and numerous opportunities for internal perception that is more altruistic. We might think of the painting, with its central cross image, as a kind of play on the popular phrase "the eyes are the window to the soul": the viewer whose eyes look through the window depicted in Snow's painting, it is implied, might perceive something about the artist's soul, or something about their own through the painting's expressive powers. The simple, fairly linear designs and the prominence of a recognizable image or icon keep these paintings from being *only* about painting—although both paintings are powerfully self-reflexive—and from becoming overwhelmingly irrational.

Like Bush, Snow, and Ronald, the poet D.G. Jones, who read at the Greenwich Gallery directly following an exhibition of Snow's work, was similarly considering the dynamic potential of both space and colour in his poems of the 1950s. His first book of poems, *Frost on the Sun*, published in 1957 by Contact Press, includes a number of poems in which typography, white space, and the positioning of words simulate action and maximize their visual impact: poems such as "Soliloquy" (39), "Request" (40), and "Fire Crackers" (41) feature varied line

lengths, and the text of each poem is scattered across the page. Jones, however, also saw the need for structure and discipline in these works, which would engender a different kind of energy in the poem—a tension of opposition between the poem's less rational elements and its formal structure or composition. In both "Request" and "Fire-Crackers," which appear adjacently on verso and recto sides respectively in *Frost on the Sun*, Jones includes the tree icons in each poem to structure the visually spontaneous elements and abstract ideas. In "Request," the tree branches

> wind themselves with snow,
>
> two old chimneys
>
> and beyond
>
> two ragged hemlock
>
> blow,
>
> for when the hemlock sway
>
> the chimneys seem to move.
>
> . . . .
>
> Now may my days prepare,
>
> as they like trees and roofs
>
> grow more precise
>
> a sky that breaks
>
> like great white birds, white,
>
> into the full summer of my life.

The "ragged hemlock[s]," poisonous trees, typically symbolize death and destruction: the fact that the trees are located in a winter setting only underscores the

symbolic association. Later, the trees, conflated with the chimneys, become si-

miles for the poet's "days" that "grow more precise" as he anticipates summer.

"Fire-Crackers" fulfills the poet's "Request" for the summer setting:

Not all clear days

of spring or summer

of youth even

are lyric

. . . .

As here

upon this April

street

where budding elms

tower above the roofs of houses,

Where two boys

no longer toying with a plane

of silk and wire, which will not fly,

abstractly toss

fire-crackers that explode

in little puffs of dust

and dry paper

somewhere

over their heads,

near the lower branches of the elm—

. . . .

The trees in "Firecracker" are no longer hemlocks but "budding elms / [that]

tower above the roofs of houses." The stately elms provide an antithesis to the

hemlocks of the previous poem, and the two poems—although appearing chaotic

on the page—are quite clearly structured and yoked together through their shared

tree (and roof) images.

There are other poems in the collection in which white space, typography,

and imagery interact to evoke a tension between abstraction and iconicity. The

painterly poem "John Marin" (5), a response to the American abstract landscape

painter who died in 1953, is the first poem in *Frost on the Sun* and as a result has

a powerful structuring effect on the book's representations as a whole. The

poem's imagery, in fact, includes typical elements of a landscape painting—a

"flock of red wings" and "alders"—and Jones foregrounds their brilliant colours

in a rather abstract manner much like Marin's paintings. The poem, however, is

really about poetry, and it begins by questioning the importance of structure in a

poem:

Do poems have backbones:

stalks of syntax on which sway

the dark

    red

      or blue images –

a flock of red-wings

      swaying in the alders –

of words

    which rise and whirl

> shifting
>
>   like the red-wings in their single cloud,
>
> or like wild geese
>
>   arrowed into statement?
>
> . . . .
>
> so words, like lovers, their unequal spines
>
>   wound to frame the one
>
>   essential backbone
>
>   bend and sway
>
> within the rhythm of their physical joy.

The poem questions the importance of structure even as it gives the superficial impression of a lack thereof. The "syntax" that would be the "backbone" of "John Marin" is complex—especially where it is interrupted by dashes—and the typical "structural" elements of poetry are visually absent: the poem is without stanzas, line length is irregular, and the left-hand margin, which is still defined, is scarcely obeyed, creating visual tension. Each of these qualities contributes to a deferral and / or a complication of the poem's meaning; the ambiguity of the images that are either "dark / red or / blue" assists in abstracting the content of the poem. Jones offers a poem that is typographically analogous to an "all-over" painting, a poem in which energy and action are implied in the application of ink (text) to the white page. Poetic words that would "rise and whirl / shifting" appear to be shift-ing across Jones's page, a kind of poetic "landscape" in "John Marin"; and where words might be like geese "arrowed into statement," Jones has created a vector out of the line, thrusting the statement forward through indentation.

Given the spatial dynamics of "John Marin," we might read the poem as a "color-space event," a phrase coined by the American painter Stuart Davis. Drawing on Kandinsky's theories of the movement of warm and cool colours, Davis believed that "a warm-hued colo[u]r might sometimes seem to advance . . . ," but that "this occurred only when the meaning of its position in the context of the picture referred to an advanced plane position" (Lane 43). Similar to Ronald's *Hero*, in which the warm, red colour of the figure's face appears to advance to the foreground and the cool, blue colour recedes to the background, despite the relative flatness of the painting, "John Marin" replicates the dynamic tension evoked in the title of the book *Frost* (cool) *on the Sun* (warm) in its minimalistic palette, which is also red and blue. These verbal colours act out spatially, on the surface of the white page, the "movement" that they would present in a painting according to Davis's theory. Jones isolates the colour "red," for example, as the only word on the poem's fourth line, whereas the blue is subdued between words on the line below. The first use of the word "red-wings" appears almost vertically below the "red" above it, which again emphasizes the colour. The colour blue, conversely, appears only once as a word in the poem, the effect being that the colour "recedes" in the mind of the reader. The mental conflict evoked between the two colours, words that "bend and sway" in the poem, not only challenges the reader's perceptions, but also promotes an impression of dynamic movement.

Despite such a playful use of colour and space, the poem's abstraction does not lead to great difficulty. Jones has used the spatial / grammatical structure of the poem and its repetitive imagery to help convey its meaning. There is a moment of slight semantic uncertainty (the double meaning of "wound" as a past par-

ticiple of "to wind around," the most coherent option given the context of the word, or the present tense of "to wound"), which momentarily obscures the referentiality of the poem; but the word is ultimately comprehensible and the poem, in its entirety, communicates its concepts and ideas. The repetitive image of the flock of birds (the "red-wings" and the related image of the "wild geese") helps Jones to convey what is at stake in the poem: the tension between a spontaneous painterly lyricism and compositional structure. These birds represent the "flight" of words on the page, the fluid movement of text in the poem. At the same time the birds, like the crosses in Bush and Snow's paintings, are symbolic icons that add semantic clarity, coherence, and unity to the abstract composition. Nevertheless, the poem—through its unorthodox typographical presentation and obscure language in tension with its repetitive, symbolic imagery—places a number of cognitive demands on the reader, who cannot be lackadaisical if he or she wants to understand the poem. Jones's interest in painting, clearly signaled by his responsiveness to Marin and by his presence at the Greenwich Gallery, helps explain the painterly affinities of his poem to abstract expressionism and its active, energetic aesthetics.

Although Phyllis Webb did not take up painting herself until much later in life (Stephen Collis indicates that she was in her sixties when she started), the poet, like Jones, was a longtime art enthusiast. In the early 1950s, Webb moved to London and Paris for a few years, where she frequented European art galleries. She wrote Dudek in 1954, for example, excited about a Picasso exhibition she had attended in Paris, and her poem "Picasso Exhibition" was inspired by what she saw there (5 September 1954). After living in Paris, Webb returned to Canada to

live in Toronto, where she worked for McClelland & Stewart as a freelance copy
editor and for the CBC for a brief interval (Butling 143). She was invited, and had
agreed, to read her poems at the city's Greenwich Gallery as early as 1959
(McRobbie, "Outline"). It is not known if she ever did deliver a reading there; but
she was obviously aware of the gallery, and it seems likely that she attended some
of the Contact Poetry Readings. The gallery reading series might have attracted
her precisely because the most contemporary, abstract paintings in Canada were
on display there, and because it was a space in which poetry and painting were in
direct interaction with one another.

The painterly influences on Webb's own poetry and her painting were
diverse and broad; Stephen Collis remarks, however, that while Webb only started
painting in the early 1990s, her painterly aesthetic does not resonate with contem-
porary and postmodern painting of that decade. "In a strange way," remarks Col-
lis,

> in turning to abstract art in the 1990s, Webb returns to the late modernism
> of her origins as a poet in the 1940s and '50s—to the artistic movements
> contemporaneous with her poetic origins. And it is there, in the Montreal
> of the 1950s, that we can see the beginnings of Webb's interest in abstrac-
> tion—right where her poetry begins. (162-3)

Collis reminds us that it was in the 1950s that Webb really began to consider ab-
straction; however, the decade's painterly influences on Webb's abstraction are
probably not limited to Montreal artists Marian Scott (a good friend of Webb's)
and the *Automatistes* (who were, Collis admits, "beginning to disband" by the
time Webb came to Montreal)—sources that Collis "speculate[s]" had a "lasting

impact" on Webb's art (163).

The cover of Webb's first book of poems, in collaboration with Eli Man-del and Gael Turnbull, *Trio* (Fig. 30), which was published by Contact Press in 1954, is exemplary of the kind of abstract art that had an immediate effect on the development of her poetry throughout the 1950s.
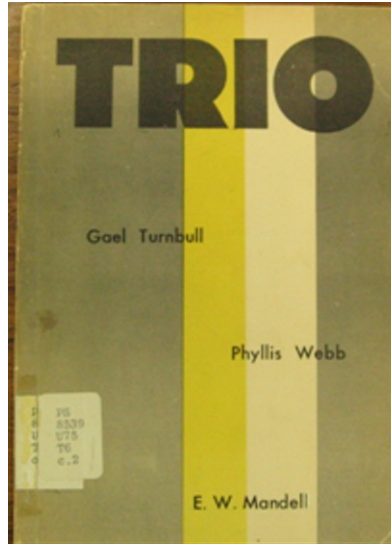
Fig. 30. Betty Sutherland, cover of *Trio* by Gael Turn-bull, Phyllis Webb, and Eli Mandel. Contact Press, 1954 (photograph by the author)

The covers and illustrations of Contact Press publications, after all, were careful-ly conceived and often designed by artists who knew the poet (or poets) personal-ly and / or were familiar with their work. This was the case with *Trio.* Designed by Sutherland, who befriended Webb as part of a literary group in the 1950s (Butling 131),[176] the cover of *Trio* is suggestive, perhaps even emblematic, of the

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[176] Butling notes that Webb was introduced to the "group of writers"—which Butling lists as hav-ing included Dudek, Layton, Betty Layton [Sutherland], Turnbull, Mandel, Waddington, and Leo-nard Cohen and Al Purdy (who joined later on)—by F.R. Scott, also a member of the group (131-2).

poetry found inside. Composed of four vertical bands—two grey strips[177] that frame one yellow and one white strip near the centre—the cover resembles anti-*Malerische* Abstract Expressionist paintings, even the Colour Field paintings of the 1960s. The tension between colours on the flat picture plane focuses energy at the core of the cover, where the lighter strips are positioned. The poets' names appear to aggregate around the central yellow band of colour, as though they were heliotropes drawn to a kind of solar energy. The colour yellow and images of the sun, in fact, crop up frequently throughout the collection: Turnbull writes, for example, of a "yellow curtain to obscure the sun" in "Post-Mortem" and of a clock's "yellow face" that "hung like a cut-out moon" in "Nightpiece, Pittsburg." The sun also appears in his "A Poem is a Pearl," "To the Point for Once," "Love Poem—2," in Webb's "Earth Descending," and frequently in Mandel's "Minotaur Poems," such as "II," in which the speaker's father "fell into the sun," and "III" where we learn of the existence of "the sun people." Furthermore, the misspelling of Eli Mandel's name on the cover, a typographical error,[178] has a significant visual effect on the book's design: the extra "l" unites all three names through the double "l" in each name and terminal doubled letter in each surname, which mimic the vertical thrust of the two light-coloured bands. Moreover, the scattered, seemingly random placement of each name resembles the alignment of a number of poems in the collection—particularly Webb's poem "Standing (for Earle Birney)," which is situated near the centre of the publication—where indented and

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[177] The colour of the strips in Fig. 30 may appear slightly green: the photographic reproduction does not accurately represent the actual colour of the strips, which are grey.

[178] Gnarowski notes that Mandel's name is "misspelt on the cover, title-page and, on the page preceding Mandel's poems. An attempt was made to correct this error by hand in most copies of the book" (n. pag.).

stepped lines create the impression of movement.[179]

Significantly, this cover is unlike any extant work that Betty Sutherland designed or painted.[180] The divergence of this design from Sutherland's signature style is another indication that the artist was, whether willfully or compliantly, tailoring the look of the book to its contents. The vertical, flat colour-bands might, for those familiar with Canadian art of the decade, call to mind paintings done by post-*Automatistes* artists in Montreal (such as Guido Molinari and Claude Toussignant). The combination of this rigid, Colour Field design with fluid typographical elements—the authors' names that appear to migrate across the cover, and the book's transparent title revealing layers of design beneath, which Wilkin notes is an Abstract Expressionist technique meant to indicate a painting's "previous and future states" (45)—brings it close to the Anti-Malerische paintings of the late 1950s and early 1960s by Bush and Snow.

Like these paintings, and Sutherland's cover of *Trio*, Webb's poems from this period evoke movement and transience, particularly through their explorations of the page space; but the total energizing effect of the poems is one that contrasts unconscious free play with a more conscious, organized structure. A number of Webb's abstract poems from the 1950s, such as "Fragment" and "Double Entendre," use the surface of the page to create an active, mobilized reading experience. William Carlos Williams, who experimented with stepped

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[179] Turnbull's "Love Poem -1-" and Mandel's "Minotaur Poems IV" feature a similar loosening up of the left hand margin, like that of Jones's "John Marin," and spaces between lines that give the impression of movement or fluidity. No poem in the collection, however, is quite as forceful in its spatial diversity as Webb's "Standing."

[180] Many of Sutherland's paintings from the 1950s were destroyed in a fire in 1958. There is little evidence, however, that she ever painted in an Abstract Expressionist style. Reviews of the decade describe her as a "humanist" ("Betty Sutherland"), and her works are rarely without figuration.

lines of poetry in the fifties, may have influenced Webb's lineation of the period, as Sharon Thesen has discussed (14). In a few of Webb's poems, however, such as "Two Versions" and "Standing (For Earle Birney)," the lineation is pushed beyond stepped lines and resembles Marianne Moore's experimentations with indentations, as in her poems "Melchior Vulpius" or "The Steeple-Jack." Webb's poems explore a *visual* expressiveness of lineation and the surface of the white page to such a degree, in fact, that they call to mind painterly precedents or exemplars of the period that explored the space of the canvas through "all-over" composition kept in check by a central image.

"Two Versions," from *Even Your Right Eye* (1956), is particularly interesting because it juxtaposes the dynamics of the open page space in the first section—"1. Poetry"—against the stability and visual stasis of the second—"2. In Situ":

1.   Poetry

Fidelity

       as in love

              is in poetry

                     an unexpected satisfaction.

Or, rendered into French,

              "The Importance of Being Earnest" becomes

        "L'important, C'est d'être fidèle"!

Discoverable after promiscuities,

        flirtations,

flights of fancy;

This is to say that

Genius is no scarecrow!

For instance:

Murder in South Kensington

is no strange fruit on any poet's tree;

For instance:

The hoodwinked eye of ignorance

lurks sinister beneath the professorial gown

. . . .

2. In Situ

The poet in his tree of hell

will see life steadily and see it well.

The world is round. It moves in circles.

The poet in his vision tree

Imparts immaculate necessity

to murder, ignorance and lust.

The world is round. It moves in circles.

. . . .

"1. Poetry" represents on the surface of the page the movement of "flights of fan-

cy," the circularity, "profundities of otherness," and "ambiguous nakedness" that all satisfying poetry, poetry marked by "fidelity," explores and enacts. The poet creates a visual impression of movement through her lineation, which is stepped in some instances—as in the first few lines—but radically indented or aligned right in others—as in the line "*'The Importance of Being Earnest' becomes*," for example, or the line "freely ravage the pulse of evil" near the end of the poem. Other lines feature isolated words: "flirtations," "Or," "for," "Poetry," are words that are slightly detached from their context because they appear alone on a line. The effect of such indentations and isolations is similar to that created by the movement of authors' names across *Trio's* cover, or by the gestural application of paint in Ronald's *The Hero*: the visual impact is expressive and the reader or viewer's eye is encouraged to scan vigorously across the surface of the canvas or page to link its disparate elements and create coherence and meaning.

Consequently, the poem's lineation contributes to the general abstraction of the work, as it furthers a broad complication of referentiality that occurs on many levels in the poem. The frequent appearance of abstract ideas (words like "Fidelity," "love," "satisfaction," or "ignorance") is also part of the poem's abstraction. This last word, moreover, belongs to the phrase "the hoodwink of ignorance"—an "a of b" formulation that suggests preconscious composition mirrored in the phrase "Extremes of possibility." Stream-of-consciousness is further evidenced in the chiasmic reversal of this phrase in the subsequent line "the greatest possible extremities"—the poet's mind promptly inverting its most recent thought. Webb appears to be letting irrational and emotive forces guide her hand to write this poetry of "Fidelity" and to place the words spatially on the page.

While the impression of the first section is dynamic in itself, it is the tension created through its contrast with the second section "In Situ" that generates a dissonant and impactful energy in the poem. This second section (as its title suggests) deals with stability, stasis, structure, consciousness, and emplacement. It is about the poet who "see[s] life steadily and see[s] it well" from a single perspective. Although the poet's singular and fixed vantage point may limit his or her insight, Webb suggests that this emplacement also sharpens the poet's vision. From this unwavering point of view, the poet sees with certainty that "[t]he world is round. It moves in circles." The poem's form reflects this rational, stable vision of the world. The lineation here is very conventional and entirely conforms to the left-hand margin. The poem's stanzaic structure is fairly consistent: a couplet, followed by a single line, followed by a tercet, and the pattern of a single line followed by a tercet is repeated with only slight alteration in sequence through the remainder of the poem. Moreover, there is frequent end-rhyme in the section: "hell" / "well"; "tree" / "necessity"; and "curse" / "worse," for example. These characteristics combine to create the immediate impression that the section was consciously and carefully composed, unlike the broad effect of the first section, in which scattered lineation, abstract ideas, and prepositional phrasing coalesce to suggest—at first—a more spontaneous composition.

The central image of the "poet's tree" appears in both sections, however, and creates a rational organization to the overall poem that is in tension with its bifurcation. Thesen parses the significance of the tree in her introduction to *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems*, where she rightly contends that Webb's idea of the poet in the tree is a metaphor for the poet's role "as a messenger of the other, as

spiritual adept, and as 'seer' of visions" (17). The tree, however, also has a structural function in the poem, as it yokes the two sections, "1. Poetry" and "2. In Situ," together as a coherent whole. Webb's tree, then, is similar to Bush and Snow's cross and to Jones's birds and trees, as it is an icon that unites the poem's disparate elements and assists in bringing rationality into play with the more irrational elements of the poem. The tree establishes visually and symbolically the poem's forceful tension between the poet's drive towards abstraction and her drive towards concrete emplacement.

Louis Dudek, meanwhile, may have observed a paradox of the dynamic, gestural brushwork and formal, iconic structure of Ronald's paintings when he read at the Greenwich Gallery in 1957. The spatial dynamics and formal tensions of Ronald's paintings involve features similar to some of Dudek's poetic experiments of the late 1950s. Although a number of Dudek's poems preceding this encounter with Ronald's work feature bright colours and dynamic typographical experiments with indentations, these early poems rarely highlight the formal tension between abstraction and iconicity that Ronald's art displays. For example, Dudek's poem "Noon," published in *Twenty-Four Poems* in 1952 (12), is one of his earliest attempts at varied line lengths, stepped lines, and indentations, and the juxtaposition of bright, mainly primary colours to imply energy; the poem, however, lacks a forceful, central image uniting its elements:

Red!   blue   white!   yellow (

a square?   of jiggling colours

against a sand sidewalk, cloth?

Patches, of kids!   building roller-coasters

Out of soap boxes. . .

) Yellow   blue   white   red, and rusty

Heads and flesh colours

         busily shifting, in shirts, red white and yellow

. . . .

 and / or the pile of pale banana boxes

Against a brick wall.

Dudek's s indented lines, along with his strange placement of parentheses, certainly resemble the poetry of E.E. Cummings (see, for example, Cummings's "in Just-" or "O Sweet Spontaneous"). The bright colours and clear images he invokes, however, are more suggestive of a painterly affinity to the Abstract Expressionist paintings of Bush and Snow. Like *Spot on Red* and *Self-Centered*, Dudek's "Noon" explores the interplay and movement of bright colours— "jiggling colours," as the speaker refers to them. The poet creates the effect of an energetic and spontaneous composition through parataxis: the accumulation of images catalogued in the lines, such as the "sand sidewalk, cloth? / Patches, of kids! building roller-coasters," meanwhile, engender a visual dynamic for the reader who can sense the poems movement between construction and abstraction. The list of elements comprises the speaker's immediate, un-edited, and unconnected reactions to his perceptions that combine to form a central image or what Jones calls the "backbone" of the poem: the image of children building soap-box "roller-coasters."

Unlike Bush, Snow, and Ronald's paintings, however, where central images are monolithic and unite the disparate elements of the compositions, Dudek's

central image in "Noon" is literally parenthetical to the abstract interaction of co-
lours that become the subject of the poem. The image also competes with the
"Heads and flesh colours / busily shifting" and the final image of "pale banana
boxes / Against a brick wall." These conflictual images, along with the fore-
grounding of colours that shift in sequence following the closed parenthesis, pro-
mote abstraction, uncertainty, and difficulty in the poem. Ultimately, Dudek's im-
agistic "Noon," an early attempt to capture an objective and painterly reality,
lacks the structure and metaphoric clarity he would eventually develop in later
poems of similar visual diversity.

Dudek's encounter with Ronald's work and that of other Canadian abstract
expressionists in the Greenwich Gallery in 1957 appears to have reinforced his
earlier inclinations towards typographical experimentation and abstraction and
inspired a new formal tension between this abstraction and iconicity in his poetry.
Although his long poem *En México* of 1958 features quite realistic, figurative illu-
strations by the artist Zygmunt Turkiewicz, the poem itself is exemplary in both
its formal properties and its thematic preoccupations of an energizing dynamic
between chaotic abstraction and a more rational iconicity resembling Ronald's
painting. The poet represents the jungle's "chaos of growing" and its dynamic
energy through a number of visual and typographical elements contributing to its
abstraction. Most obviously, as with Jones's "John Marin" and Webb's "1. Poe-
try" section of her poem "Two Versions," Dudek uses the surface of the page to
create the impression of movement and volatility through the indentation of lines.
Unlike Jones and Webb, however, Dudek expands the energetic significance of
the white space of the page by justifying his fragmented text against the bottom

margin: consequently, almost three quarters of each page is blank from the top

margin. The space seems to reflect the "peak of Popocatepetl," a Mexican volca-

no, that Dudek observes "cutting the air with white precision" in the poem. Like

the volcano, this white space appears volatile, charged with creative potential, and

it has an unsettling effect on the reader, who is so accustomed to seeing it filled

with text. Dudek's use of italics for most of the poem is equally jarring: it lends a

calligraphic quality of "chaos" to the lines, a quality that resembles the gestural

brushwork seen in Ronald's *Hero.*

In addition to these typographic, visual impressions of dynamic instability,

the poet engenders abstraction through his meditative, disorienting or vague de-

scriptions of space. The poet's depictions of Mexico, with his frequent use of

Spanish words and place names, are particularly disorienting. Although the poet-

persona appears to travel through city streets, walk through cemeteries, and pass

through rural communities with ease, his descriptions of these places are not al-

ways easy to comprehend:

> *The jungle has an oceanic luxury:*
>
> *boys by a heap of papaya*
>
> *(above them, the cornfields,*
>
> > *maguey rows, cactus)*
>
> *and thatched native huts*
>
> *with little children in the puddles.*
>
> *Rain, out of a solitary cloud,*
>
> *then sun, more sun—*
>
> *building pyramids of green*

> *and* las floras
>
> *in the Huastecan jungle,*
>
> *the pre-Aztec world.* (15)

The speaker declares that the "Huastecan jungle" has an "oceanic luxury," and the colon suggests he will explain this comparison; however, little of what follows seems "oceanic," nor does it seem particularly jungle-like. The images of "children in the puddles" and "thatched native huts," for example, are domestic images of rural Mexican life. The poet, meanwhile, creates a disorderly collage of images via prepositions. "The cornfields, / maguey rows, cactus," for example, appear "above" the "boys by a heap of papaya." The placement of these elements is not impossible (perhaps the boys appear at the bottom of a hill and the cornfields and other plants appear on higher ground), but it takes some effort and imagination on the reader's part to fit them together. The lines "thatched native huts / with little children in the puddles," create a similar confusion. The prepositions suggest the children are "in the puddles" that belong to the "native huts." Are these puddles outside the huts? Are the children beside the huts, in front of them, or behind them? Much of the spatial orientation of the scene is left up to the reader to decide. The lack of a sense of emplacement in the poem—unlike the rational stability of position affirmed by the speaker in Webb's "2. In Situ"—keeps the mind's eye of the reader constantly moving, as he or she attempts to piece together the poet's various abstract impressions of the Mexican landscape.

Dudek also assists the reader by asserting a rational, iconic structure to the poem that establishes an energetic tension between abstraction and iconicity. The speaker, in fact, is quite self-conscious of this dynamic in the poem, which he en-

visions as a new artistic model. In this "time of weakness, insecurity, and mental pain," the poet looks to the natural world for "the conditions" in which "energy is given"(200), and he translates these conditions into his poem. Trehearne rightly notes that the Mexican "world of such startling disorder. . . appears to have provoked [Dudek's] consideration, for the first time, of the kinds of coherence and meaningfulness that might inhere in random structure" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 271). The speaker identifies, in particular, the rational "repetition" of form and image in the natural world:

> *Someday we shall come again to the poem*
>
> *as mysterious as these trees,*
>
> > *of various texture,*
>
> *leaves, bark, fruit*
>
> *(the razor teeth so neatly arranged,*
>
> *so clean the weathered root).*
>
> *There is the art of formal repetition*
>
> *and the art of singular form—lines, lines*
>
> > *like a wave-worn stone.* (69)

The speaker compares the poem to "trees" and their "leaves, bark, fruit"—images that are themselves repeated throughout the poem. These images embody the "green, and brown, and red" colours that make up the "patterned fields" of Mexico mentioned in the penultimate stanza (78). Through the repetition of these images and colours, the poet connects the chaotic "lines" of the poem to establish a "singular form." The poem, like the natural world, includes both a disorderly, fertile energy of growth (the poet's artistic freedom through abstraction) and a po-

werful but mysterious rational order (the poet's conscious creation of order through iconic repetition). The iconicity of the poem enables the reader to take away a memorable impression of Mexico, just as the viewer is able to take away a clear impression of Ronald's *Hero* based on the painting's dominant figuration. Form may not be the "inner stir," but it is "a signature of individuality, of integrity" the artist or poet weaves into the painting or poem and that exists in energetic counterpoint to the chaos of abstraction (75).

Dudek, Webb, and Jones all read or attended readings at the Greenwich Gallery and looked to the paintings hung there as models of artistic freedom and energetic abstraction generated through a tension between dynamic abstract elements and a more stable or rational iconicity. The paintings exemplified formal spontaneity and dynamism through the gestural application of paint; the poets found an analogue through experimentation with the application of text to the space of the page. The title of D.G. Jones's "Free Press," first published in *Contact* and which displays this kind of spatial experimentation (along with his "John Marin"), is suggestive of the autonomy this kind of formal presentation represented for the poet. John Bishopric, who published in *Delta*, also experimented with the space of the page in "A Poet's Pride." He wrote to Dudek that the poem is "fundamentally. . . a bid for the writer's autonomy not preconditioned by emotional fatalism of any sort" (Letter to Dudek, 18 Jan 1958), and followed his letter with a detailed postscript on how to typeset the poem to follow "the manner . . . a leaf takes in drifting gently down to earth" (Letter to Dudek, 18 Jan 1958). For a number of poets in this decade, the spatial presentation of a poem became symbolic of the artist's and poet's will, of the freedom from poetic tradition or

conventions that had contributed to the cultural lethargy that Dudek wrote of in his poem "Suburban Prospect," for example. The new and dynamic use of the page space and typography these poets experimented with placed certain perceptual demands on their readers. Like the painters, however, these poets structured the spatial dynamics of their work through persistent iconicity—a formal counterpoint creating a new kind of powerful, energizing tension in the work.

V. Canadian Modernism's Sculptural Idiom: Dudek, Cohen, and Turnbull

In "Line and Form," a poem that also attends to the dynamic possibilities of the space of the page and that was first published in 1952, Dudek wrote of "The great orchestrating principle of gravity," which shapes mountains just as the "mathematical hands / of four winds, clouds / yield in excellent experimental sculpture" these great topographical projections. This image, which opens the poem, is really a metaphor for the idea of an organic poetic form, a form that is not imposed (through standard metrical patterns or stanzaic structures, for example), but that works "naturally" with the poem's internal dynamics. In addition to Dudek's invocation of the organic, it is significant that his metaphor for poetic form is related to "excellent experimental sculpture," for this art form became a dominant image in and model for his poems throughout the decade.

Dorothy Livesay famously applied the sculptural analogy to Dudek's poetry in her essay "The Sculpture of Poetry: On Louis Dudek" (1966). It is a metaphor, however, first articulated by Dudek himself in *Delta* in 1958: "A poem, after all, is not something poured into prepared muffin tins; each poem—each verse—should be carved as an individual sculpture" ("Note" 113). His poem

"Spilled Plaster," published in *Twenty-Four Poems* (1952: 8), attests to his interest at that time in the materials of the sculptor—particularly plaster, which can be hard and precise and yet could also have the appearance of transient "clouds" or "frozen waterfalls" that are paradoxically both stiff and fluid in appearance. Dudek is the master carver of Canadian poetry because, as Livesay remarks, he is "consciously concerned with shape, form, and sound: the origins of rhythm" ("Sculpture of Poetry" 74). His experiments with "strong stress metre" and sound patterning, in particular, engender a poetry in which, "as in sculpture, the whole . . . [is] visible at a glance, but the detail [is] exact, and highlighted where essential" (Livesay, "Sculpture of Poetry" 80). Of course, this cannot be entirely true of Dudek's long poems, some of which are over a hundred pages long. But Dudek's precision with sound and rhythm and his careful control over the composition of each section of his long poems establish a weight and integrity to his verse.

The sculptural metaphor can also be extended to poems by Dudek's students and colleagues of the decade. Sculpture fascinated these 1950s poets: in addition to the long list of poems of the 1950s that take up the subject of sculptors or sculpture explicitly—for example, Ralph Gustafson's "Epstein," Layton's "On Seeing the Statuettes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the Church of Notre Dame" (*Bull Calf* 16-7), Eldon Grier's "Eskimo Sculpture—Mother and Child" (*Ring of Ice* 16), and Livesay's own "On Looking into Henry Moore"—a number of poems published in the little magazines and poetry chapbooks of the decade evoke the qualities of sculpture, especially its hard materials and texture, and its properties of mass and weight. Beyond these general sculptural properties, a number of Canadian modernist poets were attempting to capture an energetic tension particular

to the sculpture of the decade. Through their experiments with rhythm and sound, they were emulating the forceful paradox of movement within fixity evoked in modern sculptures created by sculptors they knew well.

Dudek and his colleagues likely arrived at a sculptural poetry by way of Ezra Pound.[181] The common comparison of Imagism and sculpture, Pound's friendship with sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and Pound's own use of the sculptural analogy have been written about extensively,[182] and the influence of Pound on Dudek has been well-documented by Tony Tremblay and, of course, by Dudek himself. Dudek was teaching Pound's poetry to his students at McGill in the 1950s, and corresponding with friends and colleagues about the poet as well as with Pound himself.[183] Pound's ideas about sculpture took on added force, and new concreteness and specificity, in the poets' encounters with contemporary and local sculptors.

In 1950s Canada, in fact, there occurred what might be called a "renaissance" of sculpture in the visual arts. Long considered to be "the cripple of Canadian art," as Robert Fulford once put it ("Winter" 134), sculpture came to be seen

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[181] The connection to Pound was Livesay's explanation for the sculptural quality of Dudek's poetry: "it is this sculptural, visual approach [to poetry] that aligns him with the early Imagist movement of the century and with its re-development under the aegis of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound" (73).

[182] Donald Davie has elaborated on Pound's interest in contemporary sculpture and his friendship with the young Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Davie aptly applies the 'poet as sculptor' analogy to Pound in his study; but it was Pound himself, in his essay "Vorticism"—first published in the *Fortnightly Review* (September 1914) and later reprinted in his memoir of *Gaudier-Brzeska* (1916)—who first invoked the sculptural analogy to his poetry by comparing "The Return" to Brzeska's *Boy with a Coney* and Jacob Epstein's *Sun God* (85). In this essay, Pound also famously defines imagism as "a sort of poetry where painting or sculpture seems as it were 'just coming over into speech'" (82).

[183] For example, Dudek suggested to D.G. Jones, who was writing a thesis on Pound and architecture at the time, that he read *Gaudier-Brzeska*. Jones wrote Dudek to thank him for the advice: "Thanks for the suggestions regarding books. I have the New Directions' Cantos, Personae, Kultur, (Kenner), and Unwobbling Pivot. I have the Faber Letters, and Selected Poetry. The Library has Patria Mia, Gaudier Brzeska [*sic*], and they did have Pavannes & Divisions until one of our dogs ate it. . ." (1).

as "the ascendant art of the second half of the twentieth century" in this country

(Jarvis 269). Expensive materials and lack of funds meant that many visual artists

had abandoned sculpture for the more affordable medium of painting during the

inter-war years of the Depression (Jarvis 269). A much improved economic situa-

tion following World War II allowed significant numbers of Canadian visual art-

ists to return to sculpture around 1945, and interest in the art form continued to

grow from there (Jarvis 269). Many established Canadian painters turned to sculp-

ture in the 1950s: painters such as *Les Automatistes* alumni Paul-Émile Borduas

and Jean-Paul Riopelle, and *Painters Eleven* members Kazuo Nakamura, Walter

Yarwood, and Harold Town, for example, put down their brushes and palette

knives briefly to experiment with clay, wood, metal.[184] There was clearly an

emergent artistic, perhaps even national, interest in sculpture in 1950s Canada.[185]

More immediately related to the poetry and poets of the decade in Canada

were the many sculptors who were friends, relatives, and / or colleagues of the

poets, who collaborated with them on a number of literary publications, and

whose sculptures were featured in the little magazines. In *CIV/n*'s third issue, for

example, Dudek wrote an article about his cousin and *CIV/n* art director [Stanley]

Rozynski's wood carvings ("Wood Carvings"). The article was accompanied by

three images of Rozynski's figurative works (Fig. 31), which Dudek praises for

their "rugged energy which would signify both youth and genuine expressive tal-

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[184] Allan Jarvis cites a "fundamental dissatisfaction with the limitations of the two-dimensional picture plane" particular to the "space age" driving these painters to experiment with sculpture in the 1950s (269).

[185] In 1951, the National Gallery of Canada held the first national exhibition featuring Canadian sculpture in over a decade (McCurry n. pag.). In addition to established sculptors, such as Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Florence Wyle, and Frances Loring, whose work reappeared in the 1950s, a number of welders, carvers, and modelers emerged as relevant Canadian artists in the decade, such as Armand Vaillancourt, Louis Archambault, and Anne Kahane.

ent. . ." ("Wood Carvings" 83).[186] Michael Lekakis, a painter, sculptor, and poet

from New York, contributed a line drawing to Dudek's *The Transparent Sea* in

1956; in turn, Dudek included reproductions of ink drawings and sculptures by

Lekakis in *Delta*'s third issue of April 1958 and sixth issue of January 1959. Du-

dek had met Lekakis via Ezra Pound years earlier, while he was in New York City

pursuing doctoral studies at Columbia University (Dudek, "Louis Dudek" 130).

About a decade later, in 1957, Rozynski left Montreal for New York to study

sculpture on the advice of Lekakis,[187] who became his "mentor" (Rozynski,

Personal interview).

Fig. 31. Stanley Rozynski, *Dancer* (left), and *The Adolescent*
(right), wood sculptures in *CIV/n* 3 [July / August 1953]
(Collins, ed. 85)

Both Lekakis's and Rozynski's sculptures of the late 1950s and early

1960s explore the vital rhythms of organic materials while maintaining a sense of

their mass and stability. Both sculptors were also painters: it is not surprising,

therefore, that their sculptures of the decade bear striking similarities to the dy-

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[186] Dudek also notifies the reader that Rozynski's wood carvings are the "subject of a poem in CONTACT 4" (83). Presumably, Dudek is referring to the poem "Sculpture" by *CIV/n* associate, and Rozynski's wife, Wanda Staniszewska.

[187] Lekakis visited Montreal in either August or September of 1955, where he met many of the city's poets and artists, including Rozynski, Betty Sutherland, and Irving Layton (Lekakis, Letter to Dudek). It was most likely during this visit that he convinced Rozynski to move to New York and study sculpture (Rozynski, Personal interview).

namic abstraction of the Abstract Expressionist painters. Their sculptures, however, do not display a forceful tension between abstraction and iconicity; rather it is the paradox of fixity within movement that charges their sculptures. In the 1950s, Lekakis's work took a new direction: he moved away from working with metals (copper, aluminum, bronze) and began to work primarily with organic materials, such as wood.[188] Lisa Phillips explains that, through the opening and closing of forms, Lekakis's "carved wooden sculptures convey a dynamism and sense of breathing, pulsing, life. . ." (26). Consider, for example, Lekakis's sculpture *Dance* (Fig. 32), which combines the qualities of what Priscilla Colt calls his "line" sculptures—which are characteristically linear—and his spheroids—which are primarily orbicular in shape.[189]

Fig. 32. Michael Lekakis, *Dance*, 1958, Sassafras, 81.6 x 51.4 x 30.5 cm. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, 58.1509 (Friedman 23, fig. 15)

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[188] "When I see a piece of wood," the artist explains, "if I have a rapport with it, I immediately see what its possibility is. . . . If I am truly creative, I will realize from this piece of wood its full potential" (qtd. in Margolis 108). It is through this intuitive approach to his materials that Lekakis "worked to uncover the vital rhythm and biomorphic pattern inherent in the material" (Phillips 26).

[189] Priscilla Colt identifies three main "aspects" or categories in Lekakis's oeuvre: the columns, the lines, and the spheroids (n. pag.). "The columns," explains Colt, "are the most austere, their single upward thrust primordial and direct. The lines, on the other hand, disperse their energies with more freedom through movements that are at once rhythmic and structural. The spheroids grow in tight clusters or open out into constellations that seem ready to burst with unseen interior energies" (n. pag.).

As the title suggests, *Dance* is an attempt to capture the movement that is latent in the artist's material: wood from a sassafras tree. Its whirling, asymmetrical, and biomorphic form implies motion. The tapered line at the height of the composition tilts slightly to one side, giving the impression that it is being stretched and weighed down by "the great orchestrating principle of gravity" (Dudek, "Line and Form"). The impression of a gravitational pull affecting the form of the sculpture reflects Lekakis's interest in natural forces, an interest that also inspired the "drip" technique of action painting.[190]

An untitled sculpture by Rozynski (Fig. 33) from this period has a very similar effect to Lekakis's sculpture.

Fig. 33. Stanley Rozynski, Untitled 3, n.d. Collection of the artist (image courtesy of Rozynski)

The piece is made from the roots of a plum tree, which Rozynski dug from the

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[190] Harold Rosenberg was the first to hail Lekakis's works from this period as part of a "vigorous surge of Abstract Expressionism occurring in sculpture" (qtd. in Margolis 107). Affirming this qualification, Priscilla Colt identifies in Lekakis's "line" sculptures a "parallel" to "the spatial openness of abstract-expressionism [*sic*]. . . and something of the free gesturalism of the painters" (n. pag). Colt also sees parallels to Abstract Expressionism in Lekakis's "spheroid" sculptures. Both Margolis and B.H. Friedman, however, have rightly warned that, despite many similarities with the paintings of the New York school, Lekakis's sculptures should not be labeled as Abstract Expressionist, which they consider an oversimplification of his work (Margolis 107; B. Friedman 22).

ground when he found it on his grandparents' farm east of Montreal (Rozynski, Phone Interview). Working with the natural shape of the bulbous root formation, Rozynski carved into the material sparingly, just enough to reveal its dynamic potential. Gravity appears to have less effect on the form of Rozynski's sculpture than it does on Lekakis's *Dance*: Rozynski's sculpture gives the impression that it is lighter and more cosmic—a number of its biomorphic shapes having something of an unearthly weightlessness. A few of the sculpture's swollen lines are located quite high on its vertical axis, which creates the illusion of weightlessness. The swelling and tapering lines, moreover, give the impression of slow, random movement comparable to the smooth flow of wax in a lava lamp. Where the composition is tighter and the lines twisted at the base of the sculpture (see left side of Fig. 33), the implied pulsations—established through the interplay between positive space (filled or occupied) and negative space (unfilled or unoccupied)—pick up their pace.

While both Lekakis's and Rozynski's sculptures imply movement, neither of the sculptures discussed here is kinetic: there is no actual motion involved in either piece and the stasis of each is equally asserted. The swelling of the line near the base of *Dance* adds to the illusion that gravity is working on the form and implies density. Similarly, a "rootedness," both literal and figurative, is achieved in the asymmetrical, diagonal composition of Rozynski's sculpture, which shifts the mass of the piece to one side below the horizontal axis. Although the tighter, twisting formations at the base imply an acceleration of pulsations, their clustering simultaneously adds bulk to the foundation. Both Lekakis and Rozynski affirm the stasis and monumentality of their works, moreover, with the use of a pe-

destal. Lekakis, in fact, insists on the use of a pedestal in most of his works; it is "essential to him, as a formal element and as a symbol of the transcendence of art" (Colt n. pag.). The pedestal, then, is another paradox in Lekakis's work: despite the organicism of his material, the artist attempts to elevate his work of art beyond the physical world ironically by giving it a material foundation. The solidity of both sculptors' chosen materials is one part of the paradox embodied in their sculptures of the period: hard and heavy structures of dynamic form that each sculptor has achieved by following the inherent pulse or rhythm "embedded in the natural materials he selects" (Margolis 108). The contradiction is part of the sculptors' equal "emphasis on reason and intuition. . . ," which must be united, at least as Lekakis sees it, "to produce the kind of work which enables man to remain most harmoniously in the world" (Margolis 109).

Lekakis's and Rozynski's emphasis on the dynamic potential of natural materials, their attempts to "intuit. . . the appropriate 'pulse' of each piece" (Margolis 109), and the tension between movement and stasis evoked in their sculptures resemble a number of poetic theories circulating in North America during the 1950s.[191] Phillips's characterization of the "breathing" quality of Lekakis's sculptures will no doubt bring to mind Charles Olson's theory of "Projective

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[191] Lekakis's and Rozynski's shared commitment to organic materials and natural form also brings to mind what Frank Davey has called "Souster's most impressive aesthetic statement" (104): "Get the Poem Outdoors." In this poem, the speaker implores the reader to "let [the poem] go, stranger in a fresh green world, to / wander down the flower beds, let it go to / welcome each bird that lights on the still barren mulberry tree"([66]). Although his instructions are rather vague, Souster suggests that a poem should "be part of a summer pastoral world, originating as close to nature as the poet's 'open window' will permit" (Davey 105). In *En México*, Dudek is similarly fascinated with the natural form and energy of a poem, which he imagines as a natural, organic material having a "weathered root" similar to Rozynski's sculpture (69; see page 300-2 for discussion).

Verse."[192] Dudek's poetic theorizing from this period resembles Olson's in his insistence that poetry should not rely on formulas of metre and rhyme, but rather grow organically from within the poet. In "A Note on Metrics," Dudek claims that "it is the *voice* that makes the poem" (113); he goes on to clarify that "[t]he inner ear, in all poetry since 1650, appreciates a more subtle, at any rate different music from the noise made by the vocal chords. The poem it hears is the ideal sound, most private and personal" (113). As Terry Goldie has noted, while Dudek made numerous attempts to distance himself from Olson's theories, "One is tempted to see the major difference as simply a more conservative approach to similar methods" (29). Both Olson and Dudek are, ultimately, interested in the personalization of poetry, in injecting a kind of personal energy into the poem—"to bring back the current vigour" ("Functional Poetry" 2) according to Dudek, or "the kinetics of the thing," as per Olson (387)—through sound and rhythm. It is perhaps Dudek's "more conservative approach" that brings his poetics, and those of his students, closer to the qualities embodied in the sculptures of Rozynski and Lekakis: both the poet and the sculptors rely on intuition to elicit kinetic energy in their works, but this energy is tempered by an impression of mass and stability grounding the works in reality and rationality.

The theoretical correlations between Lekakis's and Rozynski's sculptures

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[192] "Verse now, 1950, if it is to go ahead, if it is to be of essential use, must, I take it, catch up and put into itself certain laws and possibilities of breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listening" (Olson 386). It is not definitively known whether Lekakis and Rozynski were familiar with Olson's essay; both would have been familiar with Olson's poetry, though, which was published in *CIV/n*. According to Margolis, Lekakis also "recalls discussing years ago, with the poet William Carlos Williams, the exciting analogy of the congruence . . . between the rhythmic beat of the recited line and the intervals of actual breathing in the dramatically appropriate recitation" of the Homeric poems, a poetic analogy that he expressly attempted to capture in his sculpture (21). Dudek, Souster, and Layton all engaged in similar conversations about poetry—whether in person, in correspondence, or in essays—with Williams, Robert Creeley, and Olson in the fifties.

and Canadian poetry of the decade make up part of a "sculptural idiom" that constitutes an essential experimental aspect of the poetry. In many poems published in the little magazines and by Contact Press, the poet's images are of clay, wood, metal, glass, or stone: the materials of the sculptor. These are tactile images, figures or impressions that appeal to the sense of touch and that imply a concreteness and rigidity that distinguishes them from painterly images. The poets' attention to sound and rhythm in such poems also lends an adamantine quality to their verse, especially their use of hard consonants, an abundance of stressed syllables, masculine rhyme (when there is rhyme at all), and frequent spondaic substitutions. At the same time, in a paradox similar to that embodied in Rozynski's and Lekakis's sculptures, impressions of solidity and stability are positioned against impressions of flux and movement. The poets introduce this kinetic polarity through imagery and content, as well as through metre: the numerous pyrrhic feet, in particular, lend a pulsing, flowing movement to the verse that is often in tension with regular spondees or heavily stressed metre throughout. It is the impression of solidity and structure combined with that of mobility and mutability that characterizes the sculptural idiom of fifties poetry.

Part of this paradox might be seen as an attempt to moderate, without eliminating, the dynamic, expressive or impulsive energy achieved in many of the decade's poems—those that explore the unconscious or emotional expression—and which tilted the scale for some poets, perhaps, a little too much to the side of irrationality. In his essay "Layton on the Carpet," Dudek was particularly critical of Layton's irrational poetics (137). Earlier, in an unpublished biographical sketch he wrote for Ryerson Press in 1951, Dudek explicitly expressed his own need to

"find adequate form for an adult consideration of reality, one which excludes the romantic impulse to burst the bounds of what is simple and rational and common-place" (qtd. in Stromberg-Stein 51). The sculptural idiom was a critical part of the solution he sought to bring his poetry back to earth, like the earth in which the sculptors found their materials: where the organic arises and resides.

His poem "Coming Suddenly to the Sea," published in *The Transparent Sea* (1956), is both responsive to this maturation into a new realism and exem-plary of the sculptural approach. The speaker suddenly confronts a violent, de-structive reality to which he has been "blind" for twenty-eight years. It is the sea, the "mother of all things that breathe" (breathing being an integral part of Olson's poetic theories and of Lekakis's "carved wooden sculptures," according to Phil-lips [26]), that brings this brutality to the speaker's attention:

      /   ˘ | / ˘ ˘ |˘ ˘ / |˘ ˘ / | ˘   / | /

    Coming suddenly to the sea in my twenty-eighth year,

    ˘ ˘   / | ˘ ˘ |/ / | ˘   / | ˘ / | ˘

    to the mother of all things that breathe, of mussels

          ˘   /

      and whales,

  ˘ / | ˘ \ | / ˘|˘   ˘   / | ˘ /

    I could not see anything but sand at first

  ˘   / |˘ / | ˘ / |˘ ˘ /

    and burning bits of mother-of-pearl.

˘ / |˘ ˘ / | /˘ ˘|˘ ˘ /

But this was the sea, terrible as a torch

˘   ˘ / |˘ / |˘ /

which the winter sun had lit

. . . .

˘   / |˘ /|˘ / | / ˘ | ˘ /

And then I saw the spray smashing the rocks

˘   ˘   / |˘ / | / ˘| ˘ /

and the angry gulls cutting the air,

˘   / |˘ /|˘ ˘   / |˘ / |˘   /

the heads of fish and the hands of crabs on stones:

˘ ˘ /|˘ ˘ / | /˘|˘ /

the carnivorous sea, sower of life,

/ ˘|˘ ˘|/ ˘ | / ˘| / ˘ ˘|/ ˘

battering a granite rock to make it a pebble–

/ ˘ |/˘|/ ˘ |˘ ˘ |/˘| / ˘ |˘ / | /

love and pity needless as the ferny froth on its long smooth

/

waves.

˘ / | ˘ ˘ / |˘ ˘ /|˘ /

The sea, with its border of crinkly weed,

˘ ˘ / |˘ ˘ /|˘ ˘|/ ˘ |/˘| / ˘

the inverted Atlantic of our unstable planet,

˘ |/˘ ˘|/ ˘ ˘| / ˘ | / ˘ ˘ |/ ˘| / /|˘

froze me into a circle of marble, sending the icy air out in

/ | / /

lukewarm waves.

Whereas the speaker had been aware only of the generative power of the sea with its biomorphic imagery—the "mussels," the "whales," and the "burning bits of mother-of-pearl"—the winter sun (a symbol of rebirth) shines a light on a darker side of the sea. For the first time, the speaker witnesses the violence of this body of water when he encounters "the heads of fish and the hands of crabs on stones," remnants of the water's destructive force. Significantly, as in a number of Dudek's "sea" poems, the maritime body is characterized here as a sculptor.[193] Along with the speaker, we witness the sea carving rock by "smashing" against it; we see it "battering a granite rock to make it a pebble." With the magic of a sculptor's touch, "The sea," the speaker tells us, "with its border of crinkly weed / the inverted Atlantic of our unstable planet / froze me into a circle of marble." Rock, granite, and marble are cold, hard sculptural materials creating both a tactile and visual impression of stability working against, but subject to, the fluidity of the "long smooth / waves" and the "unstable planet" that is the speaker's world. It is significant that the poet is frozen into a "circle of marble": his shape is uncommon for a marble statue and resembles the curvilinear forms of Lekakis's and Rozyns-

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[193] Dudek, at times, depicts the sea as sculptor in *Europe* as well: in poem "10" he writes, "And I would not be surprised if the sea made Time / in which to build and destroy / as it builds these waves and indolently breaks them" (32); in poem "53," he tells us of "the sea carving the architraves of the ragged rocks" (83). In the fifth section of the poem "Provincetown," called "The Ocean," the speaker depicts, as in "Coming Suddenly," a scene of the sea's destructive, sculptural force: ". . . the small scallops, the crabs, the crustaceans" are ". . . torn upon the tide / rolling in, / that gives them its shape, of a tiara, / or a chandelier of jelly, / a groping claw—" (109).

ki's sculptures.

The speaker cannot evade his newfound knowledge of the world and must accept it, a fact symbolized by the "blood-red weed" carried "home" in his hand in the poem's last lines. Dudek has tailored rhythm and sound to reflect the speaker's superseding of a fluid / stable dichotomy: for example, he creates tension between hard and soft consonants. Elizabeth Loizeaux, in her discussion of W.B. Yeats's "sculptural poetry," has noted that "The palpable quality" of the sculptural poet's images comes ". . . through their sounds and rhythms" (186). But it is "the harder consonant sounds, the 'stops' *b, t, k,* and *g*, repeated in succession that . . . endow the poetic world with a seemingly physical hardness and roundness" (186). "Coming Suddenly to the Sea" features many of these hard consonants either alliteratively or repeatedly, as in the *b* in "burning bits," or the *t* in the sea that is "terrible as a torch," "lit" by the "winter sun." While these harder sounds weigh down a few lines in the poem, they are not nearly as profuse as the fluid sibilants, fricatives, and liquids, such as the *f*, *s*, and *w* in words like "sea," "sun," "salt," "spray," "fish," "ferny froth," "whales," "waves," and "weed." The tension between hard and soft sounds is reflected in the poem's rhythms. The poem opens with a line of falling rhythm, but it promptly turns to rising rhythm in the second line; the rising rhythm is consistent until the line beginning with "battering," where there is a marked shift to falling rhythm until the end of the next line. The last two lines mirror the rhythmic shift of the first, this time changing from rising to falling rhythm. Dudek, moreover, asserts the sculptural quality of the verse by stressing syllables at the end of the first and last lines, with the words "year" and "hand." The poet also introduces, as in the first line, a few catalectic lines assert-

ing strong, masculine endings. The abundance of stressed syllables in the phrase "lukewarm waves," and throughout the poem, brings a sculptural hardness and structure to what is primarily a fluid poem, especially in its subject matter.

By stressing equally what are perhaps the poem's most fluid words, "luke warm waves," Dudek emphasizes a paradox like that embodied in Rozynski and Lekakis's sculptures of the 1950s. Particularly in the stressed end words in lines two ("whales") and fifteen ("waves"), which are also visually emphasized through typographical isolation where they exceed the margin of typesetting in *The Transparent Sea*, the paradox of fluidity within stability is strongly represented by the juxtaposition of the soft, liquid consonants followed by diphthongs and the assertive and definitive stress on the single syllable. The fluidity and transience of the sea is positioned in counterpoint to the sculptural imagery, sounds, and metrical stresses of the poem, and the poem builds strongly on the dynamic interplay between these two forces.

The poem appears, we might say, to stage Isaac Newton's Third Law of Motion, which the speaker seems to grasp epiphanically by the poem's close: that for every action (organic, generative, dynamic / pyrrhic, rising, liquid), there is an equal and opposite reaction (inorganic, destructive, inert / spondee, falling, plosive). This law is equally lauded in Dudek's long poem *En México*, in which the speaker "praise[s] the glory of the green jungle / with all its terrible thunder," "death and generation," and "frost and thaw," opposing forces of growth and destruction, life and death, and hot and cold (*Poetry* 85). Newton's law is also captured in Lekakis's and Rozynski's sculptures, which are composed of organic materials evoking fluidity and fecundity, but that are at the same time inert and ste-

rile, detached from their natural contexts and carved away, however minimally, by the sculptors who visually enhance the paradox.

Gael Turnbull's poem "Sunset," published in *Contact* in 1953, evokes a conflict of opposites comparable to Lekakis's and Rozynski's sculptures in its pitting of the organic against the inorganic. Complementing his epigrammatic and sculptural poem "Dawn Over the City," also published in *Contact* that year, in which the sun is described as "A silent chisel crack[ing] the night," "Sunset" presents an impression of an autumn sun setting. The speaker foregrounds the sculptural effects of the sunset:

 / ˘ | / ˘ | / ˘

 On those autumn evenings

 ˘ / | ˘ ˘ / | / ˘

 The surface of each building

 / / | ˘ ˘ | / /

 Grows puckered with dark lines

 ˘ / | ˘ / | ˘ / | \

 Like broken fronds of sea-weed,

 ˘ / | ˘ / |˘

 Each jutt [*sic*] and crevice

 ˘ | / ˘ ˘ | / ˘ ˘

 Methodically gathering

 ˘ / | ˘ / |˘

 The crumbs of darkness

˘   / | ˘ /| ˘ /

That tremble on the air

˘   / | ˘ / | ˘

(A silt of shadows

˘   / | ˘ / | ˘

That makes apparent

˘   / | ˘   \ | ˘/|˘

The sculpture and erosion

˘   / | /   / | ˘   /

Of gravestone names and years)

Atypically for a poem about a sunset, the focus here is not on the sky, but on the way the sun passes over "the surface of each building," which "grows puckered with dark lines"—a paradoxical image that embodies both circular and linear form—and "each jutt and crevice" of the cityscape is soon covered in "darkness." This sunset is not painterly: while its monochromatic palette (with only the slightest hint of an "amber" glow) and its geometric effect on the cityscape might bring to mind the early experiments of analytic cubism, Turnbull emphasizes the tactile elements of the scene. He tempts the reader to run a hand over the crevices and protrusions of the buildings. We can almost feel the sharp "claws" of darkness threatening to close around us, just as they grasp at the "husk." These appeals to the reader's sense of touch, combined with the hard and rigid materials Turnbull presents—the buildings, the gravestone—lend this sunset the vision and abilities of a sculptor.

Through imagery, rhythm, and sound, Turnbull also develops the equal

and opposing forces of 1950s sculpture: a dynamic life force against a heavy iner-tia, which, combined, create a balanced, realistic sunset instead of a romanticized one. A sunset is typically symbolic of both death and rebirth; but Turnbull's re-presentation of a sunset appears to foreground imagery related to death—the "darkness" that invades the city, and the "shadows" it creates on "gravestone names and years," revealing their "erosion." The force represented in these details is anti-generative and destructive; it is what creates the "silt of shadows" and the "abandoned sediment" from the tide, which have settled and become "adhe-rent[s]" in the poem. Nevertheless, Turnbull includes a number of generative im-ages in counterpoint: the "broken fronds of seaweed" to which the buildings' sur-faces are compared, the "husk," and the "spear-leaf." While both the seaweed and the husk might be thought of as symbols of death—being "broken" or removed from a context of growth—both organic images are placed in proximity to words that communicate movement and generation: "gathering" and "sprouting." Turn-bull also selects the word "[g]rows" to describe the transformation of the build-ings as the sun moves across them. He ends the poem with a kinetic image: the "recoiling tide / Of temporary sunshine," which brings light and animation, even if "temporary" and "recoiling," to an otherwise dark and lifeless scene.

The sounds and rhythms in Turnbull's sculptural poem create an analog-ous tension between movement and stasis in his verse. The poem opens with sounds that add bulk to the lines, and metrical emphases that complement the ini-tial hard, solid materials of the poem's images. The velar stops *g* and *k* are re-peated frequently, especially in the first fourteen lines of the poem, and the weight of these sounds is only exaggerated by the sharpness and rigidity of the plosive *b,*

t, p, and *d* sounds that surround them. For example, the end of line two, and lines three and four, display cacophony among these consonants, which pulls on the rhythm of the verse: "The surface of each **b**uilding / **G**rows **p**uc**k**ere**d** with **d**ark lines / like **b**ro**k**en fron**d**s of sea wee**d**." But notice, also, the numerous liquids (*r, l, w*) interlaced into these heavily plosive lines, creating an antiphonal effect. This sonorous dissonance is accompanied by metrical tension, especially in the first seven lines of the poem, where the metre is extremely irregular and antithetical. The poem shifts, for example, between the lightness of an anapest and the heaviness of the spondees connected by a pyrrhic foot in lines two and three. Lines three and four feature a repetition of stressed final syllables: "dark lines" / "sea-weed." These stressed syllables stand in contrast to the unstressed, feminine endings Turnbull creates in multiple lines, such as lines two and five. The poem's final line, however, affirms the stability and weight of the sculptural poem with a spondee: "sunshine." What could have been a stereotypical, idealized sunset (noted for its light, energy, and beauty) is moderated, authenticated, by dark, hard imagery and the intermittent inclusion of heavy sounds and rhythms of the sculptural idiom.

The question "what is reality?" is a typically modernist one that Leonard Cohen's poem "The Sparrows," appearing in his first collection *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (but first published in *CIV/n* in 1955), grapples with in a particularly sculptural way. The poem features two children in disagreement over a flock of birds they played with during the summer, over whether or not their feathered friends would stay and be faithful playmates. As it turns out, these birds were migratory. Not fully understanding the biologically determined reality of their depar-

ture, the speaker initially concludes that the birds were "traitors who deserted us."

It was, perhaps, the sculptural appearance of the migratory birds that led the speaker to believe they would remain fixed in their location. The birds are, after all, described as having "carved nostrils," and the speaker's friend imagines that they might be heard "splintering / against the sun," which suggests they are made of wood. The friend remarks, however, that the birds' "wings are made of glass and gold": materials that Cohen's good friend, the sculptor Morton Rosengarten, worked with in the late 1950s. Rosengarten created both figurative and abstract sculptures during this decade at an industrial foundry in Montreal (Millar n. pag.). The birds' nests that "sit like tumors or petrified blossoms / between the wire branches" bring to mind Rosengarten's sculptural tools: the wire branches appear to function as an armature for the hardened nests. But the sculptural birds are composed of a variety of materials; like the sparrows, they cannot be easily categorized. The hard, metallic and glass wings, and the solid, but organic, wooden appearance of the birds' heads, combined with their ability to fly freely across the sky, recall the movement / stasis paradox of both Rozynski and Lekakis's sculptures of the fifties.

Rhythm and sound heighten such tension in the poem. The poet implies movement, for example, with repetition of the final consonant of a line, as in the *s* sound that occurs in the final position of most lines in the first stanza: "Catching winter in their carved nostril**s** / the traitor birds have deserted u**s** / leaving only the dullest brown sparrow**s** /for spring negotiation**s**." A smooth and slick sound to begin with, the *s* ties together the lines of the poem, and its frequency builds anticipation that pulls the reader forward. This light and smooth movement, however,

contrasts with the alliterative stops, such as the *k* sound in the first line, "**C**atching winter in their **c**arved nostrils," or the *g* sound in the third stanza's fourth line, "Their win**g**s are made of **g**lass and **g**old." The poem's rhythm, moreover, has a sculptural quality to it, especially in the final stanza, where there is a predomin-ance of masculine endings:

˘　　/　˘　˘　/　˘　˘　˘　/　˘

But what shall I tell you of migrations

˘　　/ |˘　/ |˘　/

when in this empty sky

˘　˘| /　　/　|　˘　˘ / |˘　/　|˘　/

the precise ghosts of departed summer birds

\　　/　|　/　/

still trace old signs;

˘　˘　/　|˘　˘　/

or of desperate flights

˘　　˘　/　|˘　/ |˘˘|˘ / |　˘　/

when the dimmest flutter of a coloured wing

˘　/ | \ ˘　/ |˘　˘　/

excites all our favourite streets

˘　˘ / |　˘　˘　/|˘˘|˘　/

to delight in imaginary spring.

Cohen's metrical variations, and the way he has at times forced the stressed end-ing in the line by enjambment, create the impression of stability or stasis in the poem. The third-last and last lines of the poem, moreover, include masculine

rhyme (with the words "wing" and "spring"), which Loizeaux suggests can produce weight and force in a poem and contribute "to the sense of a palpable world. . . making the poetic world seem solid and earthy" (188). At the same time, there is an opposing sense of movement established in the content and rhythms of these lines. One cannot neglect the fact that the masculine end rhyme in this stanza (the only instance in the poem) happens to be on words typically symbolic of flight, movement, and dynamism. This opens up a paradox between the connotative meanings of these words and their metrical roles as anchors in the verse. Furthermore, the stanza is peppered with pyrrhics and anapests, which add a lightness, a fluidity to the lines that is in counterpoint with the more sculptural qualities of the poem.

As the paradox of stability within movement is asserted throughout "The Sparrows," the speaker begins to question implicitly his initial declaration that the sculptural birds are "traitors": reconsidering the birds' exodus, the speaker recognizes for the first time that there may be other motives behind their departure. Their flight is not simply treasonous, but rather it is "desperate." Recast as urgent, necessary, the birds' migration now has a faint metaphorical resonance with exile or diaspora. The speaker also begins to see that the birds have not left completely; their "ghosts" remain behind. He now acknowledges the complexities of reality, which is neither black nor white, but full of paradoxes.

Cohen's poem questions the status of "reality" by examining the relationship between the stable or monumental and the fluid or transient; such questioning is mirrored in the juxtaposition of sculptural elements and qualities or techniques evoking mutability and lightness throughout the poem. The invocation of a sculp-

tural idiom became a forceful way for poets of the fifties, such as Cohen, to explore such paradoxes and challenge stable concepts of the real. As Marya Fiamengo's poem "Shadows on Contemporary Sculpture," published in *The Fiddlehead* in 1955, suggests, it was particularly in the sculpture of the decade that this relationship was first thrown into question. For the "contemporary" sculpture of the 1950s was "No longer monumental / but Angsi[194] a twisted horn note / winding inside the labyrinth / conch of the ear // Stone is not our dominion. . . . // Movement is the decision. . . ." Certainly, this new, organic, fluid sculptural aesthetic must have *seemed* like an abandonment of structure and monumentality; as we have seen, sculptors like Lekakis and Rozynski were actually grappling with the energy and dynamism of these forms. Poets such as Dudek, Turnbull, and Cohen were also invoking this duality in their verse through a sculptural idiom. Phyllis Webb's poem "Moments are Monuments," published in 1956, presents the possibility that ephemeral "Moments" can become "monuments / if caught / carved into stone // Caught / pressed into words. . . .": the sculpture and the poem, here, having equal powers of making that which is fluid or intangible at the same time stable and durable.

VI. Conclusion

Webb's comparison of poetry and sculpture is one among innumerable invocations of visual art in the decade's poetry. The close personal relationships between visual artists and poets of the fifties not only spawned countless poems

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[194] "Angsi" is most likely a reference to one of three headstreams of the Brahmaputra River from the Chemayungdung Glacier in the Himalayas ("Brahmaputra" 244).

about visual art, but also it gave rise to a new attention to the visual aspects of the poetic text and the design of literary publications. The poets admired, in particular, modern painting and sculpture's formal and thematic dynamics, which embody the idea of an artistic freedom and autonomy that includes the audience as well as the artist. They sought to translate or emulate the energy promoted by visual arts' dissonances and formal dichotomies in their own poems as a way of shocking or jolting Canadian culture out of its postwar slumber.

One way they achieved a translation of visual art's forceful contemporary aesthetics was quite literal: they began to include modernist visual art in their literary publications and engaged visual artists to design and illustrate their books. Rozynski and Sutherland actively worked as art directors for *CIV/n*, illustrating poems and designing its cover. Rozynski's sculptures were also featured in the magazine. Dudek's American friend Lekakis was likewise involved in designing book covers for Contact Press, and his sculptures featured in *Delta* had an identifiable impact on the magazine's and Dudek's poetry. Meanwhile, Betty Sutherland worked diligently throughout the decade designing some of the best covers for Contact Press, becoming its un-official in-house artist.

Sutherland's designs were effective in bringing modern art's energy into direct contact with the literature, because her illustrations and covers often worked with the poetry to convey meaning. It was perhaps her proximity to the poets and the poetry that made her designs engage so well with the poems. As we saw with Layton's *The Bull Calf and Other Poems*, Sutherland's covers could emblematize the dramatic visual and thematic tensions encompassed within the covers of a book, while they served as an interface between poetry and the visual

arts in the era. Her woodcut illustrations for *The Cold Green Element*, moreover, indicate that she was not obediently illustrating poems, but participating in the construction of the text's meaning. The designs of Contact Press publications are, therefore, part of what George Bornstein calls the "bibliographic code" of these books and part of their modernism (1).

While poetry books and little magazines functioned as metaphorical sites of interartistic activity throughout the decade, the art gallery became a literal site or locus of conjunction between artists and poets. Toronto's Greenwich Gallery put on public display both paintings by *P11* artists and their younger colleagues, such as Michael Snow, as well as Contact Press poetry books with their "spectacular covers" (Layton, "Summer Idyll").[195] Furthermore, the gallery hosted what came to be known as the Contact Poetry Readings, where poets, such as Dudek, Jones, Olson, and Webb, among others, gathered to read their poems to a diverse audience of poets, poetry lovers, and artists. The Contact Poetry Readings definitively exposed these poets to the contemporary art of Toronto and likewise introduced or connected a number of visual artists to Canadian modernist poetry. This interartistic contact positions Toronto as an emerging "centre" for poetry, not just painting as art critics have noted, in the late fifties, as many poets (Webb, Souster, Wilkinson) lived in and around the city, and Contact Press's presence in the metropolis brought poets from Montreal and New York to this new community of modernism. The convergence of poets and artists on the gallery, moreover, led to a number of collaborative projects in the 1960s through the Isaacs Gallery Press.

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[195] In a letter to Dudek in 1957, Souster writes that he is ". . . working now on a deal with a small avante-garde [*sic*] art gallery here—the Greenwich Gallery – who may very possibly display CONTACT PRESS books and others" (24 March 1957).

These historical nexuses help shed some light on the formal and aesthetic connections between the visual arts and poetry, and on fifties modernism.

By using this historical contact between poets and painters as a springboard to formal analysis of their poems and paintings, I have been able to uncover and identify a number of interesting painterly qualities of the poetry. It would appear that another way in which poets were able to inject energy into their works was by emulating some of the qualities of visual art in their poems. Invocations of colour, in particular, stand out in the poems for their reflection of visual theories and properties that artists like Sutherland and Rozynski, as well as members of *P11*, were employing in their compositions. Colours in the poems tend to be primary, and are often implicitly high keyed—that is, rarely do the poets invoke or mention softer hues or muddled colours such as mauve, taupe, sage, or brown. Instead, the colours they mention and imply through imagery are typically bright red, blue, yellow, and green. Moreover, the poets, like the painters, establish forceful contrasts among these colours, particularly through colourful complements as in Wilkinson's "The Red and the Green." Tonal contrasts between black and white were also common, as in Layton's "Death of a Construction Worker." These colourful and tonal contrasts were painterly in origin and they often worked with the visual art in the publications to promote either an Expressionist or Abstract Expressionist aesthetic.

Another feature of fifties poetry foregrounded by interartistic comparison is the tension between the iconic and the abstract, a tension that would at times inspire a formal and thematic dichotomy between reason and irrationality in the verse. At times, this tension was rendered visually: poets experimented with the

space of the page to imply a less rational approach to poetic composition, through the jutting and thrusting of lines away from the left-hand margin. As in Webb's "Two Versions," which juxtaposes this more fluid, loose, and irrational looking verse of "1. Poetry" with a very structured, straight, and rational looking section in "2. In Situ," there is usually an icon or repeated image to counteract or push against such visual impressions of irrationality. Any suggestions of automatic or stream-of-consciousness composition, in particular, are accompanied by a central icon or motif as a kind of comprehensible, rational, organizing element to their poems, as in Jones's "John Marin," in which we find that the symbolic birds help to stabalise an otherwise visually chaotic poem.

The sculptural idiom of fifties poetry, inspired by the work of Lekakis and Rozynski, established a similar dichotomy between movement and stasis. The sculptures gave the appearance of spontaneity and movement through their abstract pulsations of form—but their heavy materials and use of pedestals or plinths give these works a paradoxical energy. The poets emulated this paradox in their poems, mimicking the materials and sense of sculptural mass through their images and through spondaic or masculine metre as well as masculine rhyme. But these elements were thrown in tension with a number of more fluid or ephemeral themes, images, and metrical shifts, such as a frequent use of pyrrhics and anapests. The image of Cohen's sculptural birds seems to embody this dichotomy between movement and stability: the bird, a common symbol for freedom and flight, is ironically wooden, having the appearance of being "carved." Turnbull's sculptural sunset is equally paradoxical. Both these images helped the poets establish a tension analogous to that of the sculpture of the decade.

The poets and editors of the 1950s embraced a "do-it-yourself" philosophy and praxis that was essential to modernism. The rise of the small press movement enabled them to design little magazines and poetry books tailored to the themes and aesthetics of the poetry inside; it also allowed the poets to experiment with lineation and layout in ways that mainstream publishers would not have encouraged. These book designs were an injection of energy into a Canadian culture, including literary culture, that, both poets and artists thought, had become complacent and homogenized. The art and "spectacular covers" of Contact Press's publications highlighted the powerful tensions of the poetry's imagery, language, syntax, rhythm. Faced with the financial burden of funding their own projects and ever-increasing competition from new forms of "low" visual culture—film, television, comic books—modernist poets and editors of the 1950s adopted an interartistic approach to modernism that was part of its originality, success, and posterity.

Chapter Four:

P.K. PAGE-IRWIN'S "GEOMETRY AWASH":

NEGOTIATING MODERNIST AESTHETICS VIA THE VISUAL ARTS

The man beside me said she was sleeping.
Possibly self-protective. I thought that his
was crucified or crying, 'Help me' – spare,
male, square, as if cut with a tool.

—P.K. Page, "In Class We Create Ourselves," in *The Glass Air*

I. Introduction

In Page's "This Whole Green World," [196] a previously unpublished poem written

in 1957-8 during the poet's so-called "prolonged middle silence" (Trehearne,

Montreal 41), the poet begins by observing "[t]his whole green world, crystal and

spherical,[197] / silent as the hole in a head," but goes on to describe, in this first

stanza, a world "within / which all those birds' coloured beaks cheep cheep / girls'

throats yell boys' brakes scream / and Manuel's wheelbarrow crunches and

scrapes / its rusty iron rim." As Page writes this "silent" world, she ironically de-

fines its contours and character aurally. How can one, after all, write silence? The

poet-persona resolves in the second and final stanza to "Paint it," to create—not

instead of her poem, which already exists, but as a complement to it—a visual

analogue of this green world. Painting the world will banish "the other silence," a

painful, poetic silence that "aches around it," and paradoxically establish "a global

shell / through which those thousand noises dart like birds." Page's imperative

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[196] The poem was published posthumously in Zailig Pollock's *Kaleidoscope* in 2010 (*K* 113).
[197] See Chapter Two, page 175, footnote 107 for a discussion of crystals in biomorphic modern-
ism.

command[198] affirms the interconnectedness of poetry and painting in her imagina-

tion and suggests that what cannot be communicated, depicted, or resolved sen-

sually and aesthetically through verse might be expressed through the visual arts.

The painterly nature of Page's poetry has been the topic of a handful of

recent critical essays on the poet-artist's work, all of which focus on her Brazilian

and post-Brazilian poetry. Cynthia Messenger has significantly contributed to our

knowledge of the relationship between Page's poetry and her painting in her com-

parative essay on Page and Elizabeth Bishop's ekphrastic Brazilian poetry, and

her work on biomorphism and the "mystical quest" in Irwin's[199] early painting

and Page's poetry following the publication of *Cry Ararat!* Sigrid Renaux has of-

fered a deft analysis of Page's "Conversation," a retrospective poem on the poet's

relationship with painter Arie Aroch in Brazil, as "the concretization of a new *ars*

poetica, in which the arts of painting and poetry overlap" (127). Most recently,

Emily Ballantyne considers Page's role as "landscape artist, working through var-

ious media to explain her distance from and fascination with the natural order"

(25). Ballantyne focuses on Page's Brazilian poetry primarily and Irwin's Brazili-

an art exclusively to show how Page redefines her "self-conception throughout

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[198] The imperative command is a feature of a number of Page's poems, in which it appears to be directed at the poet more than the reader. The poem "Arras" (1954), for example, begins with the speaker's instruction to "[c]onsider a new habit—classical." It is as though the speaker asks the poet to "consider" writing poems with a "classical" aesthetic, which calls to mind T.E. Hulme's, Ezra Pound's, and T.S. Eliot's various "call[s] for a new classicism" (Gregory 4). Åke E. Andersson and David E. Andersson note that "[m]any of the classical aesthetic analyses were derived from Plato's idealism. . . ," and that Plato "recommended artists to use [*sic*] geometric techniques. . . that would increase the perceived similarity to the ideal" (22). In "Arras," however, the poet cannot entirely comply with a classical "habit," as her eye is distracted by the "peacock," "peaches," and "green garden of cinema" and their organic associations.
[199] When discussing her artwork, I will refer to the artist as Irwin; when discussing her writing, I will use the author's surname Page. When the discussion between her artwork and writing overlaps, I will use a hyphenated form of her surnames: Page-Irwin. These distinctions are meant to respect the significance of the names that Page chose for her writing and painting selves and will help to highlight, at the same time, the confluence of these selves in both her painting and poetry.

her career" as "both exile and inhabitant" (28). Each of these essays has contributed to our knowledge of the dialogue between painting and poetry in Page-Irwin's oeuvre; combined, however, they create the impression that this interartistic colloquy was, if not confined to her Brazilian period, engendered entirely by her Brazilian experience.

This essay will present an alternate narrative to the idea of Brazil as provoking the poet's "middle silence" and simultaneous turn to the visual arts, a turn that supposedly repositioned Page's poetry in dialogue with the visual arts. This powerful narrative—largely promoted by Page herself in her retrospective *Brazilian Journal* (1987), but either reproduced or left unchallenged by Messenger, Anne McDougall, and Kevin McNeilly, among others—overlooks the complexity of the poet's personal crises during this period, as well as her earlier poetic crisis, and oversimplifies Page's absence from publication as a linguistic and communicative impasse. While Page did not *publish* any poetry during her stay in Brazil, she did *write* poems during her residence in this foreign land;[200] and while Page began her career as P.K. Irwin, the painter, in Brazil, she had dabbled in the visual arts before this time, and struggled with this artistic medium periodically after. Page did not entirely abandon poetry for painting in Brazil: she practised the two arts at times simultaneously, at times alternately, during her time there, and the visual arts play an important metaphorical and metonymic role in her poetry pre-

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[200] A number of Page's previously unpublished poems from Brazil, such as "Could I Write a Poem Now" (*K* 99*)*and "Natural History Museum" (*K* 102) are included in *Kaleidoscope* (2010). Emily Ballantyne's M.A. thesis analyzes a number of the unpublished poems from this period and compiles them into a "genetic parallel text edition" (5). Ballantyne notes that the Brazilian poetry is located in various files in the Page fonds at the Library and Archives Canada. Much of this poetry is "fragmentary" in nature (Ballantyne 33), and the exact number of Brazilian poems is presently unknown as recent acquisitions by the LAC have yet to be catalogued. The archival file Ballantyne investigates, however, includes twenty-seven poetry fragments (33).

ceding and following this period. Drawing, Page stated in an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, "didn't take the place of writing, it was a parallel thing—a Siamese twin to writing" (55). For this reason, discussions of Page's middle period, from about 1956 until 1964, would benefit from a co-extensive consideration of her preceding poetic crisis and her turn to the visual arts.

Much has been written of Page's impersonalist poetics and its relationship to her poetic crisis of the 1950s. T.S. Eliot first espoused the impersonal mode for modernist poetry in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in which he called for the artist's "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (154). Brian Trehearne has demonstrated that Eliot's doctrine of impersonality "dominate[d] the transition in Canadian poetry in the years between P.K. Page's first two volumes" (*Montreal* 73), *As Ten As Twenty* (*ATAT* 1946) and *The Metal and the Flower* (*MF* 1954), and that Page herself "found it impossible to accept" the shift to a new "subjectivist *integritas*"[201] (*Montreal* 73) that emerged by the mid-1950s. Finding no other alternative, Page, he argues, "fell silent for many years after 1954" (73).[202] Both Dean Irvine and Laura Killian have similarly sought to account for Page's poetic "silence" by examining her oscillation between a personalist and impersonalist poetics in the years leading up to her cri-

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[201] See footnote 137, page 220 of Chapter Two for a discussion of modernist "integritas."

[202] Consistent with Maud Ellman's understanding of Eliotian impersonality as "anything from the destruction to the apotheosis of the self" (4), Trehearne acknowledges the fact that "impersonality and subjectivism are hardly such separable concepts in poetry as some modernist dogma sought to imply" (71). Trehearne therefore treats the oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity in Page's poetry as part of the "contradiction inherent in the doctrine" (71). While this chapter does not contest this contradiction in Eliot's impersonalist doctrine, it will discuss impersonality and personality as separate terms in order to highlight Page's oscillation between these modes and the impact of such oscillation on Page's poetic and artistic career.

sis.[203] Irvine identifies Page's period of silence as the result of "the accumulated effect of her early poetry's oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity, between interiority and exteriority, between self-reflexivity and self-effacement, between a poetics of personality and impersonality, and between personation and impersonation. These unsynthesized pairs," according to Irvine, "are emblematic of her early poetry's split between masculinist and feminist discursive positionings. . . " ("Two Giovannis" 25). Killian likewise identifies a gender paradox in Page's poetry, which she calls a "reading effect," related to the poet's movement between personalist and impersonalist modernist modes:

> on the one hand, while Page is forever warning the reader about the danger of the subjective I / eye, particularly in the poet (in which we recognize Eliot's doctrine of the impersonality of art). . . I feel that *she* characterizes it as masculine: it is the eye that would fix, the (phallic) camera that would kill, the gaze that would harden; on the other hand, the poetic and impersonal objective eye. . . is characterized by a feminine fluidity, by its receptivity to an unending flux of images which merely flow through it, like light through glass, air or water, and by its association with flowers and gardens. This metaphoric, feminine fluidity is what I will tentatively call a textual 'woman-in-effect'. . . (93)

Killian concludes that "the divorce of a poetic vision coded feminine and a gendered self" could not be sustained by Page (94), and that it leads to her "poetic silence" (100).

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[203] Unlike Trehearne, Irvine and Killian see Page's personalist and impersonalist / subjective and objective poetics as two distinct forms of modernism.

Killian speculates about a possible matrilineal heritage for Page's "feminine" modernist tradition, which includes such "literary mothers and sisters" as Virginia Woolf, H.D., Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, and Dorothy Livesay (90). This lineage is somewhat consistent with Sandra Djwa's identification of the influences on Page's "modern and feminine aesthetic consciousness" ("Discovering" 78): while Djwa asserts that Page did not read Livesay until "approximately 1944" ("Discovering" 76), she cites both H.D. and Woolf as antecedents to Page's female modernism. Significantly, Djwa also identifies a painterly / artistic influence for this gendered modernist sensibility in Page: The London Group of the 1930s ("Discovering" 78), whose membership, Djwa remarks, included John and Paul Nash, Ben Nicolson, and Stanley Spencer, among others.

Intriguingly, the painterly lineage of the "modern and feminine aesthetic consciousness" that Djwa distinguishes is composed entirely of male painters ("Discovering" 78). In particular, notes Djwa, Page was interested in the paintings by these artists that "were either mystical or very modern," such as the "surrealist landscape paintings" by Paul Nash and the biblical works of Spencer ("Discovering" 80). I would argue, however, that the "mystical" and "modern" qualities of these artists' works are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and it was the combination of such qualities in their works that probably appealed to Page. Margaret Garlake has noted, for example, that Nash "practiced a form of Surrealism related to abstraction and biomorphism" (176), and biomorphic art, as Cynthia Messenger has demonstrated with Page's later artwork and poetry, is both mystical *and* modern ("'Their small-toothed interlock'"). As I have argued in Chapter Two, moreover, biomorphic modernism was a widespread artistic phenomenon that Page

would have also seen, and possibly admired, in the paintings of Canadian CAS painter Marian Scott in the 1940s.

In the realm of the visual arts, biomorphism was a significant form of modernism: this fact was affirmed when Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, firmly established a binary relationship between geometric abstract art and non-geometrical abstract art, the latter including "biomorphism" (19), in his catalogue for *Cubism and Abstract Art* in 1936. Here is Barr's binary of abstract art, which deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

> At the risk of grave oversimplification the impulse towards abstract art during the past fifty years may be divided historically into two main currents, both of which emerged from Impressionism. The first more important current finds its sources in the art and theories of Cézanne and Seurat, passes through the widening stream of Cubism and finds its delta in the various geometrical and Constructivist movements which developed in Russia and Holland during the War and have since spread throughout the world. This current may be described as intellectual, structural, architectonic, geometrical, rectilinear and classical in its austerity and dependence upon logic and calculation. The second—and, until recently, secondary—current has its principal source in the art theories of Gauguin and his circle, flows through the *Fauvisme* of Matisse to the Abstract Expressionism of the pre-war paintings of Kandinsky. After running under ground for a few years it reappears vigorously among the masters of abstract art associated with Surrealism. This tradition, by contrast with the first, is intuitional and emotional rather than intellectual; organic or biomorphic rather

than geometrical in its forms; curvilinear rather than rectilinear, decorative

rather than structural, and romantic rather than classical in its exaltation of

the mystical, the spontaneous and the irrational. (19)

Barr's aesthetic binary had a lasting impact on the visual arts and has "a long-

standing historical significance" (M. Brennan 179). Barr essentially reaffirmed the

binary created by Geoffrey Grigson[204] between geometric abstraction and non-

geometric or biomorphic abstraction, and he lauded the geometric strain as the

"more important current" in Modern art (19), despite later acknowledging that this

form of abstraction was "in decline" (200).

Both Grigson and Barr essentially borrowed Wilhelm Worringer's earlier

dichotomy of modern aesthetics between Abstraction and Empathy, but acknowl-

edged that the art of Empathy could also be abstract, and thus, not simply modern,

but modernist.[205] According to Marcia Brennan, Barr's catalogue established a

"dialogical theorization of gendered subjectivity embedded within the[se] aesthet-

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[204] See page 131, footnote 75 for further discussion of Grigson's role in acknowledging organic abstraction.

[205] In his seminal essay *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer established a binary of "modern aesthetics," which included on the one hand the art of "empathy"—art that has as its "Archimedian point. . . human artistic feeling" (4) and that is concerned with human emotions, the beauty of the organic, and is associated with life and energy—and on the other hand the art of Abstraction—which Worringer describes as "life-denying," "inorganic," and "geometric." Worringer considers the art of empathy, then, to be imitative and mimetic. He is primarily concerned with the "urge" towards abstraction, however, which he claims is the "outcome of great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world" (15), and he suggests that "[t]he simple line and its development in purely geometrical regularity was bound to offer the greatest possibility of happiness to the man disquieted by the obscurity and entanglement of phenomena" (20). Worringer is very firm in his conviction that "pure abstraction could never be attained once a factual natural model underlay it" (20). It is unclear whether Grigson and Barr's reworking of Worringer's dichotomy of modern aesthetics to unite abstraction with the organic is a fundamental misreading of Worringer, though it seems unlikely. Worringer's essay was written in 1908: before the Dada and Surrealist movements and before the rise of post-cubist abstraction following the First World War. Barr and Grigson probably sensed the inaccuracy of Worringer's segregation of organicism and abstraction in light of the proliferation of post-war abstract art that was non-geometrical and often based on life forms and organic structures, and they likely intended to revise the dichotomy the better to reflect the contemporary art scene.

ic structures of canonical modernism" (180). Brennan suggests that Barr "actively

dislodged associations that had previously been ascribed to the feminine subject

position in order to recuperate these qualities within a revised, and powerfully pa-

radoxical, conception of modern masculine subjectivity" (194).[206] The painterly

influence of biomorphic modernists such as Nash on Page's "modern and femi-

nine aesthetic consciousness" (Djwa, "Discovering" 78), therefore, was actually

gendered masculine in the realm of art history. This biomorphic strain of non-

geometric abstraction, typically celebrated for its "vital" and "primitive" qualities,

became a significant form of modernist art beginning in the late 1930s and 1940s.

    In many of her early poems, Page adopts a biomorphic idiom from the

visual arts as an abstract means of constantly renegotiating subjectivity and ac-

commodating a fluctuation between personalist and impersonalist poetics. While

this biomorphic idiom was celebrated as a rising form of modernism within the

realm of the visual arts in the 1930s and 1940s, it was not acknowledged as such

within the realm of modernist poetry, which still typically favoured an imperso-

nalist, geometric idiom. As I will show, however, Page was not a poet whose im-

agination could easily accept or adhere to such binaries in her poetry, especially

complex gendered binaries (impersonalist / geometric / masculine vs. personalist /

organic / feminine). Nevertheless, such binaries were part of the critical and theo-

retical heritage of modernist poetry with which Page increasingly contended dur-

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[206] Barr's gendering of non-geometrical abstract art is evident, for example, in the exclusively male lineage he establishes for it, which runs from Gauguin to Matisse to Kandinsky to the "masters" of abstract Surrealist art. Although he resists naming these "masters" of Surrealism in the paragraph quoted above in the section titled "Abstract tendencies in Surrealist art," Barr discusses the following artists: Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Max Ernst, Kurt Schwitters, Man Ray, Giorgio de Chirico, Paul Klee, Andre Masson, Juan Miro, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Jean Hans Arp, Pablo Picasso, Julio Gonzales, Jacques Lipchitz, and "The Younger Generation"—all of whom are male.

ing and after her *Preview* years.

Page grappled with this modernist dichotomy throughout her career and frequently addressed it through the visual arts, whether by adopting an aesthetic from the visual arts in her poetry, by alluding to and thinking about visual art in her poetry and prose, or by creating visual art itself. I will begin by demonstrating that much of Page's early poetry attempted to challenge this modernist dichotomy through the poet's adoption, from the realm of the visual arts, of a biomorphic idiom that accommodated a fluctuation between personalist and impersonalist poetic modes. The pressure to align herself with a geometric and impersonalist modernism made a reconciliation between impersonalist and personalist demands increasingly difficult for the poet to sustain. Her poetry and prose of the same period frequently invokes the visual arts as both sites and tropes of an intensifying aesthetic conflict between a female, biomorphic, personalist idiom and a masculine, geometric, impersonalist idiom: a conflict that reaches a climax with her well-known poem "After Rain" of 1956 and that leads to a period of poetic "silence."

Page, however, did not relinquish this aesthetic conflict when she moved to Brazil in 1957; rather, she renegotiated the biomorphic and geometric aesthetic via a new artistic medium: visual art. A survey of her artwork from Brazil and Mexico will reveal that Page initially abandoned biomorphic and geometric abstraction and turned to realism to reconsider the associated relationship between organic and geometric form. Her subsequent attempts and efforts to move to a modernist, abstract idiom essentially mirrored the conflict between the geometric and the biomorphic in her early poetry: in search of a balance between impersonal

and personal forces in her artwork, Irwin initially rejected geometric abstraction, which she found too impersonal, in favour of the biomorphic idiom. Her experimentation with various artistic media in Mexico, however, facilitated a more subjective and personal artistic process accommodating ambiguity and inconsistency of form, and in the early 1960s Page-Irwin found a way to accommodate visually the two modernist aesthetics in her art and, eventually, in her poetry. She never fully reconciled herself, however, to a Euclidean geometric aesthetic: through her nature art of the late 1950s and later discovery of Sufism and Islamic art in the late 1960s and 1970s, she reconceptualised her understanding of geometry altogether, which enabled her to develop a greater appreciation for geometric objectivity and impersonality. Whether ekphrastically, metaphorically, or literally, then, Page explored, negotiated, and addressed the aesthetic conflicts and crises of her poetry via the visual arts.

II. "Such Female Whimsy": Page's Early Biomorphic Poetry

Killian's description of the "woman-in-effect" of Page's poetry is both thematically and aesthetically coherent with biomorphic modernism: the "fluidity" of her style, the "unending flux of images" flowing in and out of her verse, and the constant "association with flowers and gardens" are all characteristic of biomorphic art. Diana M. A. Relke has revealed the "terrestrially-grounded side of Page's sensibility" and the poet's early engagement with nature (237), which Relke calls Page's "ecological poetic" (249). She has even demonstrated (without stating it directly) that the biocentric attitude underlying the biomorphic aesthetic runs through much of Page's early poems through her creations of "intersubjec-

tive space" (238) and tendency to invest "nature with subjectivity" (249). Relke, however, has stopped short of demonstrating how Page's early ecological poetic is related to the significant stream of modernism in the visual arts, biomorphism, which extends from Art Nouveau into a modernist art that, according to Botar, "represents vital forces and natural processes" (54) and combines natural and biological (sometimes microscopic) shapes and imagery with the underlying themes of genesis, metamorphosis, and flux. Page's "poetic and impersonal objective eye" that Killian identifies perceives the world as would a biomorphic artist; but as I will show, her "subjective I / eye" does as well (93). The poet adopted the images, themes, and predominantly curvilinear shapes of the idiom from the visual arts as an abstract means of constantly renegotiating subjectivity and accommodating a fluctuation between personalist and impersonalist modes in her early poetry.

I commented in Chapter Two on the biomorphic qualities of Page's poem "Desiring Only," her first poem published in *Preview,* which appeared in the little magazine's April 1942 issue. The poem exemplifies the biomorphic idiom's accommodation of a fluctuation between personality and impersonality. Trehearne has previously remarked, for example, that the poem, ironically, is "in the first person, but only so as to be loud about the speaker's impersonal devotions" (71). Trehearne acknowledges that "[s]ome will psychologize and suggest that a constitutive irony in 'Desiring Only'. . . makes plain the speaker's (or Page's) suppressed need for 'personal contact,' but the poem's closing sneer at shows 'of pity and understanding' is too convincing to my ear to support the argument" (72). I agree with Trehearne that the predominant mode of the poem is impersonalist,

which the poem's content appears to support. We should not, however, altogether dismiss the personalist qualities of the poem, such as the use of the first-person pronoun and the suggestions of a pregnant female body.

Page experimented with the biomorphic idiom using both personalist and impersonalist modes in her poetry leading up to her poetic crisis in 1956. The earliest examples of the biomorphic idiom informing Page's poetry are two poems published together in 1939 in *Canadian Poetry Magazine*: "Design" and "Reflection." Both poems focus on the organic or natural world and are suggestive of a biocentric philosophy; but whereas "Design" is impersonal and objectivist in its perspective, "Reflection" is predominantly subjectivist, and the poet-persona's tone is quite personal. Interestingly, "Design" would appear to offer a view of the mechanized world, with its early image of "smoke from trains": but any mechanical associations are overthrown in a number of ways. First, the poet likens the train's smoke to "ostrich plumes," and this image of the fowl's feathers precedes that of the engine, which is never actually represented in the poem, as the speaker simply sees the "smoke from trains" and not the trains themselves. Second, the poem's subsequent lines are increasingly focused on the natural world and its shifting organic icons and transient forms. "The sun" with its "golden mesh of light," as we know, is a typical biomorphic icon. While "the world," echoing the spherical icon of the sun, is compared to a second man-made object—the "globe-shaped floats of fishermen," which were often made of glass in the 1940s and hand-blown—in the poem the focus is on the spherical affinity of these floats to the natural "world." This image is quickly followed by the organicism of "pine-needle bunches" and "cones growing in groups," images focusing on the genera-

tive qualities of trees. The poem culminates with the human images of "[f]ormless man" stopping "to discourse on life with formless man." The subject of their discourse happens to be the "totalizing eighteenth[-]century construct. . . 'life'" that Botar notes is "favoured" by the "biocentric attitude" (7). Moreover, the form of these men, or lack thereof, has significant biomorphic reverberations: as Botar explains,

> with roots in the thinking of Heraclitus, and central to the work of philo-
> sophers from Goethe to Nietzsche to Bergson, the centrality of formless-
> ness and its temporal corollary, flux, is implicit in organicist biological
> views of nature and its 'representation' is pivotal to biomorphic
> [m]odernism. (8-9)

Formlessness does not necessarily designate a subject or object lacking form; rather it identifies form in "flux," as Botar suggests, or emergent form. These men embody, or disembody, the ideal shapes and shapelessness of biomorphic modernism, and although the "sack-like shape" of the first man "breaks the fluent flow / of day," the second man reinforces and affirms a fluid aesthetic dominating the poem. It is significant that this aesthetic of flux is gendered male in the poem, as it subverts a general poetic and philosophical association of formlessness with effeminacy.[207] Moreover, despite biomorphism's typical association with the sub-

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[207] Luce Irigaray argues, for example, that Western philosophy typically characterized the female as weak, "deformed and formless" (167). In her seminal study, *Thinking About Women*, Mary Ellman similarly demonstrates that "formlessness" is a characteristic that literature typically attributes to women (74). Since formlessness has typically been associated with the female in Western thought, it follows that it also became a marker of effeminacy in men. Miranda Hickman notes that, for the Vorticists, "'effeminacy' included qualities of langour and laxity; that which was 'wandering,' 'slovenly,'. . . 'passive,' and 'slack'" (18): essentially qualities lacking structure, definition, and precision of form, which is why the geometric idiom and its clear-cut, well-defined forms were thought "capable of countering. . . effeminacy" (19).

jective (Wood 81), the suppression of the grammatical first person, combined with the ungendered anonymity of the speaker, affirms an impersonal and objective perspective.

Page's poem "Reflection," on the other hand, is personal in its presentation of the biomorphic idiom, and its inclusion of the grammatical first person is definitively gendered female. Djwa has identified the theme of "metamorphosis and the Daphne myth" in Page's poem (86).[208] The woman-as-tree icon of the Daphne myth was certainly consistent with the body-as-landscape motif, which became popular in Canadian poetry of the 1940s. It is also typical of biomorphic artists, who invent "analogies of human forms in nature and other organisms" (Alloway 18). But Page brings the motif and the poem forcefully into the biomorphic realm through her emphasis on the botanomorphism of the poet-persona, which is literally central to the poem. While the initial image of the "tree / pretending it was a woman" is anthropomorphic, and thus suggestive of an anthropocentric or humanist perspective, the poem describes the persona's experience of *becoming* a tree, and her transformation, her "merg[er]" with the tree, is indicative of the biocentric perspective that underlies biomorphic modernism. This biocentric perspective results in the persona's complicated subjectivity ("I knew not whether I was the woman or tree"), as it decentres the role of the human in understanding the world. Nevertheless, the poem is predominantly subjective and personal, a fact affirmed by Djwa, who suggests the poem "alludes" to Page's own "tree expe-

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[208] Indeed, as Lawrence Alloway suggests, biomorphism drew its signs, which were "evocative and suggestive, but not precisely decodable," from "mythology" (20).

rience" ("Discovering" 86).[209]

The tree experience is rearticulated in her poem "Spring," published in the *Canadian Forum* in 1945. "Spring," however, features a male subject viewed in the third person and is predominantly impersonal. Once again, the poem does not include the grammatical first-person pronoun. Moreover, instead of the woman-as-tree icon in "Reflection," here we have the image of man-as-garden, as the subject's "fossil frame"—part of biomorphic modernism's osseous imagery—"dissolves, flows free," and he becomes "the garden—heart the sun / and all his body the soil." Again, this poem resonates with the popular forties trope of the body-as-landscape, and the final images affirm its biomorphic status: the "jonquils blossom from his skull,"[210] and we are also told that "something rare and perfect, yet unknown, / stirs like a foetus just behind his eyes." These images are generative and the latter is also incubative, highlighting the process of becoming. That the subject is male is slightly strange given the poem's focus on generation and its final image of pregnancy. If this poem is based partly on Page's personal "tree experience," the poem's detached speaker and male subject deny the poem any hint of such a biographical connection.

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[209] Djwa notes that in Page's annotations to Ezra Pound's poem "A Girl," the poet has written in the margin, "Since my tree experience, E.P. vaguely makes sense to me" (qtd. in Djwa, "Discovering," 85). It is unclear what, exactly, this "tree experience" entailed; however, Djwa speculates that Page may have been experimenting with an exercise in Joanna Field's (a.k.a. Marian Milnor) *A Life of One's Own* (1935), which Page brought to St. John with her in 1935, and in which "Field writes about projecting her own consciousness into the larger reality of a tree" (Djwa, "Discovering" 86).

[210] The image of the flowers that "blossom from his skull" is strikingly similar to Wilkinson's skull "ablaze with golden flowers" in her poem "Climate of the Brain," in *Northern Review*'s October-November 1949 issue. See page 191-2 for a discussion of the poem's biomorphic aesthetic. Both Page and Wilkinson were likely responding to Eliot's "Whispers of Immortality," in which the poet describes the Jacobean dramatist John Webster's penchant for images of "the skull beneath the skin" with "Daffodil bulbs instead of balls. . . " that "stared from the sockets of the eyes!"

Page's complementary poem "Summer," which appeared five years after "Spring" in *Contemporary Verse*, is quite different in its biomorphic approach. The poet presents the semblance of the personal with her use of the first-person singular pronoun. The poet-persona, moreover, is presumably female, as we are told of her "feminine fingers" in the second stanza. This female subject describes a similar metamorphosis to that experienced by the speaker in "Reflection": she explains that as she "fell," "the pigments" in her blood "flowed like sap. / All through my veins the green / made a lacey tree." Unlike "Reflection," however, the speaker of "Summer" focuses on the transformation of her internal body, which is a typical biomorphic perspective. The mental images she creates are of the "Green *in* my eye," the "green *in* my ear," "the green *in* my groin," and, of course, her "green blood" (my italics). Page's poem is strikingly similar, in fact, to Anne Wilkinson's poem "The Red and the Green," published around the same time (1951). Page's poem, however, lacks the colourful tensions charging Wilkinson's poem,[211] as "Summer" focuses squarely on the "green," on the organic world and its biocentric affinity and unity with the speaker's body. As the personal elements of this poem suggest, this may be another attempt by the poet to explore her "tree experience" in biomorphic terms.

Page consistently explored biomorphic modernism throughout the 1940s and early 1950s in her "dream-poems" (Pearce 34-5), many of which Trehearne has identified as Surrealist, such as "Stories of Snow" (1945). Trehearne hints at the botanomorphism and biocentricity of the poem, when he identifies its "tropi-

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[211] For a discussion of the tension between the colours red and green in Wilkinson's poem, see Chapter Three, pages 262-4.

cal landscape, in which the boundaries of subject and object, vegetable and human life, collapse" ("Surrealism" 53). Indeed the poet's tropical world is filled with "leaves" as "large as hands, and "flowers" with "fleshy chins." The speaker tells the story of inhabitants of the lands of "the vegetable rain" that "retain / an area behind their sprouting eyes / held soft and rounded with the dream of snow," an "area behind the eyes / where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies." These "sprouting eyes" are described in botanomorphic terms, and the speaker's emphasis, in true biomorphic fashion, is on the area behind them, inside the body. This new perspective on the eye is not unlike that of Page's "Subjective Eye" (1946), in which the speaker views the human eye close-up, as if under a microscope, and investigates the eye's ability, in a liminal state between sleep and waking life, to perceive "the green world."

Her poems "Incubus" (1952) and "Sleeper (1947) also describe dream states in biomorphic terms. In the former, the female speaker finds an ambiguous "too dark creature" that "nests" and "litters her yelping young / upon [her] breasts." The poem begins with this generative image and goes on to present the metamorphic potential that this dark creature delivers to the subject in a dream state:

Dreams are her thicket

in them, wearing masks

of my familiar faces

she dissembles

. . . .

Twists me like wire

stretches me tight and thin,

a black skeleton stark

among flowering apples.

Or an appaling [*sic*] valentine

of lace and hearts

hot and frilled—

abandoned in the sun

do I become

at the dark bitter wish

of this nightwalking

anxious alchemist

In the speaker's dream, the dark creature has the capacity "to dissemble," to feign the appearance of the speaker. The creature's ability to change appearance might more closely resemble a game of dress-up, as she wears various "masks" of the speaker's "familiar faces," than an authentic metamorphosis. The "anxious alchemist's" effect on the speaker's body, however, is more convincing: she "twists" the speaker into a "black skeleton"—a kind of biomorphic turning the body inside out—and then she alters her into "an appal[l]ing valentine / of lace and hearts." The speaker's morbid skeleton and negative diction imply that her transformation is painful and terrifying: so terrifying, in fact, that Page would later revise this poem with the title "Nightmare" in *The Metal and the Flower* (50-1). The skeleton, in particular, establishes a paradox in the poet's depictions of biomorphic flux

and transformation, a paradox that hints at the poet's growing uncertainty in the 1950s about the biomorphic idiom.

In her earlier poem "Sleeper," the dream state is less threatening, as "the ritual of bedtime takes its shape / meadowed with sheets and hilled with pillows," which establishes a pastoral, organic setting for the slumbering subject. The aesthetic the poem embraces is that of biomorphic flux and fluidity, as "colours remain like ribbons—drift and blow; / move and are static, fill a floating frame, / flow over and reform in fern and sand." The ability of the colours to transform, to "reform" in organic objects such as "fern and sand," clarifies the biomorphic ideals underpinning the poem. Each of these poems employs biomorphic themes, images, and shapes viewed through a Surrealistic lens, which, Alloway notes, typically functioned as a "stimulus" to biomorphic art (22). These poems, like her other biomorphic poems, moreover, are consistently neither personalist, nor impersonalist in approach.

The ambivalence over subjectivist and objectivist, personalist and impersonalist, modes in Page's biomorphic poetry of the forties and fifties would eventually come to a climax in one of the last poems Page published before her "middle silence" in *Poetry* [Chicago] (1956): "After Rain." According to Irvine, "After-Rain" "presents a poet-in-crisis as she withdraws into subjectivity, unable to communicate or sympathize with her gardener Giovanni as he surveys the ruined garden" ("Two Giovannis" 36). If the poem is about the poet's withdrawal into subjectivity, which I agree it is, it is simultaneously about her withdrawal into the aesthetic of the biomorphic idiom, which nearly overwhelms the poem. From the opening image of "snails" that "have made a garden of green lace" to the "clothes-

line" that becomes a "rangey skeleton" with a spider web hanging off its "rib" that is "its skeletal infant, similar in shape, / now sagged with sequins, pulled ellipsoid," the poem is replete with the organicism, fluidity, formlessness, and osseous imagery of biomorphic modernism. The final image looks forward to the generative symbolism of "pears upon the bough / encrusted with / small snails as pale as pearls" that she prays will "hang golden" *in* Giovanni's "heart" and enable him to "know. . ." what he cannot at the moment understand—the "beauty" of the organic, fluid world.[212] While the poet enacts the biomorphic idiom in "After Rain," however, it is precisely this idiom that "shame[s]" her, as she associates it with an undesirable "female whimsy" that, mimicking the biomorphic aesthetic of fluidity and flux, "floats about [her] like / a kind of tulle, a flimsy mesh."

Unlike her earlier biomorphic poems, "After Rain" now explicitly associates the idiom with a female modernism that Page enacts in writing the poem, which also happens to be predominantly in a personalist mode. Page's sudden, overt alignment of biomorphism with femininity and personalist poetics suggests her internalization of modernist poetic criticism, which—unlike visual art criticism—continued to reject biomorphic and organic imagery and a personalist style as too effeminate to be modern.[213] Besides the use of the grammatical first person throughout the poem, and the poet's articulation of despair over a poetic and aesthetic crisis, "After Rain" largely projects the poet's inspiration springing from

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[212] Later Page would heighten the biomorphic aspect of the poet-persona's heart by adding a final stanza in which the speaker prays to "keep" it "a size larger than seeing" (*K* 90-1), a move that would dramatically magnify the scale of the poet's internal, life-giving, organ.

[213] Trehearne notes, for example, that in *Where Poetry Stands Now* (1948), Henry Wells—who praised Page's "'cooler tone' largely because it helped to constrain her occasional 'romantic enthusiasm' of style" in the same book (97)—associated a personalist mode with women poets (*Montreal* 335n107).

the natural world. Impersonality, conversely, is generally not interested in nature's inspiration, the doctrine being, as Ellmann notes, "the equivalent in art to a crusade against Romantic individualism in society" that finds "[t]he idea of a personal inspiration jumping all complete from nature. . . ridiculous" (5). The biomorphic idiom is definitively at odds with this kind of anti-romanticism: as Botar remarks, "the first critic to systematically theorize what was in effect biomorphic [m]odernist art as a category" was Erno Kallai, who noted that the themes and iconography of these artworks are rooted in "Nature Romanticism" (67) and "termed" the category "*Bioromantik*" (65). While both Trehearne and Irvine write of the poet-persona of "After Rain" lacking "sympathy" for Giovanni (Trehearne, *Montreal* 42), and discuss her "aesthetic detachment" in the poem as "impersonal" (Irvine, *Editing* 173), we should not dismiss the fact that both sympathy and empathy for Giovanni are also admitted into the poem but curiously disclaimed by the speaker: "I find his ache exists beyond my rim, / then almost weep to see a broken man / had satisfied my whim" (101). First, the speaker is sensitive enough to identify Giovanni's "ache" and "broken" character. Second, although she insists these qualities exist "beyond her rim," she suppresses an immediate impulse to weep at the very thought of them. The paradox expressed here is part of the ironic energy of the poem, which appears to shift between impersonalist and personalist modes: however, the poet writes primarily a biomorphic-personalist poetics (coded female in the poem), while the speaker contemplates the ethical status of a biomorphic-impersonalist poetics, which Page had been writing for years in poems such as "Design," "Spring," and "The Sleeper."

Many of Page's early poems, evidently, embrace a biomorphic idiom that

fluctuates between personalist and impersonalist modes. These poems typically include subject matter and imagery from nature and the organic world and focus on the potential powers of flux, metamorphosis, and formlessness. Her poem "After Rain," written just prior to her move to Brazil in 1957, is exemplary of the biomorphic idiom, but it proves exceptional to her earlier biomorphic poems. It is the first poem in which Page directly associates the biomorphic aesthetic with femininity. It also acknowledges a conflicting, impersonalist, geometric aesthetic that, I will show, is coded male.

III. "Feet in gumboots pace the rectangles":
Conflicting Biomorphic and Geometric Idioms in Page's Early Poetry and Fiction

Page began to articulate in "After Rain" an incommensurability between a biomorphic idiom that could accommodate female subjectivity and an impersonalist poetics, the latter typically associated with a masculine, geometric idiom. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain, Eliot's doctrine of impersonality "constructs an implicitly masculine aesthetic of hard, abstract, learned verse that is opposed to the aesthetic of soft, effusive, personal verse supposedly written by women and Romantics" (154). The "discourse" of Eliot's doctrine and others like it—e.g. Cleanth Brooks's *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947*),* Ezra Pound's *The ABC of Reading* (1934)—according to Gilbert and Gubar, is largely based on the lectures of T.E. Hulme who, drawing on Worringer's binary of geometrical abstraction and empathy, established "a binary opposition between the 'geometrical' and the 'vital'" in poetry (Hickman 15). Miranda Hickman has further discussed the adoption of the geometric idiom by Vorticists as a way of countering "the 'effe-

minacy' it takes as its enemy," an effeminacy generally associated with the "femininity of women" (85), homosexuality (19), turn-of-the-century aestheticism (19), and the organic. "[G]eometry," writes Hickman, "indicated the realm of the man-made, the artificial rather than the organic" (44). In modernist poetry, unlike the realm of modernist visual art, the biomorphic idiom was considered antithetical to the masculine, geometric idiom and a visual aesthetic of angularity, precision, and rigidity that an impersonal poetics aimed to promote.

Trehearne has already observed among "the central dialectics" of Page's "After Rain" a dichotomy similar to the one described above, "between the fluidity of delicate fabric and the rigidity of geometry" (*Montreal* 43). Indeed, while the poet explores the "primeval" and "abstracted" organicism of the garden with reckless abandon and turns its formal "geometry awash" by writing in a biomorphic idiom, the speaker articulates a resistance to the biomorphic aesthetic by "pac[ing] the rectangles" and associating herself with "Euclid in glorious chlorophyl [*sic*], half drunk." As the sobriety of Euclidean geometry gives way to the inebriation of the irrational and organic world, the speaker struggles, "slipping in the mud," to maintain a geometric impersonality represented by the male gardener, Giovanni, whose head is "a diamond. . . / . . . diademmed [*sic*]," possibly with other rigidly faceted jewels, and who presumably cultivated the originally rectangular garden in which he now "squelches . . . /. . . over his ruin." The poet's organic and biomorphic images "ruin" the geometry of Giovanni's garden.

Page later revised the poem and added a new final stanza, included in *Cry Ararat!* (18-9), in which the speaker admonishes herself that these "myriad images still-- / do what I will / encumber. . ." the "pure line." Trehearne argues that

"Page's choice of words here is striking" because the words establish a distinction between "the 'whole' poem with its 'pure line' and the images that 'encumber' its 'meaning'. . ." (42). The new stanza is significant, therefore, because it suggests a poetic connection to the visual aesthetics discussed by the speaker. Trehearne speculates, however, that Page "is clearly not speaking of the 'line' in a metrical or rhythmic, but in some vaguely referential, sense: 'line' as outline, as evocation" (42). She may equally be referring to the visual aesthetic of the poem, to the pure geometric "line," which Hickman notes Pound, for example, admired for its ability "to express dynamic motion and emotional states" in an objective fashion (118).

In this final, added stanza, then, the speaker articulates a belief that the poet should adhere to a poetics of impersonality; but she expresses this belief rather disconcertingly. Her inability, despite her "will" and effort, to write the "pure line" begs the question, should she practice a poetics that does not come naturally to her, that is insincere? In the poem's original state, without the final stanza, it is already clear that the speaker pitches a female, personalist, biomorphic idiom that comes naturally to her against a masculine, impersonalist, geometric one, represented by Giovanni, to which the speaker has difficulty relating but that she feels obliged to write. In the original final stanza, the speaker, nevertheless, prays that Giovanni will in turn come to understand the value of a biomorphic-personalist aesthetic. In the later, added stanza, the speaker (as a poet-persona) suggests that it is the poet who has attempted to understand the value of and conform to a geometric aesthetic, and a related impersonalist poetic mode; but her efforts have been wholly futile.

As I have demonstrated, Page frequently wrote biomorphic poems in the 1940s and 1950s; she rarely, however, wrote in an exclusively geometric idiom during this time. Her poem "The Figures," published in *The Metal and the Flower* (1954), is the clear exception, as its interest in geometry is blatant:

> These equal lines refused their triangle—
>
> the two-dimensional figure they were given.
>
> Varied their groupings, always one was single.
>
> Potential equal angles were unproven.
>
> Met, forming points at *ac* and *bc*
>
> but *a* and *b* refused. The two lines rose
>
> perilous uprights, wavering, uneasy,
>
> balancing delicately at ninety degrees.
>
> So formed a figure that wanted to be square
>
> whose outline finding itself incomplete
>
> might draw *d* to it from the empty air
>
> to consummate its quadrilateral need. (31)

The poem, written entirely in an impersonalist mode, presents the reader with a mathematical-geometrical puzzle, a scenario where two "equal lines," "*ac*" and "*bc*," combine and recombine to form various figures. One of the figures formed, in fact, is said to have a "quadrilateral need" and dreams itself into becoming a "square" with "all its lines and all its angles equal . . . . / sharp black on white, exact, symmetrical." Even in this poem that is saturated with geometric language and images, it is interesting that the poet focuses on the potential of the geometric forms to transform and become different shapes—a kind of metamorphosis more

typical of the biomorphic idiom. Although the one figure's apparent yearning for the transformative properties of the biomorphic idiom is forceful, "The Figures" comes closest of all Page's early poems to embodying a geometric idiom. Geometric shapes, language, and metaphors, nevertheless, frequently enter Page's poetry of this period, but are nearly always positioned in conflict with the biomorphic idiom, a conflict that Page addresses and examines consistently via the visual arts, whether through ekphrasis, through allusion, or (later in her career) through the practice of the visual arts.

"After Rain" is exemplary of this battle of modernist aesthetics; the conflict's earliest appearance in her poetry, however, is in "Ecce Homo," which Page first published in *Contemporary Verse* in September of 1941. The persona of the poem recalls her conversation with a friend when they went to Leicester Square in the 1930s to view Vorticist artist Jacob Epstein's sculpture *Ecce Homo* (Fig. 34), which means "Behold the Man"—the words that Pontius Pilate uttered to Christ in front of a crowd following his flogging and prior to his hanging on the cross.

Fig. 34. Jacob Epstein, *Ecce Homo,* 1934-5, subiaco marble. Coventry Cathedral, Coventry, UK. © The Estate of Sir Jacob Epstein / Tate, London 2012 (photograph courtesy of Jonathan Evens, *Between,* web)

Fig. 35. Jacob Epstein, *Rima*, 1925, stone bas-relief. Hyde Park, London, UK. © The Estate of Sir Jacob Epstein / Tate, London 2012 (image courtesy of Conway Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London)

In addition to its male subject, the sculpture embodies the aesthetic values of the masculine geometric idiom. Hickman has noted that Epstein, a Vorticist artist, tended to "depict the body geometrically" in his sculptures (141). *Ecce Homo* exemplifies this aesthetic disposition: the figure of Christ "appears simplified to the point of crudeness" (Silber and Friedman 32) and is embodied in the large, rectangular, stone block out of which it is carved. Nose, chin, and arms are sharp and angular, and the figure is formally defined by horizontal lines formed at the chin and arms that are juxtaposed against the vertical thrust of the piece. Epstein himself noted that in working on the sculpture he "gave [him]self up wholly to a realization of lines and planes. . ." (168). The geometrical aesthetic of the piece is quite striking, even if the speaker of Page's poem does not explicitly comment on its angularity.

Nevertheless the persona's description of "Ecce Homo" is quite telling, and her reaction to its aesthetic is one of terror and rejection. When she walks into the gallery where Epstein's sculpture is on display, she finds the room to be

. . . filled

with might,

with the might of fear in stone,

immense and shackled.

The flesh that covered the bone

seemed bone itself. . .

terrible, holy. . . you could not take a breath. . .

the Man, deformed, thick-hipped,

the God of Death,

in a little room in a gallery in Leicester Square,

silently standing there. (6)

The speaker emphasizes the hard material of the sculpture, the "stone" which is end-rhymed with the sculpture's "bone" that overtakes the figure's flesh. This bone is not captured in the osseous imagery of biomorphic modernism: it is the skeletal bone of "the God of Death" that is neither generative nor transformative, but rather stifling, asphyxiating. While the geometrical form of the sculpture is understated here, the speaker's closing remarks highlight, via rhyming couplet, its position in "Leicester Square"—the geographical "Square" contains the sculpture just as the rectangular stone contains the figure of Christ in Epstein's sculpture. The persona finds this sculpture and its "deformed" aesthetic "terrible" and fear-ful, and she does not embrace its visual presentation.

The persona's initial reaction, in fact, is dismissive of "Ecce Homo": she finds the room where it "stood" to be "bare" to her. Instead, she indicates that she "was away with Rima." *Rima* (Fig. 35) is another sculpture by Epstein. It is located in Hyde Park as a memorial to W.H. Hudson, the author of the romantic fiction novel *Green Mansions* (1904). Epstein's sculpture was commissioned by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to be placed in honour of Hudson in a section of the park known as the "Bird Sanctuary" (Epstein, *Let* 128). It is a relief sculpture depicting the female heroine of *Green Mansions,* Rima, whom Kay W. Hitchcock once described as "neither woman nor bird," and "more like a nymph or young nature goddess than a girl" (48). Indeed, Rima is both woman and bird, and she exemplifies the boundary-blurring and metamorphic potential of the organic world that biomorphic artists typically explored. In many ways, Rima also resembles the protagonist, Kristin, of Page's novella *The Sun and the Moon* (1944), who has a strange affinity with the natural world and morphs into organic elements, such as stone. Epstein's cenotaph for Hudson depicts Rima in the nude, which stirred great controversy at its unveiling; later, the sculpture was tarred and feathered,[214] a defacement referred to by the persona's friend in the poem. With *Rima*, Epstein softens much of the rectilinearity and sharpness seen in the figure of "Ecce Homo" to celebrate instead the graceful curves of the female figure of *Rima*, who is thrown out of scale so as to be in harmony with the birds in flight that surround her. Although *Rima* is not entirely devoid of angles—her breasts are

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[214] As Epstein explains the controversy in his autobiography: immediately following *Rima'*s unveiling, "a 'hullabaloo,' unequaled for venom and spite, broke out in the Press. The monument was 'obscene' and should be removed immediately" (*Let* 129). The memorial has been tarred and feathered on at least two separate occasions (Baker 68).

sharply pointed and her profile is quite geometric—the sculptor also highlights the natural forms of the body juxtaposed against such angles, and not, as is the case with *Ecce Homo*, the geometricization of the body. Epstein's *Rima* aligns itself with biomorphic modernism as much as, if not more than, geometric abstraction as it explores the vital forces of the female body through a subject aligned with nature who herself has mystical, transformative capabilities.

Epstein depicts Hudson's *Rima* in what Stephen Hutchings calls "reverse ekphrasis": "visual renditions of verbal texts" (9). Page in turn cites Epstein's *Rima* meta-ekphrastically—her poem alludes to a sculpture alluding to a novel—as a way of comparing the modernisms Epstein explores in his sculptures and the poet considers in her poetry. While the poem is about "Ecce Homo," embodying a masculine, geometric modernism, the female persona aligns herself with *Rima*, with a female and organic modernism, a figurative biomorphic modernism. Both sculptures, however, were created by a male artist, a fact that subverts the gendered binary of these modernist aesthetics. The persona eventually does give adequate attention to *Ecce Homo* in the poem, but when she contemplates both of Epstein's sculptures, along with the idea of "polygamy," her final reaction is metaphorically biomorphic: contemplating Epstein's sculptures, she "like a young tree. . . put out a timid shoot / and prayed for the day, the wonderful day / when it bore its fruit" (6). Her reaction is anthropomorphic, mirroring the Daphne-like metamorphosis of the subjects in "Reflection" and "Spring." The persona also has distinctly generative aspirations for her thoughts, which she prays will grow into "fruit." These final organic, transformative, and generative images, however, would appear to aspire not simply to the biomorphic aesthetic of *Rima*, but to a

possible coexistence of both the biomorphic and geometric and the single artist's

"polygamous" marriage with these two modernist idioms.

Page revives the biomorphic-geometric conflict ekphrastically in her poem

"Piece for a Formal Garden," first published in *Contemporary Verse* in 1946,

which, like "Ecce Homo," invokes sculpture as a discursive medium for the con-

flict's articulation. In "Piece for a Formal Garden," however, the aesthetic conflict

is largely established by the setting of the sculpture in "the formal garden." This

garden, after all, is not a domesticated realm of female experience, but itself a

work of art that carries a particular aesthetic and gendered codification. While De-

rek Clifford has written a survey of the history of the garden as "fine art," Mara

Miller has gone as far as arguing that gardens are capable of being "great art," that

in addition to "formal excellence" they can simultaneously engage "important

content" (135). Page's "formal garden," while its degree of "greatness" is unclear,

includes both "form"—its physical location and design—and "important con-

tent"—the "piece" situated inside its garden space. Details regarding the design of

Page's garden are not provided by the poet; nevertheless, a *formal garden*, like the

one in Page's poem, is traditionally "structured around geometric, often symmetr-

ically positioned and planted beds, separated by clipped hedges and straight

paths" (Pipes 196). As a work of art, the formal garden represents the aesthetic

ideals of the geometric idiom. Gang Chen lists three underlying principles to the

formal garden's design: the "emphasis of man's ability to improve nature," the

"integration of garden and architecture as one entity," and an "emphasis on human

wisdom and geometric beauty" (113-4). The formal garden, then, is a reflection of

the gardener's intention to "improve" nature and his or her desire to subjugate the

space to artistic will. Although I have left the gardener's gender in this last sentence ambiguous, the role is often metaphorized as patriarchal and masculine, as we saw with Giovanni in Page's "After Rain" (although Giovanni's masculinity is somewhat softened by the poet's images that leave him aching and "broken"). Chandra Mukerji, for example, writes of seventeenth-century French formal gardens as "laboratories of power" and the formal gardens at Versailles as "the material marking and control of territory as an expression of power" (659), and the expression of power on the part of the King (a national patriarch) in particular. Page's "Piece for a Formal Garden" hints at a similar association of the formal garden and patriarchal power: the "piece" is "for a formal garden," as the title indicates, and it belongs to this space just as it is "a broken marble / for his embrace," as we later learn in the second stanza. Both the garden and the unidentified male figure are rhetorically aligned, and they dominate the titular "piece," which is, evidently, gendered female.

This statue, unlike the formal garden to which it belongs, embodies, if not the biomorphic idiom per se, the curvilinear and irregular forms of the biomorphic idiom and is characterized in contradistinction to its setting—which happens to be another work of art. The "paleness" of the statue, for example, is frequently contrasted with the "dark" that "falls" on the rest of the garden. This paleness is described as "irregular," and it mirrors the statue's irregular and fragmented form: she is a "broken marble" with a "chipped elbow" whose "cold stone profile" is described as "curve[d]." While "the others," whose identities remain unclear in the poem, "would / bark her into shape" so that she could conform to the strict coherence of the formal garden, her profile remains "trembling like roses": the

flowers of Venus, which symbolically assert the female sexuality of the "piece"—

a term that also happens to be a euphemism for a sexually desirable woman at the

time—and affiliate her with nature. The effect of the poet's *mise-en-abyme*, how-

ever, destabilizes the relationship of the statue and the garden, and the conflict is

left unresolved. The geometric space of the garden contains the organic, curvili-

near form of the statue that is also "broken" and "chipped": the two exist simulta-

neously in relation to one another, within one another, but not exactly in harmony.

The paleness of the statue in Page's "Piece for a Formal Garden" calls to

mind the pale protagonist, Kristin, of Page's novella, *The Sun and the Moon*, writ-

ten as early as 1939 and published in 1944. Like the statue in "Piece for a Formal

Garden," Kristin is pale and embodies the biomorphic idiom. It seems at least a

strange coincidence, for example, that Kristin, we are told by Carl, has an "empa-

thetic" knowledge of people and objects (107), an adjective that links her gift of

"inner knowledge resulting from the projection of the mind of the observer onto

the thing observed" (107) to Worringer's art of empathy—the model for Grig-

son's and Barr's ideas of non-geometric abstraction and biomorphism. In addition

to her lunar association, Kristin's physical appearance is continually associated

with both nature and the generative and metamorphic potential of the natural

world. Her eyes, for example, are "green like buds unfolding" (35), in the process

of transforming from one organic form to another; her hands are also "curled like

shells" (2-3) that later metamorphose into "two stars" (2-3). Kristin, herself, is

able to morph into natural materials—rocks, wood—and experience the world on

a microscopic level: for example, Kristin has an experience with a chair, which

enabled her to know "the pressure of the molecules in the wood, the massing to-

gether of atoms" (8). Kristin experiences what Relke identifies as an "intersubjec-
tive connection" with the chair (245), a connection she yearns to experience with
Carl, but cannot because he is her antithesis.

While Kristin is the pale, biomorphic figure in the novella, it is with Carl,
her painter husband, that she "make[s] a sort of study in black and white" (24),
that she finds her aesthetic antithesis in this prose piece in which Page, once
again, calls on the visual arts to allegorize a visual aesthetic conflict between the
biomorphic and the geometric. For Carl is not only "black" to Kristen's "white,"
but he is also "an angular shy lad" who is the "sun" to Kristen's "moon." Al-
though the sun is a popular biomorphic icon, Carl's character does not carry any
of its biomorphic associations.[215] He embodies the principles of form instead of
biomorphic formlessness or organic form. His comments about his ex-lover, Eg-
bert, whom he nicknames "the Egg"—a fundamental biomorphic icon—make his
opposition to formlessness clear: he notes that she carried her "bad shape," includ-
ing her curvilinear "half –moon lids," "courageously" (43). Egbert, therefore,
symbolizes irregular form or formlessness, which Carl claims does not appeal to
him. Meanwhile, Egbert's moon-like eyelids link her to Kristin. And whereas "the

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[215] Carl's association with the sun should not necessarily be read aesthetically so much as symbol-
ically or astrologically, as is suggested by the opening passages of the novella. Although the narra-
tor initially degrades the role of astrologers to the "bastard brothers" of astronomers (1), the irony
of such a comment is evident in the narrator's subsequent revelation that it is the astrologers who
are perceptive of the link between humanity and cosmology: the astrologers, after all, "had been
busy for weeks turning out articles for the pulps on the subject of birth and the eclipse" (2), whe-
reas the astronomers "forgot in the period of eclipse that human life was being propagated still"
(2). The astrologer's perspective, then, provides a key to understanding the characters of Kristin,
born during a lunar eclipse, and Carl, who is associated with the sun. According to Susan Miller,
in astrology, "the placement of the Sun in a chart. . ." can indicate such qualities as "a person's
vigor and strength. . ." and it also "rules over masculinity and over the prominent males such as
father, husband, or steady boyfriend in a woman's chart. . ." (60). This is consistent with Kristin's
explanation that Carl's association with the sun marks him as "the strong, vital element" (56), and
it is consistent with Carl's frequent "reassertion of his masculinity" (65), particularly through his
painting.

Egg" is representative of fertility and generation, much like Kristin, Carl is anti-generative, and menacingly so by the end of the novel, not only when he declares to Kristin that they should clear-cut the forest on the other side of the lake and "scrap the cedar that grows as fast as the mushroom" and "slash[es] at young willows" with an axe (123, 133), but also when he cuts "the canvas to ribbons with his palette knife" and leaves Birchlands (137). The "angular" Carl symbolizes the geometric: the narrator points out the way the "square line of his shoulder jutted against the light" (71), for example, which is foiled by "the curve of Kristin's shoulder and the long, lean line of her arm" (125).

While Carl's painting, in general, is not described explicitly in geometric terms, his more modern painting is associated with certain qualities of the geometric idiom; when Kristin "takes over" his painting, however, his aesthetic becomes increasingly biomorphic. When Carl first meets Kristin, it would appear that he mainly paints fairly realistic portraits, such as the one commissioned by the Lothrops, landscapes, and still lifes.[216] Following a lunar eclipse (54-7), however, Carl's painting is somehow intercepted by Kristin, as if "someone [were] using [his] faculties, or [he] using someone else's" (58). The resulting painting, which turns out to be of himself, frightens Carl. The narrator reveals little about the painting's aesthetic or composition, but Carl sees it as a "thick mess of paint" out of which "[h]is own eyes mock. . . him" (59). As we later learn, the painting terrifies him because "he could no longer see her objectively; when he looked he

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[216] Following his initial sketch of Kristin, for example, Carl expresses his approval of the sketch in that "he had caught her exactly. For a background, rocks, her rocks and the line of the sea. Kristin, white and pale against the rocks" (35). Carl's description of the painting also reflects his geometric consciousness of style: the short, staccato syntax of the passage manifests the condensed and pared down aesthetics typical of Vorticists experimenting with the geometric idiom (Hickman 24).

seemed only to be seeing a part of himself" (135). He is critical of the subjective

nature of the painting and reacts by promptly leaving and painting "The Boy": "A

red-headed boy against a background of brick buildings, crude and powerful"

(65). Not only does this more modern painting represent a "reassertion of his

masculinity" 65), as Kristin points out, but it also presents content typical of the

geometric idiom: its male subject is positioned in front of what appears to be ur-

ban architecture of simplified and forceful form. Hickman has noted Pound's

"longstanding concern with the line in architecture, and, specifically, a celebration

of buildings with clean lines" (116), which he praised in his essay 'The City'," a

piece that, Hickman notes, "recall[s] the work of Le Corbusier, who similarly in-

sisted upon clean lines and order in such studies as *Vers une Architecture* and *Ur-*

banism" (116). These authors were part of an avant-garde promoting the geome-

tric idiom in the visual arts and poetry via architecture. Carl's painting, in content

at least, draws on the hard materials of architecture to buttress the masculinity of

its subject. Not a hint of organic life is present in this portrait / urban landscape

painting. The painting's emphatically red palette, moreover, thwarts any suspicion

of a complementary and Expressionist verdancy (discussed in Chapter Three).

Hanging on Kristin's wall, however, "The Boy," with its forceful red hues, helps

make it appear "strong and virile and masculine against the pale femininity of her

bedroom," with its "apple-green curtain" symbolizing Kristin's organic associa-

tions (82).

In addition to the contrast between Kristin's room and Carl's painting,

Kristin's "painting"—or rather her invasion of Carl's painting—conflicts with

both the realism of Carl's earlier painting and the masculine, architectural paint-

ing of "The Boy" that he has recently completed. When Carl sets out to paint a water-colour of "the river," he begins by finger-painting, moving "cleanly, economically; brown and certain from paint to paper" (97). But when Kristin sees him sketch a tree on the river's edge, she begins to take over his painting as "her mind moved with his hands—back and forth, back and forth, caught in the rhythm, carried by the rhythm, until thought dissolved in motion and swam like a fish in the current of a stream" (97). Carl's painting technique has transformed at this point from very strict and logical brushwork to something akin to automatism, where "thought dissolve[s]" and the unconscious is transferred onto the canvas in loose, rhythmical brushwork. As Carl / Kristin paints "quickly, unconsciously" (98), the realistic and the urban and architectural aesthetics of Carl's work give way to something more organic:

> The invader marched in, stormed his defenses, hoisted the invading flag, took possession smoothly and entirely. The city that was Carl knew foreign leadership; foreign colours waved from the ramparts; foreign primitive workmanship ousted the easy-running talent. (98)

Kristin's invasion ousts the leadership of "the city that was Carl" and ushers in a more modern, organic, and "primitive" kind of painting, something close to automatism. I have already noted the link between automatism and biomorphism, and as previously mentioned, biomorphism was typically celebrated for its "primitive" qualities. Carl perceives this aesthetic to be talentless and naïve; but it was, by the time Page wrote the novel, a popular modernist idiom in the visual arts.

This automatist-biomorphic idiom, represented by Kristin, is constantly in conflict with the geometric idiom, represented by Carl, in the novel; the two can

coexist, but cannot be synthesized or united, for that would "mean the complete merging of two personalities. . . ," but it would also "mean the obliteration of two personalities" (119), a consequence that is allegorized by the marriage of Kristin and Carl. At the end of the novel, the two must part ways, as their marriage has turned Kristin into a distant, "phlegmatic, disinterested woman" (137). Page's choice of words here is precise: "disinterest" does not mean "lack of interest," but rather "rid of self-interest." Richard Schusterman explains that "disinterestedness" is an "aesthetic perception," first advocated by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgement,* that "examines and appreciates its object not in terms of some ulterior motive or function—a desire for possession, power, material or political advantage, or instrumental use—but instead for the intrinsic value or pleasure of the appreciative experience itself" (241). Loris Mirella notes that it is "through the value of disinterest or detachment that [T.S.] Eliot sees the possibility of re-uniting the increasingly factional and fractious state of vying European 'interests'" (98). For Eliot, impersonality becomes a means of promoting "disinterestedness" in the work of art. Through her marriage to Carl, Kristin has acquired the impersonality and detachment associated with Eliot, Carl, and the geometric aesthetic and lost her "empathetic" and subjective perspective (107). Before Carl leaves her, he destroys the canvas he'd been working on, an act symbolic of their unsuccessful aesthetic synthesis: it was, what Carl earlier calls, a "remote" painting, "as if [it] were paint[ed] in a dream. . . . a product of the imagination," painted by Carl but that evidently bears the marks of Kristin's biomorphic-automatist hand (132). The destruction of the painting asserts the disunity of the two lovers and their respective modernist aesthetics.

In a number of Page's poems, these two modernist idioms are similarly pitted against one another through tropes or similes relating to the visual arts, often with one artistic idiom posing a threat to the poet-persona or subject's authenticity and / or agency. In Page's "Children," published in *Preview*'s September 1944 issue (10), the youthful subjects are compared to a "delicate. . . sketch which they have made." Like the markings of their sketch, these children "merge in a singular way with their own thoughts, / drawing an arabesque with a spoon or fork / casually on the air behind their shoulders." Page characterizes the children in biomorphic terms: they relate to the curved line of the arabesque and have an instinctual, personal connection with their "own thoughts." As adults, however, they transform when they turn to geometry to depict themselves. They attempt to "fit themselves to the thing / they see outside them": they turn to *mimesis* and objectivism and "become round and hard, demand / shapes that are real, castles upon the shore / And all the lines and angles of tradition." Such a transformation distances them from their selfhood and weakens their perception, as "stones. . . replace their eyes." In the poem "Draughtsman," the subject experiences a similar shift in perspective, but in the opposite direction. While the draughtsman began his career creating "thin / accurate lines" and watching "from square to careful square," as he ages he experiences "the slow / and formless fading of his art." The visual aesthetic of his art shifts from the rigidly geometric towards a "formless" and "liquid shape," engendered by the fact that, as he ages, "his fading vision shifts / and far is hot and near, and near so far." He now sees the world in biomorphic terms, on a radically altered scale. But this shift in perspective is not exactly positive, as the draughtsman has lost control of his perception and art, and

"fear sits upon his draughting board." Perhaps he fears that his newly acquired biomorphic perspective symbolizes his emasculation in old age; his male gender appears to be significant. In the previous poem, meanwhile, Page does not specify the gender of the children, but they might be thought of as prior-to-gender before they try to "fit themselves to the thing / they see outside them." Page's "Draughtsman" and "Children" might not explicitly identify the geometric idiom as a masculine idiom, but both poems suggest the geometric view is restrictive, confining, and impersonal.

In the poem "If It Were You" (*K* 41-3), published in *Contemporary Verse* in 1946, the speaker asks her silent interlocutor and the reader to sympathize with people who suffer from feeling their "sharp eyes water and grow colour blind, / unable to distinguish green from blue / and everything terribly run together as if rain / had smudged the markings on the paper." Their altered perspective leaves them seeing the world like "a child's painting after a storm" and "walk[ing] a blind circle in a personal place." The speaker of "If It Were You" considers whether a probable reaction to such a strange, biomorphic perspective would be to "sit / weeping, weeping in the public *square* / your flimsy butterfly fingers in your hair / your face destroyed by rain" (my italics). She envisions the suffering person attempting, like the speaker of "After Rain" whose "feet in gumboots pace the rectangles," to dissociate himself or herself from the personalist, biomorphic aesthetic that overwhelms him or her by surrounding himself or herself with public, geometric forms. The speaker, however, can sympathize with such a reaction because she admits briefly that she has experienced the "bewilder[ment]" of such a biomorphic perspective ("not me this time"). The single admission reflects the

speaker's own dissociation from the experience of a biomorphic world view that she seems determined to treat in a hypothetical manner. Both "After Rain," and "If It Were You," moreover, distance the experience of the speaker from that of the poet by interrogating the modernist aesthetic dichotomy thematically through the visual arts instead of through poetry.

Page's choice to address this conflict of modernist aesthetics via treatments of painting, drawing, and sculpture in her poetry is, nevertheless, fitting, because it is primarily a visual conflict. The geometric and the biomorphic idioms accrue linguistic, grammatical, and syntactic baggage when they are adopted by poets; but at their most basic level these modernist terms refer to visual form. Page's struggle with the two idioms and developing poetic crisis that climaxes in the 1950s, when, Trehearne remarks, Page rejected the new "subjectivist *integritas*" (73) of fifties poetics, occurs in part because she continued to address the modernist dichotomy of visual aesthetics poetically, and she was unable to ignore or resist the critical pressure for a geometric / impersonalist poetics at that time. The poet would return to grapple with the biomorphic and the geometric idiom in her later poetry, as I will demonstrate, but only after a period of lapsed poetic creativity. As a visual crisis, the modernist dichotomy was perhaps more easily addressed through a visual medium, and in the realm of the visual arts.

IV. "Paint It":
Renegotiating Geometric and Organic Form through the Visual Arts

In her *Brazilian Journal* (1987), Page writes retrospectively about her transition from poet to artist, and she suggests that she began drawing when she

was forced to fire a house servant named Salvador and "doodled" her way through the ordeal (59). When her husband Arthur Irwin saw her doodles sitting on the desk later that day, he asked Page "What's all this?," to which Page replied, "[t]hat's me firing Salvador" (59). Page perceived language and communication to be at the centre of her transformation from poet to artist, as she attributes a clear semiotic function to the sketch she drew. Her identification of the doodle as "me" is part of Page's self-creation as artist in this passage from her published *Brazilian Journal*, with Page responding to Arthur's assertion that she "could draw" that "[s]urely, if I'd been going to draw, I'd have drawn by now" (59). Page's account here, however, is largely fictionalized: this particular event is not in the original Brazilian diaries in the Page Fonds at the Library and Archives Canada. Moreover, as Barbara Godard notes, it was "with an informed as well as incisive eye and practiced hand that [Page] took up the felt marking pen in Brazil" (7).

Besides her frequent invocations of painting, sculpture, and drawing in her early poetry, Page had dabbled in the visual arts prior to her sojourn in Brazil. In addition to her friendship and correspondence with CAS members throughout the forties (discussed in Chapter Two), to whom, Godard notes, "she offered detailed formal analysis of structural elements of their work in her correspondence. . . " (7), Page had been sketching, albeit informally, throughout the forties and early 1950s. Along with her *Australian Landscape* (1953), which she painted in Australia when she joined Arthur at his painting lessons (Page, Personal Correspondence with Zailig Pollock), Page produced a line sketch of Eleanor Roosevelt in the early 1940s, currently located in the LAC. Furthermore, Godard remarks that

"some manuscripts at the NFB" show Page's "complex doodling exhibit[ing] the spiraling and geometric forms she would later perfect" (7). Even as she was writing poetry about the conflict between the geometric and biomorphic idioms, Page explored their forms with her doodling pen.

Page's decisive turn to the practice of visual arts is directly related to her earlier poetic crisis and her engagement with the geometric and biomorphic aesthetics. As with her early poetry, Page addressed the dichotomy of modernist aesthetics through the visual arts, but this time she grappled with each idiom indirectly at first—by focusing primarily on form—through drawing and, eventually, more directly—by taking full account of the forms as well as the themes, subject matters, and iconographies of each idiom—through painting. Page's movement from drawing to painting is mirrored by a move from realism to abstraction in the visual arts, a move that further documents her struggles with the modernist dichotomy and deserves adequate consideration if we are to understand how she eventually arrived at a synthesis of its tensions. Initially, as I will demonstrate, Page turned away from modernist abstraction and towards realism as an impersonalist mode of drawing, through which she could focus primarily on the forms and shapes associated with each pole of the dichotomy: geometric form (linear, symmetrical, regular, jagged) and organic form (curvilinear, asymmetrical, irregular, smooth). Later, she shifted her subject matter from the external landscape of Brazil to the domestic realm, a shift that not only enabled Page to continue to explore the dichotomy of modernist form, but also to deconstruct its gendered associations. Her subsequent transition to abstraction and, eventually, abstract painting enabled Page to shift her focus from modernist form to a full consideration of the

geometric and biomorphic idioms and the personalist / impersonalist possibilities of the latter idiom. Until her discovery of the sgraffito technique and egg tempera, however, Page remained quite skeptical of the geometric aesthetic in modernist art.

Most, if not all, of her first works from Brazil are realistic sketches recording the artist's immediate perceptions of the world around her. Nevertheless, these realistic sketches recall the early motifs of her poetry through which Page first explored the two modernist idioms: nature and architecture. The transition to visual realism enabled the artist to concentrate on an impersonal context (the public space of the city) through a style that is traditionally thought of as "objective" or impersonal.[217] When Page picked up the felt-nibbed pen in Brazil, she began by drawing a series of plant sketches, such as her *Anthurium* series, her *Ficus* series, and her *Cesta* Series. Ballantyne has already noted that "the bulk of Page's early drawings and paintings from 1957 are representations of various types of flora and fauna, often in still-life style with an emphasis on one central image" (82). Similarly, Ballantyne[218] has demonstrated a distinct focus in the poetry of this pe-

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[217] In the visual arts, the terms "personal" and "impersonal" have other nuances than in poetry and are not as clearly oppositional. Indeed, we can speak of a realistic painting being impersonal in content, yet personal in style or technique. Realism is commonly thought of as an objective, disinterested, or impersonal style of art. As John Hyman and Linda Nochlin have rightly argued, realism in the visual arts is hardly a "styleless or transparent style, a mere simulacrum or mirror image of reality" (Nochlin 14); as we shall see, Page's own realistic drawings of Rio are not carbon copies of the appearance of the cityscape, but rather artistic compositions that evince the artist's personal interests in and struggle with organic and geometric form. Nevertheless, Page—whose early poems demonstrate a mind well-acquainted with theoretical and stylistic debates in the visual arts—would have been aware of the impersonal associations of realism.

[218] Ballantyne argues that the colour green functions as "a marker of distance and disability" in Page's Brazilian poetry, which represents Page's distance or "exclusion" from the Brazilian landscape and inability to write poetry while in Brazil (52). She adds that "Page's opposition between the speaker and the natural 'green' environment" in her Brazilian poetry "reverses tropes of nature as calming, pastoral, idealized. Page becomes the foreign element, the viral contaminant that the Brazilian environment radically rejects. This painful exclusion is associated very heavily with greenscapes in the poetry" (52).

riod on nature or the "greenscapes" of Brazil: in contrast, most of the early organ-

ic sketches from Brazil are void of the colour green. In fact, most of the early

sketches from this period are entirely in black and white. It was not until Novem-

ber of 1957 that Irwin introduced gouache into her sketches, admitting the colour

green to images of plants and nature; before this point (and even for a short period

afterwards), however, the artist focused exclusively on capturing the natural, often

curvilinear and irregular forms of organic life, as well as the impression of genesis

and proliferation through the crowding of these forms, which often exceed the

boundaries of the page.

"I've been trying to draw," writes Page as a caption to *Ficus* [2] (1957) in

her *Brazilian Journal*, "to recreate the wonderful shapes of the leaves. . ." (147).

This attention to organic shape would appear to be the goal of her *Cesta* series as

well: *Cesta* [4] (Fig. 36), for example, demonstrates the artist's focus on organic

form, as she quickly outlined the variety of leaf shapes in her black felt pen.

Irwin's pen captures the irregularity of these forms and their curving shapes. The

bountiful vegetation of the gift basket, sent to the Irwins "for July 1st" (*Brazilian

Journal* 84), is emphasized through the crowded leaf shapes near the centre of the

page as well as the extension of the leaves beyond the frame of the page. Irwin's

Helena's Garden (Fig. 37), an earlier sketch from the summer of 1957, is similar-

ly void of colour—in contrast to the author's description of the garden in her *Bra-

zilian Journal* (75)—and exhibits the artist's interest in the curvilinearity of or-

ganic form through the slight bend in the central tree trunk and the palm branches

that extend from its core.

Fig. 36. P.K. Irwin, *Cesta* [4], 1957, felt pen on paper. Artist's Collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Fig. 37. P.K. Irwin, *Helena's Garden*, 1957, felt pen on paper. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Drawing with Helena in her dream garden. Words cannot describe it, which is perhaps why I draw. Anthuria ranging from white to deep red, those great red rockets bursting out of banana-like leaves; an ipê in full flood of yellow, its flowers seen middle distance like yellow hydrangeas. Against a blue sky it is unbelievable.

— P.K. Page, *Brazilian Journal* (75)

Irwin also depicts, in rather hasty pen markings, the irregular form of the anthuria leaves that crowd around the base of the tree. These organic forms are concentrated around the central palm tree, where density is suggested by the artist's thick markings in black pen and where, behind the tree trunk, form becomes indistinguishable. This formlessness suggests the lushness of the garden and the abundance of its organic growth. Further away from the central tree and lush undergrowth, the leaves of the tree and numerous other plants once again extend beyond the frame of the page, in excess. Irwin's early sketches of nature in Brazil are realistic, but, as with her early abstract poetry, they explore the "biomorph"— the "curved line of form" (Botar 14)—a primary feature of the modernist idiom of biomorphism.

While the majority of Irwin's early realistic sketches of Brazil depict the flora and fauna of the country and its landscape, a substantial number of sketches from this same period (beginning in the late summer of 1957) depict the cityscape of Brazil and its architectural elements, a subject matter through which the artist explores geometric form. One of the earliest architectural sketches is *Rio Rooftops* [1] (Fig. 38), done in late August of 1957.
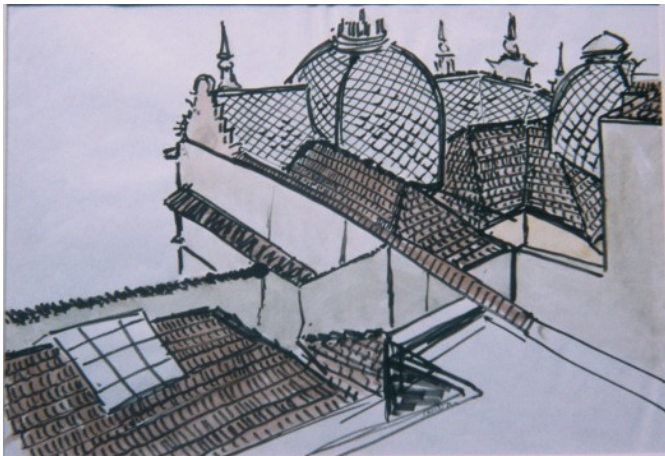

Fig. 38. P.K. Irwin, *Rio Rooftops* [1], 1957, felt pen and gouache. N. pl. (Image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Originally a black and white sketch,[219] *Rio Rooftops* is nearly all angles and straight lines. Irwin captures the rectangular and triangular architectural forms and grid-like details of the roof tiles with her felt-nibbed pen. Additional roof tiles are also created through short black lines, reflecting the lineation that is central to the composition: the diagonal line that divides the two levels of architecture depicted in the sketch and that divides the page in half. The only exception to the angularity and linearity of the sketch is the curved lines of the architectural domes—but these curves are hardly irregular in form, and their symmetry reflects the mathematical rationality that underlies these structures.

While Ballantyne and McNeilly have stressed Page's reaction to the "greenness" of Brazil, and her sense of "dislocation" or "exile" from the "seductive exoticism" (McNeilly 86) of the Brazilian landscape and its vegetation in the travel writing and poetry, we must not forget that Page's written reaction to her visual impression of Brazil is not simply interested in the organic forms "greenness" of the country. In her first entry in *Brazilian Journal*, for example, dated 21 January 1957, Page writes of her arrival in the country by emphasizing the dualism of its visual aesthetics:

> Rio lay before us like a dog's vision of it—monochromatic—the grey light
> making it two-dimensional. A flat, platinum city. The long arc of Copaca-
> bana sand was pale silver and the apartment blocks that encircled it were
> silver, pewter, and steel. From a distance the strangely bright *amêndoa de
> praia* (beach almonds) were blobs of green enamel—the only colour. (5)

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[219] Irwin added the red to the roof tiles after purchasing gouache paints in November 1957 (Page, personal correspondence with Zailig Pollock).

Page's initial description of Rio resembles an analytic cubist painting. The city is "monochromatic" and seen in two dimensions, its flatness underscored by a bifurcated perspective of the cityscape, where the "long arc of Copacabana sand" intersects with the "blocks" of apartments that "encircle" it. Her terminology here is quite geometric, and the building materials she describes—the "silver, pewter, and steel" of the apartment blocks—invoke a hardness characteristic of the geometric idiom. Such hard and angular images nearly overwhelm the organicism of Brazil, with its curvilinear "arc" of sand and the irregular "blobs" of the beach almonds made of "green enamel." Page borrows her vocabulary in the passage from the visual arts, and she projects Barr's dichotomy of abstract visual art onto the space of Rio.

By contrast, Irwin's sketch of *Rio* (Fig. 39) is quite realistic. Nevertheless, it does juxtapose the two motifs, through which Page examines the aesthetics of the city in *Brazilian Journal*: nature and architecture.

Fig. 39. P.K. Irwin, *Rio*, c. 1957-8, felt pen on paper. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

We see the "arc" of sand that "encircles" the city, its buildings crowding the horizon in crisp rectilinearity. Page has also exaggerated the solidity and definition of the arc in her composition. These geometric structures, however, are dwarfed by the landscape that enfolds it, with mountains that exhibit both soft curves and more angular peaks. The central palm tree, moreover, dominates the composition, dividing it in half: the left half features a predominance of organic and irregular forms with its dense vegetation foregrounded, whereas the right half is considerably more angular, its mountains mimicking the sharpness of the buildings below and a foreground featuring a rather rectilinear pathway juxtaposed with lush vegetation to the left. There is a clear inclusion of both geometric and organic forms in the sketch: however, Irwin's composition has starkly segregated these two forms and the motifs of nature and architecture.

This duality of form and motif is further explored through Irwin's domestic drawings of the period. When Page began to work with gouache in November of 1957, she turned her attention (not exclusively, but certainly predominantly) from the exterior world of Brazil—which was in Page's imagination, whether overwhelmingly green or a dull grey, quite monochromatic—to an interior domestic realm that is capable of including a vast chromatic spectrum. These drawings of her residence in Rio (for example, *Stairwell* [c. 1957-8] and *Bedroom at Night* [c. 1957-8]) largely focus on the architectural details of the home; but there is also a substantial number of still life drawings featuring plants within the domestic realm, what Ballantyne calls her "plant" series (86; see fig. 42, p. 386), a subject Irwin first explored in black and white. Many of these monochromatic still-life drawings are an extension of her landscape sketches of Brazil, as they consider

the relationship between organic form and geometric form: we can see this mildly expressed in her *Cesta* series, for example, where the variegated forms of the plant leaves are contrasted with the basket, the *cesta*, which is more linear or rectilinear in form. In Irwin's sketch *Leaves Large as Hands* (Fig. 40), the contrast is amplified: the sketch foregrounds the potted plant with its massive, irregularly shaped leaves against a background composed of a juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal lines establishing a rather rectilinear impression. As Barbara Godard has noted, these plant drawings "manifest [Irwin's] strong structural forms: careful positioning and varied patterns of vertical and horizontal lines work the surface to create a pictorial composition" (7). But at the same time, they contrast this structure with the organic, more fluid forms of their subject matter.

The title of the sketch comes from Page's poem "Stories of Snow," and it associates her drawing with the "silent, unrefractive whiteness" that lies "behind the eyes" of those, like herself now, living in the vibrant setting of the "vegetable rain." Through reverse ekphrasis, Page returns to the aesthetic conflict of her early poetry but concentrates more directly on the visual relationship between geometric and organic form.[220] By limiting her palette to black and white, Irwin can focus on the duality of form that the domestic realm, with its typically female associations, both accommodates and includes.

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[220] Although in the poem, the "leaves as large as hands" are associated with the colourful setting of the "countries where great flowers bar the roads / with reds and blues which seal the route to snow," in the drawing these leaves are entirely black and white. The plant's monochromatism in Irwin's sketch establishes an ekphrastic misrepresentation: the leaves are no longer associated with the land of "vegetable rain" as they are in the poem, but rather they belong to the realm of "silent, unrefractive whiteness." The discontinuity between poem and drawing suggests that Irwin is not simply recreating the poem as visual art: she is revisiting the poem through a new medium to reconsider and rework its ideas, themes, and aesthetic representations.

Fig. 40. P.K. Irwin, *Leaves Large as Hands*, c. 1957, felt pen on paper. Trent University, Peterborough, ON (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

When Page began to add colour to her plant series, she highlighted the contrast between organic form and geometric form:[221] organic elements are filled in with a range of vibrant hues, while geometric or architectural elements are mainly depicted in black and white (or in some cases painted in a rather dull yellow or brown hue).

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[221] The dichotomous use of colour in Irwin's Plant Series is quite striking, especially because her drawings of her residence, such as *Piano* [02] (c. 1957-8), *Dining Room* (1957), *Pink Bedroom* (c. 1957-8), and *Mirror* [1] (c. 1957-8), in which (as the titles suggest) architecture is the sole or primary subject, are particularly vibrant.

Fig. 41. P.K. Irwin, Plant Series: Flower Drawings

a) *Flowers in Vase on Black Table*, c. 1958, felt pen and gouache on paper. Private collection (image courtesy of Zaillig Pollock)

b) *Flowers and Railing*, c. 1958, felt pen and gouache on paper. Artist's collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock

c) *Flowers in Vase* [1], [c. 1958], felt pen and gouache on paper. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

d) *Flowers* [2], c. 1958, felt pen and gouache on paper. N. pl. (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

e) *Flowers and Phone,* c. 1958, felt pen and gouache on paper. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Godard and Ballantyne claim that the "tension" established in *Flowers and Phone* lies between "sensory delight and communicational impasse," the latter pole symbolically represented by the rotary phone (Godard 7; Ballantyne 93). Certainly the foregrounded phone aligns itself with the geometric backdrop through its lack of colour, and it stands in opposition to the natural elements of "sensory delight" as an inorganic, technological invention. Its form, however, is not particularly geometric. In fact, it exhibits quite a few curved lines, particularly in its cord. Might Irwin's ambivalence over the relationship between form and colour *vis-à-vis* the phone suggest its potential as a communicative tool to overcome Brazil's overwhelming organicism, which initially "pelted" the artist with images? Does the phone become a link from the comfort of home to the exterior, organic world? Or does it represent a way of calling for help if the organic world encroaches on the poet and takes over, as occurs in "Stories of Snow"? Certainly this phone does not conclusively represent a communicative "impasse," as both Godard and Ballantyne suggest, given that it represents a way to connect from Brazil to a familiar, if distant, linguistic community. Irwin's ambivalence over the symbolism of the phone is underscored by the inconclusive classification of its form as either curvilinear or geometric. *Flowers and Phone* complicates the modernist dichotomization of organic form and geometric form and represents visually Page-Irwin's attempt to rework her understanding of the relationship between the two categories.

A survey of Irwin's flower drawings from the same period discloses Page-Irwin's reconsideration or working out in the course of 1957-8 of her understanding of organic form in particular. Although the exact date of each individual sketch in the series from 1958 is unknown, a glance at figures 42 a) through e), as

I have arranged them, reveals an alteration in Irwin's representation of organic

motifs in the drawings, from the very loose, sketchy forms of *Flowers in Vase on*

Black Table (fig. 41 a]) and *Flowers and Railing* (fig. 42 b]) to those with very

clear, definitive outlines in *Flowers in Vase* [1] (Fig. 41 c]), *Flowers* [2] (Fig. 41

d]), and *Flowers and Phone* (Fig. 41 e]). The large philodendron leaf in *Flowers*

and Phone, in fact, is quite symmetrical, its mid-rib dividing the organic form in

half. The linearity of this bright plant structure, and the leaf veins that extend from

it, contribute to a sense of ambivalence over the relationship between form and

colour in the drawing. Whether Irwin's examination of and experimentation with

more rigidly outlined and geometric-organic plant forms in this series represent a

chronological progression in her work, or whether these works are isolated expe-

riments, the flowers and plant drawings are quite significant to Irwin's artistic de-

velopment and her eventual synthesis of geometric and organic form.

It is also significant that it is within the domestic realm that Irwin is able to

begin to challenge the organic / geometric dichotomy of modernist aesthetics in

her artwork. In Irwin's drawings, the domestic realm—commonly designated a

female space in the 1950s—becomes a gender-neutral one in which the artist can

mediate between competing modernist impulses of organic and geometric form

without upholding their typically gendered associations. Irwin does not represent

the domestic realm as an overtly female space in her artworks from Brazil. Most

of her domestic drawings of the *palacete* on Estrada da Gavéa, such as her flower

drawings, are quite neutral with regards to gender. If anything, Irwin characterizes

the domestic realm as a personal space (relating to the artist's personal and inti-

mate life) in her works, [222] even in the absence of human subjects. Her domestic

drawings typically display the artist-poet's personal artifacts: her typewriter in

Lamps on Desk (c. 1957-8)*,* her books in *Pink Dresser* (c. 1957-8), a notebook in

Table (c. 1957-8), or her paints and brushes in *Painting Table* (c. 1957-8). Many

drawings feature large mirrors—traditional symbols of consciousness, self-

reflexivity, and even narcissism—if not reflecting back the interior space of the

palacete, then reflecting back the poet-artist herself, as in *Triptych* (1958) and

Self-Portrait in Mirror (1958). Even the title of her painting *Woman's Room*

(1959) does not designate a generally female space. The painting offers a glimpse

of two rooms, in fact, as seen through the reflection of a bathroom mirror, and it

features the intimate and personal artifacts of the individual: lotions, perfume bot-

tles, towels, an open wine bottle, the piano and notebook belonging to Page-Irwin,

belonging to this "woman" in particular—not "women" in general. By giving

greater attention to the interior, private, and personal space of the *palacete*, with

its comfortable and familiar tables and potted plants, Irwin was able to focus more

closely on the relationship between geometric and organic form and divorce these

forms from their gendered associations within modernism.

Irwin continued to explore organic and geometric forms through realistic

sketches of Brazil, both outdoors and indoors, in the 1950s; beginning in the fall

of 1957, however, she attempted to make a transition to a modernist idiom

through abstraction. Her move from realism to abstraction was a difficult one, as

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[222] One of Irwin's favourite human subjects in this domestic space, in fact, was a man: her hus-
band, Arthur Irwin. Her sketches *Arthur Lying on Sofa* (31 August 1957) and her *Arthur Reading
in Bed* series (c. 1957-1959) are exemplary of her interest in the male presence in the domestic
realm.

Irwin struggled to find a medium and aesthetic that would enable objectivity without altogether annihilating subjectivity and without cancelling the forms and energies of natural growth. In search of this balance between impersonal and personal forces, Irwin initially rejected geometric abstraction, which she found too impersonal, in favour of the biomorphic idiom. Her *Womb* series, for example, includes some of the earliest abstract works by the artist, done during a period when she was "desperately trying to have a baby" and leading up to her operation, a hysterectomy (Page, Personal Correspondence with Zailig Pollock), which inspired the short story "Fever." Her discussion of the event in *Brazilian Journal* is quite impersonal and vague; Page never explicitly mentions the type of operation she underwent.[223] Her *Womb* drawings, while their abstraction makes them appear impersonal, are thus quite personal in content. The titles of her *Womb* (Fig. 42) and *Womb Form* (Fig. 43) of 1957, both done in felt pen around the same time as her realistic domestic drawings, are explicit about their subject matter, and their curvilinear, amoebic shapes are suggestive on a very basic level of a woman's internal anatomy.

Fig. 42. P.K. Irwin, *Womb*, c. 1957, felt pen on paper. Artist's collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

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[223] Page only hints at a hysterectomy when she jokingly suspects her surgeon to have performed a "placental graft" to cure her cold (108), a procedure mentioned in an earlier story that Page tells in *Brazilian Journal* about an asthmatic woman with a newborn child who was cured through this method following an "abdominal operation" (103).

Fig. 43. P.K. Irwin, *Womb Form*, c. 1957, felt pen [and gouache]. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Womb Form presents clearly the impersonal / personal nature of the biomorphic idiom: biomorphic art appears impersonal because of its anti-mimeticism and absence of figuration, yet its content tends to be more personal, as artists—such as Marian Scott in her painting *Atom, Bone, and Embryo* that I discuss in Chapter Two (pp. 179-82)—often depict gendered elements of the human body that reveal or reflect the artist's own gender and, sometimes, personal experiences. Ghislaine Wood, furthermore, remarks that the idiom is generally associated with "the subjective, the sensual, the psychological and the unconscious" (81). Irwin's *Womb Form* displays this impersonal / personal paradox because, while it resembles the female womb, as its title suggests, it also vaguely resembles the interior of a fruit, such as the pomegranate in Dudek's poem about the fruit that I discussed in Chapter Two (pp. 221-2), with its bright seeds exposed—a metaphor, perhaps, for the artist's self-exposure enacted through the painting. This ambiguity of subject and suggestiveness of form were part of biomorphism's appeal to modernist artists, who marveled at the idiom's "ability to range freely between the poles of abstraction and figuration" (Mundy 76). Ultimately, both the subject matter and forms of Irwin's *Womb* series correspond to the personal struggle Page was undergoing at

the time, but the abstract appearance of the work and the ambiguous presentation of its subject matter make it equally impersonal.

Irwin was not satisfied, however, with the conscious compositional process of her drawings that she practised in the 1950s; she describes this artistic process as "slow" and "coming from a long distance" in an August 1957 entry in her *Brazilian* Journal. The felt pen (as a medium for her biomorphic abstraction), moreover, left her unfulfilled. In *Brazilian Journal*, her art teacher, Serpa, suggests that she needs to find a new medium that will let her "dream a bit more" (158). In 1958, Irwin reluctantly renounced the felt pen—comparing the process to "an amputation" (*Brazilian Journal* 158)—and began to work primarily with paint (*Brazilian Journal* 158). Initially, she worked in gouache, but she soon sought the help of Frank Schaeffer, an accomplished art teacher with a studio in Brazil, to learn how to work with oil paint. While Schaeffer did assist Irwin with "the straight physical handling of oils" (*Brazilian Journal* 176), she reveals in the journal her strong resistance to his ideas about composition and form: Schaeffer preferred a rational, linear, and geometric type of abstraction. She compared his method of composition to "put[ting] your picture up like a building" (*Brazilian Journal* 211), a method that was antithetical to her desire for a more organic compositional process. In her journal entry dated 12 October 1958, she writes of a show by one of Schaeffer's students that she disliked and calls it "formula painting" (176). She adds that she "[c]ame to the conclusion [Schaeffer] is trying to teach me to paint like that, so decided to leave him. Burst my brains puzzling over his concept of linear composition and the inter-relationship of masses. Decided to stay with him at least until I have presented him with my doubts" (176). Irwin

continued to work with Schaeffer and produced some rather geometrical works under his tutelage—see *Bottles* (Fig. 44) and *Apartment Blocks* (Fig. 45)— paintings that display a rational, constructivist, and geometric abstraction. Page, however, struggled to accept this form of abstraction Schaeffer advocated, which she compares to "algebra" (216).

Fig. 44. P.K. Irwin, *Bottles.* c. 1959, oil paint. Trent University, Peterborough, ON (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Fig. 45. P.K. Irwin, *Apartment Block* c. 1959, candle wax resist and ink on white paper. Present location unknown (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Eventually, Page-Irwin presented Schaeffer with her doubts when he criticized the forms and spaces, which he determined were "not beautiful," in one of Irwin's paintings. Page recalls the exchange in *Brazilian Journal*:

> Page: "Why are they not beautiful? It's just your opinion against mine, surely."
>
> Shaeffer: "Well, for instance, the space is bounded by a line which is neither a straight line nor a curve."
>
> Me: "What's wrong with that?"
>
> Schaeffer: "It's not beautiful."
>
> Me: "You find it in nature. Any tree has any number of such lines."
>
> Schaeffer: "But art isn't the reproduction of nature."
>
> This rather ends the conversation. I know that art is not the reproduction of nature. But I cannot see why every single natural thing has to be deliberately stylized, which is what he seems to want. (216)

According to Page's narrative, Schaeffer wants Irwin's painting to conform to the modernist dichotomy established in formal art criticism: either it should be entirely geometric / linear, or it should be clearly organic / curvilinear. He will not accept ambiguity or ambivalence, which is exactly what Page wishes to explore. Page-Irwin did not want to continue in the vein of realism that she started with in Brazil; but she did not want to eliminate the natural world altogether. Ultimately, the artist was not content with an either / or approach to modernism, and she searched and struggled for years for a way to synthesize the two modernist poles into a modernist abstraction that would be capable of representing her personal, female experience.

This struggle is an aesthetic one that essentially paralleled her earlier poetic conflict between the geometric and the biomorphic idioms, with Irwin initially reluctant to accept a more dominant geometric idiom, the kind advocated by Schaeffer, for her painting. Page's scepticism over the geometric aesthetic is evident in her reaction to Lygia Clark's paintings, which Page describes in *Brazilian Journal,* when she and her friend Trixie visit the Sao Paulo Museum of Modern Art to see a show of neo-concrete painting and poetry. Clark's paintings in the museum included "a series of her black and white squares," and Page-Irwin cannot comprehend what they could possibly symbolize except apocalypse: "Where can one go from there?," she asks, "[c]an she not see? Is it her statement about what she sees? I was depressed by it all. I suppose it is post-bomb painting" (217). Clark's geometric abstraction, as opposed to biomorphic abstraction with its generative associations, signified death and destruction for Page at this time. She could not see its potential to communicate life, let alone the artist's personal life.

When Irwin began to practice visual arts in Brazil, she picked up where her poetry had left off aesthetically by exploring and challenging the modernist dichotomy of organic / personalist and geometric / impersonalist form. Her earliest works from Brazil, however, were not modernist: Page turned to realism as a means of focusing her attention on the visual relationship between geometric and organic form by sketching Brazilian nature and architecture. Her sketches of Brazil's gardens and Rio's cityscape explore these forms through a detached and impersonal treatment. Later, however, Irwin turned her attention to a more personal realm as the setting for her realistic subject matter. Her sketches of potted plants in her Brazilian *palacete* begin to deconstruct the modernist dichotomy of geome-

tric and organic shape in a gender-neutral and private setting; but Irwin continued to struggle for a similar deconstruction of the polarization of the geometric / impersonal and biomorphic / personal modernist idioms. Her earliest abstract paintings of the period favoured the biomorphic idiom, as in her *Womb Series*, for its ability to engage both personal and impersonal forces; but her medium, the felt pen, and her conscious approach to composition challenged her desire for greater subjectivity in her work. The artist's decision to switch to paint initially presented the possibility of developing a more personal and subjective approach in her art and a less rigid, either-or aesthetic; but her art teacher, Carl Schaeffer, and choice of a slow-working medium, oil paint, presented obstacles on this path. Schaeffer's patriarchal affirmation of the modernist dichotomy in the visual arts was particularly challenging to Irwin's own artistic impulses, and this affirmation, along with his own advocacy of the geometric idiom, seems to have reaffirmed the gendered associations of the geometric and biomorphic idioms for Page-Irwin. The geometric idiom remained unconvincing to Page while in Brazil, as she could not wholeheartedly embrace what she suspected to be an idiom of cold, masculine impersonality.

V. "neither a straight line nor a curve": Nature's Alternative Geometry in Art and Poetry

Despite her generally despondent view of the geometric aesthetic and the modernist geometric idiom at the end of the 1950s, Irwin did not altogether abandon geometric form in her work; instead, she explored new ways in which the modernist formal polarization of geometric and organic form might be collapsed

through the alternative concept of a natural or "proto-fractal" geometry: a non-Euclidean geometry of irregular, yet symmetrical and self-similar, forms occurring in the natural world.[224] Irwin's transition from oil paint to oil pastel, with its hard point, enabled a more subjective compositional process accommodating a consideration of ambiguous forms of nature and a reconsideration of what "geometry" could mean and look like. As her comments to Schaeffer suggest, this exploration of ambiguity or inconsistency of form began with a consideration of the natural world and the ways in which the organic can grow out of the geometric and vice versa. Her exploration of ambiguous form, which she eventually carried over to her use of egg tempera, developed into a consideration of the "self-similarity"—a term that mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot used to describe a "shape" in which "each piece. . . is geometrically similar to the whole" (qtd. in Novak 176)—and symmetry of the organic world and its natural geometry.

Following her frustrations working with oil paint under Schaeffer's tutelage in Brazil, Page turned to the new medium of oil pastel, which facilitated an exploration of the natural world's synthesis of modernism's formal dichotomy. One of her earliest works in this new medium was her drawing *Stone Fruit* of 1959 (Fig. 46), which exhibits the artist's interest in understanding the relationship between the biomorphic and the geometric.

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[224] Benoit Mandelbrot coined the term "fractal" in his 1977 publication *Fractals: Form, Chance, and Dimension.* According to David Pearson, "[f]ractal geometry describes natural shapes and rhythms such as snowflakes, leaves, tree branches, mountains, waves, and coastlines" (68). Carl Bovill adds that fractal geometry is "the study of mathematical shapes that display a cascade of never-ending, self-similar, meandering detail as one observes them more closely. . . . Natural shapes and rhythms, such as leaves, tree branching, mountain ridges, flood levels of a river, wave patterns, and nerve impulses, display [a] progression of self-similar form" (3).

Fig. 46. P.K. Irwin, *Stone Fruit*, 1959, oil pastel. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Ballantyne has noted of this predominantly biomorphic painting that Page-Irwin "reveals the inside of the fruit, detailing the stone that is its nucleic centre. The abstract is a part of the organic" (10). As Ballantyne observes, through Irwin's sgraffito technique—through which she scratches into the paint to remove it from the surface—"[g]eometric shapes, triangles and circles are interwoven into the texture of the fruit itself" (105). The drawing is one of the first that Irwin completed using oil pastel, and, according to Page, the medium was significant to the development of her abstraction: "[s]trange how a hard point pleases me so much more than a brush. . . . I seem to lose all control of line and the capacity to dream when working with a flexible point" (*Brazilian Journal* 197). With the hard points of oil pastel crayons and sgraffito tools, Irwin was able to "dream" more freely, to effect a subjective, artistic creation, bordering on an unconscious process, in her

abstract art—a step towards her later Surrealist painting—while maintaining a sense of conscious composition and "control." As this new medium enabled Irwin to challenge the strict divisions between subjective and objective, conscious and unconscious composition, it also enabled a dismantling of the formal division of organic form and geometric form. *Stone Fruit* exhibits biomorphic modernism's inclusion of geometric form and nature's accommodation of both aesthetics.

Although Irwin continued to draw and paint works exemplifying qualities of either the geometric idiom or the biomorphic idiom while experimenting with a variety of media in Brazil, she also continued to explore the collapse of this modernist aesthetic dichotomy, which she pursued with greater commitment when she moved to Mexico in 1960 and began to work with a new medium: egg tempera. The Surrealist painter Leonora Carrington, also working in Mexico in the early 1960s, introduced Irwin to this medium (Pollock, "Introduction," *PK Page Home Page*), and she encouraged Irwin to explore its Surrealist possibilities. One of the benefits of working with egg tempera, for Irwin, was that it is a fast-drying medium, which easily accommodated her desire for a less conscious, more spontaneous and automatist artistic process. Page-Irwin wrote her painter friend Jori Smith in the 1960s about her preference for the medium, proclaiming that it—"for me— is bliss. Just like working hand in hand with the Holy ghost" (Letter to Jori Smith [1], [1960-2]), a comment that suggests the trance-like state in which Irwin worked with the medium. Irwin's *The Shape of the Flower is Yellow* (Fig. 47), painted sometime between 1961 and 1965, was done in egg tempera, and it exhibits a new integration of organic *and* geometric form within a predominantly biomorphic aesthetic.

Fig. 47. P.K. Irwin, *The Shape of the Flower is Yellow*, c. 1961-5, egg tempera. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

The subject of the painting is organic—a flower—and Irwin has abstracted it through the various intersecting lines of the leaves that seem to grow out of one another. The painting also exhibits an ambiguity about form (hinted at in its syn-aesthetic title) because it incorporates both curvilinear and geometric shapes. The lines of the painting are largely indefinite: the various curves are modest and often converge to create the sharp ends of the leaves. These lines refute her teacher Carl Schaeffer's criticism of her earlier painting's form that was "neither a straight line nor a curve" (*Brazilian Journal* 216). The flowers, moreover, are full of geome-tric shapes—triangles, circles, and even a few rectangles forming a border around the circles—but their organic curves are nevertheless predominant in outline. The painting, much like the earlier *Stone Fruit* (Fig. 46), exhibits a fusion of organic

and geometric form and demonstrates that the natural world rejects the polarization of these aesthetics, which is exactly the point Page makes to Schaeffer in their exchange in *Brazilian Journal*.

When Page published *Cry Ararat!* in 1967, she included in the publication details from many of the paintings and drawings she had been working on near the end of her residence in Brazil and during her residence in Mexico. The presence of these works in the collection is not arbitrary, as they engage in an interesting dialogue with a number of new poems published therein—poems that Page started writing as early as 1964, when she and Arthur returned to Canada and settled in Victoria B.C. (Orange 5)—as well as the older poems included in the collection. Both the artworks and new poems in *Cry Ararat!* explore the synthesis of organic and geometric form in art and poetry through nature, with Page the poet revealing a new acceptance of the geometric as part of the organic, and as an aesthetic that can therefore represent or articulate her personal, female experience objectively. Like *The Shape of the Flower is Yellow*, many of the artworks reproduced in *Cry Ararat!* exhibit an amalgamation of biomorphic and geometric form. For example, *The Garden* (Fig. 48) and *The Dance* (Fig. 49), details of which "illustrate" the collection's third sections "The Permanent Tourists" and "Personal Landscape" respectively, are iconically biomorphic works that both engage with and incorporate geometric form:

Fig. 48. P.K. Irwin, *The Garden*, 1963, egg tempera. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Fig. 49. P.K. Irwin, *The Dance*, c. 1963, egg tempera on board. Artist's collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Both works feature a dominantly positioned biomorphic sun shining down on a

very dense assemblage of flowers and vegetation below. These organic forms,

which appear to merge and intersect, grow towards the life-giving sun; but their intersections also engender some rather jagged and sharp angles, and the organic forms incorporate a number of geometric forms and patterns, such as squares, circles, triangles, and rather rigid lines. *The Garden*, moreover, grows in front of a large, rectangular building or fence containing a multitude of tiny square windows or holes; the geometry of this architecture, however, is imprecise, its lines not particularly rigid or firm, and unlike Irwin's early domestic plant drawings, the shapes, patterns, and colours of the architecture are repeated within the garden itself. Whereas in her early poetry, such as "Green Little Corn" (*MF* 18-9), which is reproduced in the collection as "The Tall Suns," the poet would have "walked from that high building / but its shape / would not release [her]" (*CA* 79), Irwin the artist has been released from the strictures of the geometric idiom, and her own ungenerous reactions to it, through her new understanding of a geometric presence in nature.

The new poems included in *Cry Ararat!*, which are published in sections I, III, and IV, affirm this geometry of the natural world, and reveal the beginning of the poet's acceptance, on those grounds, of the geometric aesthetic. In "Cook's Mountains" (*CA* 16), included in section I, "Landscape with Serifs"—a title itself reflecting the relationship between painting and writing in the collection—the poet considers an architectural / geometric impression imposed on the Queensland landscape by Captain James Cook, who "[b]y naming them. . . made" the region's mountains into "Glass House Mountains." Cook's naming of the mountains, from a postcolonial perspective, is clearly unethical, and the poet points to the objectionable, hegemonic purpose of the name by noting that it, and their driver's re-

peating of it, effaces the past and history of the region and its range: "[n]either of us now / remembers how they looked before they broke / the light to fragments as the driver spoke." But this statement is not entirely true: the poet does, indeed, recall for the reader her first impressions of the mountains, before the driver spoke, rising "sudden, surrealist, conical / . . . out of the rain forest," a description that simultaneously affirms their geometric form and generative relationship to the natural, organic "rain forest" environment. And while Cook's name for the mountains influences her subsequent poetic description of them, the poet's initial impression of the mountains' natural geometry is not excluded from consideration: they are "hive-shaped hothouses," an alliterative description acknowledging both their "glasshouse" architectural impression and the relationship of this "hothouse" impression and the mountain's conical shape to the bee hive, for example. And while the poet associates the mountains with "mirror glimmering," highlighting their similarity to architectural glass, they also "form / in diamond panes behind the tree ferns of / the dark imagination," which notes their similarity to the naturally occurring geometrical shapes of minerals. Although these lines suggest that Page associates imagination with the biomorphic and with nature, with the "tree ferns" that grow there, it is notable that "behind" the "tree ferns of / the dark imagination" lie the geometric diamond structures: the organic and the geometric are contiguously related, and both support the imagination.

Another poem in section I, "Landscape with Serifs," "Bark Drawing" (*CA* 14-5), suggests moreover that this geometry of the natural world can represent both male *and* female experience in art and poetry. The first poem in *Cry Ararat!*, "Bark Drawing," is an ekphrastic poem that describes an Aboriginal sketch done

on bark depicting the lives of (presumably) Aboriginal-Australian men. Page's

poem is not primarily a mimetic representation of the bark drawing: her use of

ekphrasis is transformative, an attempt to relate and translate the visual aesthetics

of the drawing to a linguistic / typographic / poetic aesthetic:

This is a landscape with serifs:

singularly sharp

each emu

kangaroo &

goanna

intaglio

on the bark

of this continent

look in its rivers

fish

swim by in skeleton

fine-boned as a comb

while pin-figured men

string thin

are dancing or hunting

(an alphabet the eye

lifts from the air

as if by ear

two senses

threaded through

a knuckle bone)

. . . .

Page transforms the bark drawing, which (based on the poet's discussion of its images—the "emu," "kangaroo," "goanna," and "pin-figured men") appears to be both an abstract and a figurative hunting scene, into a "landscape with serifs": the poet reads the drawing surface, "the bark / of this continent," not simply as support medium but as genre, landscape, and the "pin-figured men" become a written text. The speaker of the poem identifies a correlation between the visual and the aural that is reflected in the poet's verse. As the pin-figured men "stare through / sea water clear / as isinglass or air," the reader is called on not only to "stare" at the mental image of sea water drawn up by the poet, but also to hear its liquid flow through the grouping of [s] sounds in these lines. The reader moves from this aural flow into the sharp [b] and [g] sounds that help him or her visualize the abruptness of "stipple[d]. . . bark between / zig-zag & herring-bone." As the poet highlights the relationship between the verbal and visual in the poem, she also uses these sounds and images of her ekphrastic poem to resolve the aesthetic conflict between the geometric and biomorphic of her early poetry. Page calls attention to both the "sharp" and linear "zig-zag & / herring bone" patterns and "crosshatch[ing]" designs of the bark drawing, which are based on geometric lines and

forms; at the same time, the drawing's organic medium, bark, the osseous imagery of fish that "swim by in skeleton / fine-boned as a comb," the irregular shape of the "sting ray," and the curve of the "boomerang" are all common to biomorphic art. The boomerang, although a common primitivist-biomorphic icon, is actually an ambiguous form, a shape that Mark Treib, describing landscape architect Garret Eckbo's boomerang pool designs of the 1950s, calls "cubo-biomorphic": "an astute mixture of cubistic (or suprematist) forms with the curvilinear shapes" (77). Page's biomorphic "landscape with serifs," like the boomerang, includes both visual and textual versions of geometric *and* organic form to represent the daily activities and culture of Aboriginal-Australian men.

Page represents the hybridity of nature and geometry visually in section I with Irwin's drawings *Dark Kingdom* (Fig. 50), which introduces "Landscape with Serifs," and *Labyrinth* [2] (Fig. 51), opening the "Dream of Caves and Winter" subsection.

Fig. 50. P.K. Irwin, *Dark Kingdom*, c. 1959, scratched oil pastel. N. pl. (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Fig. 51. P.K. Irwin, *Labyrinth [2],* c. 1962, black and sepia ink watered down. Maltwood Art Museum, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C. (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Dark Kingdom features a night-blooming garden composed of a variety of flowers arranged randomly. The shapes of the flowers are organic—mostly curvilinear or irregular forms in their blossoms and leaves. The base of the garden, conversely, is mainly lines and jagged edges, created through hatching and cross-hatching via Irwin's sgraffito technique, which also maps out a labyrinthine pattern in the earth from which the flowers spring. The pattern is, of course, emphasized by the inclusion of *Labyrinth* [2], a non-iconic drawing created by Irwin's wandering pen, in the subsequent subsection. While the forms of Irwin's labyrinths are suggestive of the geometric aesthetic, they are neither composed of definitively straight lines nor of curves. They are ambiguous forms, like the boomerang of Page's "Bark Drawing." Irwin has scratched or drawn them through an automatic process yielding forms that resist strict categorization as either organic or geometric.

Labyrinth images in her poetry and painting similarly help Page-Irwin to overcome the dichotomization of modernist aesthetics and to reconceptualise her

understanding of geometric form. The labyrinth is a prominent image in *Cry Ara-rat!*, appearing in the new poems "In a Ship Recently Raised from the Sea" (96) and "The Knitters" (82), for example, and it shares a symbolic function with bio-morphic art in general: rebirth, renewal, and transformation. The women in "The Knitters" appear to be engaging in the creative act somewhat less than freely. The poet considers their movement "controlled," as if by "a switch." Beyond this me-chanical comparison, the women seem forced to "observe the ceremony of skeins" and its regular, artificial beat of the "metronome." The poet describes the results of their enforced knitting, however, and it does not appear to add up to a geometric aesthetic like the "cross-stitch on checked gingham" created by the women in her poem "On Educating the Natives." Instead, these women "knit a kind of mist — / climate of labyrinth," a pattern that is created by some "urgent personal circuit." Their labyrinthine knitting, which translates "hieroglyphs" and "fills / the room they sit in like a fur / as vegetable more than animal," is coded as a threat to male power and its typically Cartesian principles, as the sharp man who "rings like an axe" is "imperilled" [*sic*] by these women and their activity. They "knit him out" by contesting his analytic, Euclidean geometry: their knitting "de-vours" his "cubic feet of air" (82). The speaker questions whether, through all this knitting stitched on "a female star"—a fractal shape of the natural world—the man becomes "Theseus remembering / that maze, those daedal ways, the Mino-taur?" (82). Page's allusion to the Minotaur legend recalls the myth's motifs of rebirth and renewal. As Cassandra Camille Wass explains, in the Minotaur epic,

> [e]ntering the labyrinth was seen as a courageous act of stepping into the
> unknown to face one's fears. Meeting at the centre was a confrontation of

those demons. To slay the dragon or beast was a representation of trans-

forming the self. To follow the winding path out of the twisted maze

would bring enlightenment and a renewed life. (16-7)

The speaker's question asks the reader to consider whether the man's confronta-

tion with this female activity and its natural, "daedal" geometry could potentially

lead to change and renewal. The question reflects the poet's own confrontation

with this female activity and its organic, non-Euclidean geometry in the poem, a

confrontation repeated throughout the collection, in both its poems and artwork.

In the concluding poem of the collection, "Cry Ararat!" (104-7), the poet

articulates her new understanding of geometry: one that anticipates the concept of

fractal geometry. The poet-persona of "Cry Ararat!" expresses this epiphany when

she explains that the biomorphic aesthetic, with its biocentric philosophy, "the I-

am animal, / the We-are leaf and flower"—can, and must, "include the focus of

the total I": it must consider both the geometric and the organic, a unity symbo-

lized by the speaker's metamorphosis into a bird that lands on Ararat ". . . com-

plete– / as if I had drawn *a circle* in my flight and filled its shape." The poet con-

cludes the poem by suggesting the concept of a natural, fractal geometry, a con-

cept that she anticipated before it was formally theorized by Mandelbrot in the

1970s. As previously mentioned, fractal geometry considers the rhythms and self-

similar shapes of natural forms, from the macro to the micro scale. As David

Pearson explains, "[h]owever far you zoom in or out of a fractal system there will

always be an unending cascade of self-similar, but not identical, detail" (68). In

the final stanzas of "Cry Ararat!," the speaker attends to these details of natural

self-similarity:

The leaves that make the tree by day,

the green twig the dove saw fit

to lift across a world of water

break in a wave about our feet.

The bird in the thicket with his whistle

the crystal lizard in the grass

the star and shell

tassel and bell

of wild flowers blowing where we pass,

this flora-fauna flotsam, pick and touch,

requires the focus of the total I.

A single leaf can block a mountainside;

all Ararat be conjured by a leaf.

The speaker considers both the tree and "the leaves that make the tree by day":

the leaves are fractally symmetrical organic structures that combine to form the

larger structure of the tree, which they in turn resemble. The tree, with its trunk

and leaves, also resembles the smaller "green twig" the bird carries in its mouth

over the "world of water." The speaker's perspective reduces this liquid world to

a single "wave," a fractal form identified by Pearson (68). The speaker then turns

to the various fractal shapes of wildflowers: the symmetrical "star," "shell," and

"bell"—the rhyming here undoubtedly meant to underscore the idea of self-

similarity—along with the symmetry of the plaited "tassel." While the speaker

lists shapes that are mainly curvilinear, the star may be more angular in form and

match the implied rigid form of the "crystal lizard." The crystal, as we learned in Chapter Two, is a common biomorphic image that happens to be angular. Trehearne has remarked that "Cry Ararat!" searches "for a new sympathy of viewpoint" and for a poetics that can accommodate a "bifurcated expression" (*Montreal* 104). The poet's final images present this new perspective, in which the poet no longer relies on a modernist objectivity that divides the world into geometric and biomorphic poles. Her subjective vision recognizes the fractal geometry of the natural world, so that, while "[a] single leaf can block a mountainside," and not allow the poet to see the geometry of its conical shape, "all Ararat" can also "be conjured by a leaf."

The collection's titular poem, standing alone as the last section, suggests that the poet has experienced a transformation and has found a place to rest. As Trehearne notes, "it's worth keeping in mind that that's what Ararat offers the swamped poet, a regrounding. . ." on "dry land" following the flood of images straining her sympathies as poet (104). In her previous publication, *The Metal and the Flower*, the poet was unable to find respite: critics such as Irvine, Killian, and Trehearne have shown that in Page's early poems, many of which were republished in *The Metal and the Flower* ("Nightmare" [50-1], "The Figures" [31], "Piece for a Formal Garden" [16], "Sleeper" [32-3], "Summer" [40]) her poetic sympathies were often divided between personality and impersonality, subjectivity and objectivity, and, as I have demonstrated, the biomorphic and the geometric idioms. As the title of this earlier collection suggests, the poet was, at that time, unable to unite the polarities represented by "the metal," the inorganic, and "the flower," the organic. In the poem "Cry Ararat!," however, the inorganic and the

organic can coexist and are enmeshed: through her painting, Irwin discovered a natural space that included the geometric and that she could translate to her poems, as in "Dark Kingdom," "The Knitters," and "Cry Ararat!," for example. This organic-geometric space is not "fatal underfoot" ("Metal and Flower"), but rather a place "for the sole of her foot" where the poet finds rest in her bird form in "Cry Ararat!"

Although the poet continued to express a distrust of Euclidean geometry throughout the end of her sojourn in Brazil in the late 1950s and while in Mexico in the early 1960s, a survey of her visual art and poetry of this period reveals a developing appreciation for the geometric aesthetic and a greater understanding of its relationship to the natural world. Irwin's transition from paint to oil pastel, along with the hard points of her sgraffito tools, undoubtedly facilitated this new appreciation for geometric form, and its relationship to organic form, in abstract art. When Carrington introduced her to fast-drying egg tempera, Irwin was able to continue to explore geometric and organic form in abstract art, but now she was able to do so with greater personal expression through a medium accommodating a more spontaneous and automatist artistic process. Both medium and process enabled Page to commit with greater confidence to her subjective perceptions in her artwork and poetry, rather than rely on prescriptions of modernist objectivity and the critical paradigms enforcing the bifurcation of geometric and organic form. With her subjective eye / I, Page-Irwin began to perceive the way the organic world included both traditional geometric forms and a kind of "proto-fractal" geometry of organic elements.

Page-Irwin's new-found appreciation of geometric forms and structures

would have a profound impact on her later artistic output. The paintings and poems from her Mexico period evince the poet's attempt to reconcile the geometric and biomorphic idioms in modernist art and, through this process, to understand the ways in which the geometric aesthetic might accommodate personality and subjectivity. Geometry was no longer simply a rigid, mathematical, impersonalist, and male aesthetic. With this discovery came the chance for Page to consider whether the geometric idiom, although traditionally based on Euclidean geometry, might not be more flexible than modernist critics had typically characterized it to be. It was not until Page's discovery of Sufism and Islamic art, with its predominantly geometric forms, however, that she was able to recognize fully the potential to overcome the personalist / impersonalist dichotomy of modernism.

VI. A Sacred Geometry:
Sufism, Islamic Art, and Unity in Multiplicity in Page-Irwin's Late Art and Poetry

Zailig Pollock has noted that "Cry Ararat!" is "the first of many visionary poems inspired by Page's discovery of Sufism" ("Introduction," *K* 15). At the end of her residence in Mexico, Page began to read Idries Shah, a teacher and author in the Sufi tradition. As Pollock explains, "Shah's version of Sufism, the central mystical tradition of Islam, is much contested by students of Islam, precisely because Shah denies its Islamic roots," and claims instead that Sufism "has no deeper connection with Islam than any other religious tradition" (15). Pollock notes, however, that this universalizing impulse of Shah's Sufi philosophy, "in itself, would have attracted Page, because she had no particular interest in Islam or in any other form of organized religion" (15). Nevertheless, Page was deeply inter-

ested in traditional Islamic art, which tends towards a geometric aesthetic. Sheila R. Canby affirms that "[g]eometry lies at the heart of Islamic design. . . . the forms of plane geometry—circles, triangles, quadrilaterals and polygons, and their segments—underpin the nonfigural decoration of both objects and structures in Islamic art and architecture" (20). The linear and angular aesthetic, which Page-Irwin never fully accepted in its own right in her early poetry and art, Page now understood to have sacred resonances because of its significance to Sufism and prominence in Islamic art. Page began to incorporate this sacred geometric aesthetic in both her poetry and painting with a new understanding of its ability to unify, rather than divide, her artistic interests and modernist impulses.

As early as 1971, Page began reading Titus Burckhardt's *Sacred Art in East and West*,[225] in which the author explains the central principle of Unity and its relationship to the aesthetics of Islamic art. According to Burckhardt, "[u]nity is not expressible in terms of any image. The prohibition of images in Islam is not however absolute. A plane image is tolerated as an element in profane art, on condition that it represents neither God nor the face of the Prophet" (101). For this reason, Islamic art restricts itself primarily "to geometrical forms alone, which are faithful to the flat surface of the composition. . ." (104). Because it presents mainly non-iconic, geometric forms, Islamic art is predominantly impersonal and ab-

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[225] In recent years, Islamic art historians, such as Oleg Grabar, have criticized Burckhardt and his book for its "reluctance to deal with history," which results in the troubling generalization that a few basic "principles" govern the whole of Islamic art (50). I agree with Grabar's assessment that Burckhardt's discussion of Islamic art is an essentialization of all Islamic art that disregards the complexity and diversity of art created by Muslims throughout the centuries. For the purposes of this essay, however, I am interested in P.K. Page's particular understanding of Islamic art, which was based largely on Burckhardt's work. Few, if any, other English studies of Islamic art would have been available to Page at the time that she became interested in Sufism. A discussion of the variety and complexity of Islamic art across the years is, therefore, not entirely related to the aims of this paper.

stract. But as Burckhardt explains, whereas modernist abstraction is often created out of, or elicits, "a response that is ever more immediate, more fluid and more individual to the irrational impulses that come from the subconscious," Muslim artists create abstract art as "the expression of a law," and "it manifests as directly as possible Unity in multiplicity" (103) or "multiplicity in Unity" (106). I believe Burckhardt means that Islamic art is capable of representing the interrelated nature of logic and the "living continuity of rhythm" (109), the "geometric genius" and "nomadic rhythmicality" that he identifies as the "two poles" of Islamic art (107). Whereas Page-Irwin, earlier, had identified the ways in which nature and the biomorphic idiom may comprise geometric form, through Sufism and Islamic art she began to understand geometric form itself as inherently united with nature and the biomorphic aesthetic.

Page-Irwin's interest in Islamic art was first expressed in an essay she wrote on the work of the artist Pat Martin Bates for *Artscanada* in 1971. Page first came across Bates's work in the late 1960s, and she wrote to Jori Smith exclaiming that she found the artist to be "spontaneous and alive" (Letter to Jori Smith [2], [1960-2]). In her essay, she remarks on the relationship between Bates's work and "the art, architecture and literature of the Middle East" (40) and cites Burckhardt on the spiritual nature of Islamic Art: "Art, to, the Muslim, is proof of the Divine existence only to the extent that it is beautiful without showing the marks of a subjective individualistic inspiration. Its beauty must be impersonal like that of a starry sky" (Burckhardt 107; qtd. in "Darkinbad" 40). I would clarify that this does not mean that the subjective is entirely absent from Islamic art. As Kenneth M. George explains in *Picturing Islam*, "the Muslim artist cultivates an interiority

predicated on sincerity (*ikhlas*), conscious rationality (*akal*), and pursuit of the divine. *Originality and self-expression are not missing; but are beside the point*" (87). The ultimate goal of such art is transcendence. Part of the paradox of Islamic art is the principle of Unity, which includes both the personal and impersonal, the subjective and the objective, but which presents them both impersonally and ob-jectively.

We see this Unity principle in Irwin's own visual art of the period, which became blatantly geometric in aesthetic when the artist's interest in Sufism emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her *Pieces of Eight* series exemplifies the Unity principle of Islamic art quite simply. Take, for example, her *Lotus* and *Dervish* subseries (Fig. 52). Irwin has painted a geometrical series composed of squares, triangles, and octagons entirely in black and white, a series that in many ways recalls the black and white "post-apocalyptic" geometric squares of Lygia Clark that Page could not understand in Brazil. Irwin's paintings, however, have a spiritual foundation, as the title *Dervish*—a Muslim who has taken a vow of po-verty and austerity—suggests, and their intent is not apocalyptic, but rather tran-scendental.
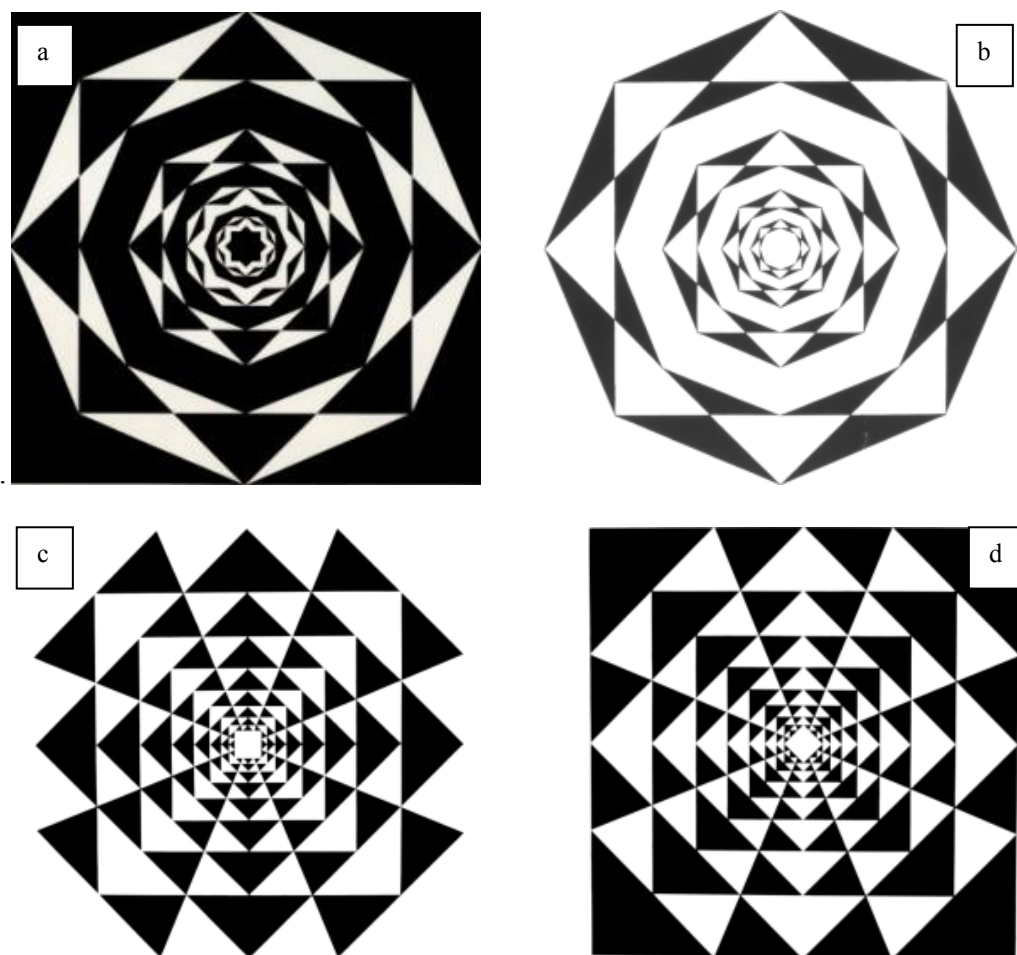
Fig. 52. P.K. Irwin, *Pieces of Eight* Series

a) *Pieces of Eight: Lotus Variation [Positive]*, c. 1972-4, gouache. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

b) *Pieces of Eight: Lotus [Negative]*, c. 1972-4, gouache. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

c) *Pieces of Eight: Dervish [Negative]*, c. 1972-4, gouache. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

d) *Pieces of Eight: Dervish [Positive]*, c. 1972-4, gouache. Private collection (image courtesy of Zailig Pollock)

Although a number of the titles in the series relate to physical objects in the

world, the degree of their geometric abstraction establishes a visual disjunction

with the material and heightens the metaphysical potential of the works. Page

wrote to Jori Smith when she was working on these sketches in the early 1970s. In her letter, she describes the precision and concentration involved in her artistic process:

> . . . I've written a few poems & I'm involved in a series of black & white drawings—geometrical. Striking. Strange. I'm doing a large four-part one at the moment. It calls for precision drawing with T-squares & set squares & then a steady steady hand. Funny for me to be doing such mathematical things. The original design 'drew itself' then, as it were 'had babies.' (Letter to Jori Smith, 26 July [1970-4])

In working on this series, Irwin became the "[d]raughtsman" of her early poem of that name (see page 371-2), using the tools of the trade to create precise lines and geometric shapes. Her vision, however, unlike his, remains clear and her hand steady, as she builds geometric patterns with her squaring tools and pencil. Once the geometric shapes are drafted, she fills them in with black gouache in a very specific pattern: Pollock identifies the patterns in this series as loosely based on Abjad numerals, a numerical system in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are assigned numerical values (personal correspondence with author). To create additional works in the series, Irwin recreated the pattern and rotated or flipped the work to apply the gouache, which yields a different visual result. Page's comments to Smith insist on the impersonality of these works, as Page asserts that their original design "drew itself," a remark that effaces the role of the artist in their creation. Her preceding comments, however, somewhat contradict this statement: the fact that she is "involved" in drawing the series, and the need for "precision drawing" and a "steady" hand to create them, indicate the artist's direct

and conscious participation in the creative process. If we consider the Unity principle of Islamic art, which inspired the creation of this series, we can understand Page's assertion that the personal is included within the impersonal quality of these works. Page, in her own terms, codes these impersonal, geometric works as generative—the design "had babies"—as well as organic—many of the titles, for example "Lotus" and "Fern," relate to plants and flowers and recall the artist's earliest works from Brazil, such as her plant series. Through her readings of Sufi philosophy, Page-Irwin began to accept that geometric, impersonal abstraction could include the organic / biomorphic and personal by drawing on the concept of "Unity in multiplicity" (Burckhardt 103).

While Irwin explored the geometric aesthetic in her painting and drawing, Page began to experiment with a geometric idiom in her later poetry. Its role in her work is primarily related to Sufi principles of Unity and the goal of transcendence, but the geometric idiom also relates to a number of modernist ideals and desires. Take, for example, Page's short poem "Geometry," first published in *West Coast Review* in 1979, in which she geometricizes the human body:

 All night long, my torso an octagon;

the right hand, cramped with pain, triangular

Why geometrical shapes?

Why *these* geometrical shapes?

Such octagonal ease.

Such nearly circular peace.

The poet-persona finds her body transformed overnight into triangular and octagonal forms. Hickman has discussed the modernist "bent for the geometricization of the body" in the Vorticist poetry of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and H.D. She argues that this corporeal geometricization is really "a desire to transform the body, discipline and refine it away from heavy corporeality into something ethereal, rare, and strange that can foster transcendent awareness. . . ." and make it "susceptible to visionary epiphany" (144). This modernist desire for transcendent awareness is essentially Page's desire and it relates to the aims of Islamic art, which inspired the poem. It is no coincidence that the poet's body is transformed into triangle and octagon; these are shapes that turn up in her *Pieces of Eight Series*, and when the persona asks "why *these* geometrical shapes?" she already knows part of the answer. In Islamic art, the triangle symbolizes harmony and "human consciousness" (Critchlow 16), and the octagon "is a step in the mathematical series going from square, symbolizing the fixity of earthly manifestation, to circle, the natural symbol for the perfection of heaven" (Glassé and Smith 122). Both shapes evoke the Unity principle as they represent harmony. The poet, however, acknowledges that the triangle, in particular, causes pain in her right hand. It is as though the typical Western and Christian associations of the triangle form—symbolizing both logic and the holy trinity, for example—strain the poet's creative release from material concerns. The triangle, moreover, does not carry the same transformative potential as the octagon, a transformative potential that relates this geometric form to the biomorphic idiom. The octagon represents a movement towards "nearly circular peace" for the poet, the spiritual transcendence mentioned in the last line.

Nevertheless, both the octagon and triangle appear frequently in Page's later poetry as symbols of transcendence, as in her glosa "Hologram," published in 1994. The poem introduces the geometric idiom through the motif of architecture. It opens with a description of "Kafka's castle," from his unfinished novel *The Castle* (1926). This castle, however, has a very unusual geometry; the speaker tells us it is engineered out of

> a new geometry of interlocking octangles
>
> and we, watching it, interlocked in a strange dimension—
>
> that neither your heart nor mine could have invented—
>
> of multiple images, complex as angels.
>
> *All that morning we looked at the citadel from every angle.*

The idea of "interlocking octangles" calls to mind Irwin's *Pieces of Eight Series*, in which squares and octagons are interlocked and engender a multitude of triangles demonstrating multiplicity within Unity evoked in the poem's "strange dimension." This dimension contains "multiple images, complex as angels" created by its new geometry, a relationship highlighted by the poet's half-rhyming of "angels" with "angle." Page's poetic form, the glosa, mirrors the idea of multiplicity in unity / unity in multiplicity: in some ways reflecting the mathematical precision of Page-Irwin's geometric aesthetic, the glosa is a very strict poetic form consisting of four ten-line stanzas preceded by a quatrain written by a different poet. The concluding lines of the last four stanzas repeat lines from the borrowed quatrain consecutively, while the sixth and ninth line of each stanza rhymes (in Page's practice, typically half-rhymes) with the tenth borrowed line. The glosa thus contains a duality of voices and a minimum duality of texts, giving rise to a multiplic-

ity of meanings within a single, highly structured poetic form. In "Hologram,"
Page borrows her quatrain from George Seferis's "The King of Asine"; this inter-
textual aspect of her poem is multiplied because she also conjures up Kafka's cas-
tle and sets it in an "Escher landscape" painting. M.C. Escher's bending of ma-
thematical principles to produce a kind of irrational and new geometrical dimen-
sion in his paintings and the Kafkaesque castle's strange geometry open up new
vistas for the poet-persona. The poet's exploration of this new geometry leads to a
"visual epiphany" in the final stanza, when her eyes struggle to adjust to "so full a
spectrum" and eventually perceive the titular "hologram."

The "interlocking octangles" in "Hologram" are another version of what
Messenger calls the "layered geometry" of the kaleidoscope in Page's poetry
("Selecting P.K. Page"). According to Messenger, the kaleidoscope, a recurring
symbol in Page's oeuvre, "plays the role of facilitator—allowing the viewer to re-
see the object in all of its cubist parts—and represents the several dimensions of
experience Page believes exist" ("Selecting P.K. Page"). The kaleidoscope in
Page's poetry is a harmonizing symbol that facilitates these visual epiphanies; it
enables us to see the geometric in the organic and vice versa. The cylinder of mir-
rors is, as the poet proclaims in her poem "Kaleidoscope," "the perfect, all-
inclusive metaphor." In the poem's first section, "A Little Fantasy," Lord Byron
experiences the kaleidoscope's Unity in multiplicity when he perceives his lover's
parts multiplied through the tube: "Four hearts her mouth, then eight, / a single
flower / become a bunch / to kiss and kiss and kiss / and kiss a fourth time. / What
a field of mouths!" But Byron is called away from this layered geometry to write
"more cantos." In section II, "A Little Reality," Page, the modernist poet, literally

writes the kaleidoscope's geometry, its "cylinder" from which she "cannot /

budge" and the "octagonal rose" that "holds [her] as though [she] were its stem."

Page can write in this modernist idiom, unlike Byron (who is not a modernist),

because she sees (the kaleidoscope clearly demonstrates) that it has a transforma-

tive potential that is able to "unit[e] all."

Page's other kaleidoscope poems, "The Flower Bed" (1976), "Another

Space" (1969), and a later poem "Chinese Boxes" [c. 1991], similarly demon-

strate the unifying and transformative potential of the "layered geometry" of the

kaleidoscope. Messenger identifies "Chinese Boxes" and "The Flower Bed" as

among Page's kaleidoscope poems and suggests that, in the former poem, the

Chinese boxes "transform themselves" ("Selecting P.K. Page"). Messenger, how-

ever, is rather vague about this transformation. It is, in fact, only when the boxes

are interlocked or interconnected, when the last "cube / the size of sugar – like a

die – / is cast within its core," that the boxes transform into "a dot, an aleph,

which / with one swift glance / sees heaven and hell united / as a globe." These

boxes, which can be as small as a cube of sugar or "as huge as the Kaaba," have

an interlocking geometry that, as in Page's "Hologram," offers the poet a new

perspective, one that is like Borges' Aleph:[226] capable of uniting the entire world.

In "The Flower Bed," the poet returns us to the geometrically designed

formal garden of her early poetry. This time, however, its geometric aesthetic is

explicitly stated by the speaker: its flower bed is "[c]ircular— / at a guess, twelve

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[226] Robert Alejandro explains that, "[a]ccording to ancient alchemists, the aleph is the point in which the past, the present and the future are condensed to form a picture where all time and space are embraced" (1). In Borge's short story "The Aleph," the main character sees "millions of acts both delightful and awful. . ." and "all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency" (Alejandro 26).

feet across." The speaker notes the precise measurements of the flower bed with her "human eye" and observes its geometry filled with "a forest of sunflowers. / Girasoles turned sunward, yellow-lashed / black eyes staring at the sailing Sun." In the second stanza, the speaker tells the reader that she observes the garden through "a port" or "thick lens" of, presumably, a kaleidoscope: the object she looks at through the "port" becomes "crystalline, / refracting, like a globe, its edges bending, sides distorted." The kaleidoscope allows the persona to recognize her own relationship to the garden, as her "own yellow eye, black lashed, provides / triangulation" with the flower and "their Lord the Sun." As with Irwin's *Pieces of Eight Series*, in which the artist creates a multitude of pictures out of a single design by creating "negatives" or variations of the original, the persona now perceives an affinity in "The Flower Bed" between the sunflowers and her own eye, which is a "negative" version of the flower. With their new geometry, the poet and flowers "enmesh / three worlds." The kaleidoscope's layered geometry leads to a visual epiphany for the poet; it unites the organic with the geometric aesthetic into paradoxical "straight curving lines" that merge at the "Omega point," a point of "supreme consciousness." The kaleidoscope, then, simulta-neously reinforces and dismantles the geometry of the formal garden and decon-structs a modernist aesthetic dichotomy in the process.

A similar process of dismantling the modernist aesthetic binary through the concept of the kaleidoscope occurs in "Another Space." The poet-persona "speculate[s]" her presence in another "dimension," one in which her vision is kaleidoscoped, so that the people she sees "in a circle on the sand . . . / turn like a wheel," and "all their movements make a compass rose / surging and altering." As

she moves closer, her perspective shifts again so that she sees the people as "a Chagall" painting, surreal figures playing instruments, a vision that "strike[s] the centre of her skull" and alters her perception radically: for while her kaleidoscopic vision was at first geometrical, it is now also biomorphic, and she can see "to-fro all the atoms pass / in bright osmosis / hitherto / in stasis locked / where now a new / direction opens like an eye." The kaleidoscopic vision, with its shifting and merging geometry, unites both the geometric and the biomorphic. It is significant that it is through the "Chagall," a painting, that the persona expresses her recognition of a unified aesthetic and a unified selfhood, for it was through her own painting that the poet was able to work through the conflict between the geometric idiom and the biomorphic idiom in her poetry.

Page's discovery of Sufism and Islamic art in the 1960s led to a major aesthetic shift in her artwork and her poetry. Whereas the impersonal aesthetic of her early poetry and artwork was rarely, if ever, predominantly geometric, her later paintings and poems relied on a geometric idiom and its impression of impersonality to communicate possibilities of Unity within multiplicity and transcendence. Her extensive *Pieces of Eight* series is exemplary of the way in which Irwin came to find the impersonality of the geometric idiom an appropriate outlet for her personal expression. By the early 1970s, the geometric idiom began to pervade Page's poetry, in which triangles and octagons, in particular, presented transformative experiences and possibilities, as in her poems "Geometry" and "Another Space." Her kaleidoscope poems extended this idea of a unifying and transformative geometry and its ability to engender transcendent visual epiphanies. Essentially, the poet-artist dismantled the modernist aesthetic dichotomy of

the geometric idiom and the biomorphic idiom by attributing the metamorphic,

transformative potential traditionally reserved for the biomorphic idiom in mod-

ernist art to the geometric idiom. She arrived at this new understanding of the

geometric idiom in her poetry, however, first through the analysis of Islamic visu-

al art and then through the practice of its principles in her own visual art.

VII. Conclusion: P.K. Page's Interartistic Modernism

The intersections between painting and poetry in Page's poetic oeuvre are

both complex and sustained throughout her career. Although she only emerged as

the artist P.K. Irwin and began to draw and paint formally in Brazil, the visual arts

played a significant role in her poetry both before and after this period. In her ear-

ly poetry, painting, drawing, and formal gardening serve as sites and metaphors

through which she examined an aesthetic conflict between the biomorphic and

geometric idioms. When she moved to Mexico following her stay in Brazil, Page

developed a synthesized aesthetic incorporating these two modernist idioms in her

painting, a synthesis which she subsequently incorporated in her poetry. Upon her

return to Canada in the 1960s and her discovery of Sufism, Page looked to Islamic

art for models of a geometric aesthetic that could be both personal and objective.

She experimented with this sacred geometry in her own drawing and explored its

possibilities of Unity and transcendence in her poetry. The early conflict between

a geometric-impersonalist-masculine poetics and an biomorphic-personalist-

feminine one with which the poet had to contend in the 1940s and 1950s was con-

tinually challenged by Page-Irwin through her invocations and explorations of

visual art throughout her career.

Biomorphic modernism plays a significant role in the poet-artist's oeuvres, one that is much broader and more complex than Cynthia Messenger's initiatory discussion of the idiom in Page-Irwin's work suggests. For although biomorphism began as a modernist aesthetic exclusively in the visual arts, Page, among other female Canadian poets (such as Miriam Waddington and Dorothy Livesay), began working in this idiom poetically. Perhaps the fact that this idiom did not fall under the aegis of modernist poetry made it a particularly malleable one for the poet who was grappling with T.S. Eliot's doctrine of impersonality and vacillated between subjectivity and objectivity, personality and impersonality. By borrowing the idiom from the visual arts, where Alfred Barr and Geoffrey Grigson had established its masculinity, Page was able to challenge its typical associations by modernist poets and critics of organicism with femininity and romanticism.

While the geometric idiom was the dominant modernist idiom in the poetry of the 1930s and 1940s, as Hickman has shown, few of Page's early poems strictly adhere to its visual aesthetic. The poet may have been less accepting of this aesthetic in her early work, despite the fact that she clearly accepted its allied impersonalist mode. One wonders why Page could embrace a poetic voice aligned with objective masculinity, but not a visual aesthetic with similar associations. Perhaps because the combination of the geometric aesthetic and impersonalist poetics would have completely subsumed her poetic subjectivity as a female poet. Impersonality itself, however much Page embraced it in her early poetics, does appear to have become a block to Page's creativity in the 1950s, as Trehearne suggests in *The Montreal Forties*. Once Page was able to deconstruct the modernist dichotomy between geometric and biomorphic abstraction in the visual arts,

and subsequently discover the sacred resonances of an impersonalist, geometric aesthetic through Islamic art, she was finally able to embrace with confidence the geometric idiom in her poetry.

Page has long held the status of Canadian modernism's "painterly poet" *par-excellence* (see essays by Godard, Bentley, and Messenger's "Chagall," for example). But the term "painterly" does not adequately capture the intensity, breadth, and diversity of the poet's engagement with the visual arts in her poetic oeuvre; nor does it represent the richness of the poet's imagination. In the realm of the visual arts, the term "painterly," as art historian Heinrich Wölfflin points out in his seminal study *Principles of Art History*, refers to a mode of painting that is distinct from the "linear" (draughtsmanly, plastic) mode of painting (18); and as Clement Greenberg has noted, the term "painterly" carries "[c]onnotations of the spontaneous and even accidental" (179). While "painterly" art and poetry are clearly part of the poet-artist's oeuvre, the poet also engaged extensively with the more linear or plastic modes[227] of art in her poetry and painting. Page's interest in the visual arts, furthermore, was not restricted to painting, as many of her poems examine the designing of formal gardens and invoke metaphors of drawing, sketching, and sculpture, artistic activities this poet-artist also avidly pursued. P.K. Irwin's art is also in dialogue with Page's poetry, recalling and reworking the aesthetic and compositional struggles, issues, and experiences of her poetic work. Page might more appropriately hold the title of Canadian modernism's interartis-

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[227] Wölfflin describes "linear" art as "draughtsmanly" art and positions it in opposition to "painterly" art (30). He selects Albrecht Dürer, the famous draughtsman, as his representative of the "linear" mode. "Plastic" art typically refers to a tactile and three dimensional artform that "involves molding certain forms" (Ferraro and Andreatta 385), such as sculpture or pottery.

tic poet *par excellence*: although it doesn't have the alliterative flair of "painter-

ly," the "interartistic" more precisely encapsulates Page's deft ability to move,

write, and paint between the visual and the poetic arts.

Conclusion

CANADA'S INTERARTISTIC MODERNISM AND NATIONAL CULTURE

The poetry collected and discussed in these chapters reflects and documents Canadian modernist poets' interest in not simply visual art, but the modernist visual art that emerged simultaneously with literary modernism in this country. The editorials, essays, reviews, and poems by Canadian modernist poets between 1930 and 1960 similarly reveal and assert the poets' interest in and engagement with the content and aesthetics of paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Canadian painters, illustrators, and sculptors. At times, these poets borrowed or attempted to recreate in their poems the themes, idioms, colours, and impressions of movement that they saw and admired in the artwork. Other times, they used the visual arts, whether as a metaphor in their poems or by practising painting or drawing themselves (as in the case of P.K. Page), to work through the aesthetic problems or crises of their own poetry. The poets' various engagements with the visual arts arose primarily out of their personal relationships with artists in this country; their social interactions undeniably helped shape the character and content of our nation's visual and literary modernism.

Close attention to the biographical and historical intersections among these artists and poets has enabled comparisons of poems and paintings by a wide variety of authors, painters, and sculptors enmeshed in the social-artistic circles I have discussed. Some of these comparisons are surprising, as they supersede conventional ideas about the antithetical poetic programmes of *Preview* and *First Statement* poets: for example, in Chapter Two, I showed how Dudek's poem "A Shadow" in *East of the City* resembles Scott's and Surrey's paintings as well as *Pre-*

view poets Ruddick's and Page's use of the body-as-landscape trope. Later in this chapter, I revealed an affinity between the biomorphic poetry in *Preview* written by Waddington and Page and a few poems, such as "O Clever Sight" and his later poem "The Pomegranate," that Louis Dudek published in *The Searching Image* (1952). The painterly qualities of Dudek's late 1940s and early 1950s poems suggest that his apprenticeship period was fostered by *Preview* poets as well as those associated with *First Statement.* In Chapter Three, I compared Layton's and Anne Wilkinson's poems to the Expressionist aesthetic that Betty Sutherland captured in her early book designs for Contact Press. Also in Chapter Three, I discussed the sculptural qualities of poems by Louis Dudek and Leonard Cohen—the poetry of the latter, although a student of Dudek's at McGill, has typically been discussed in relation to the poetry of Irving Layton. Both Dudek and Cohen, however, published in *CIV/n* and knew its art director Stanley Rozynski, a talented sculptor whose work both would likely have seen. Most of these poetic comparisons are unique in Canadian literary criticism, and the similarities between the poems are only underscored by a consideration of the interartistic connections between the poets and Canada's visual artists.

The biographical-historical method of interartistic study has also provided an ideal approach to the study of little magazines and small press books: one that does not treat these publications merely as containers of a few poems by already canonized Canadian poets. A consideration of the social contexts of the poems and the materiality of Canadian modernism supports the study of various extra-poetic documents—visual art, editorials, essays, and advertisements—that can shed light on the content and aesthetics of the poetry. I have, as a result, been able

to analyze the poetry and prose of a number of less-known or rarely discussed modernist poets, such as Bruce Ruddick, Neufville Shaw, Kit Shaw, Kay Smith, Gael Turnbull, and Daryl Hine, among others. Many of these poets played an important role in the creation and distribution of the little magazines, and their poems speak to the broader aesthetic trends and themes of their period. Nevertheless, their poetry has rarely been analyzed. In the case of Ruddick and Turnbull, I have demonstrated that their poems consistently reflect the aesthetic and thematic concerns of the more famous poets of the 1940s and 1950s respectively: these findings suggest that a reassessment of each poet's work may be a productive critical endeavour.

The juxtaposition of poems and visual art has also revealed and highlighted a number of previously unknown genres, modes, idioms, and styles that Canadian poets experimented with and adopted between 1930-1960. An example is the sculptural idiom of the 1950s that becomes evident through a comparison of Louis Dudek's, Leonard Cohen's, and Gael Turnbull's poems with Stanley Rozynski's and Michael Lekakis's sculptures. In addition, a collation of Livesay's poems and Emily Carr's paintings discloses the affective dimension of Livesay's landscape poems, which appeal to readers' sense of smell, taste, touch, hearing, and vision. Irving Layton's poems and publications of the 1950s, which often include Expressionist drawings and designs by Betty Sutherland, similarly experiment with affect; in Layton's poems, however, it is primarily readers' sense of vision that is challenged through a simultaneous exaggeration or simplification of form and image in both the poetry and illustration.

In addition to these affective experiments and idioms, this interartistic ap-

proach to modernism revealed a widespread interest in Surrealism in the 1940s. Although previous studies by Brian Trehearne have demonstrated that individual poets, such as P.K. Page and A.J.M. Smith, wrote Surrealist poetry, this study is the first to suggest that the interest in Surrealism was widespread and related to the automatist movement that emerged in the visual arts in Montreal. The automatist qualities of *Preview* and a number of *Northern Review* poems—particularly those by Kit Shaw and Bruce Ruddick—point to the social connections between *Preview* and the CAS artists who formed "Les Automatistes." The "potential images" (Gamboni 19), subversions of formal principles, and representations of unconscious experience that characterize Borduas's paintings are also forceful aspects of their forties poems. These shared qualities underscore the broad artistic associations and affinities between French and English artistic groups in Montreal during the forties, which have too often been segregated by critics into linguistic camps. Certainly language presented barriers to the interaction between French and English artists working in Montreal during the 1940s; it did not, however, become a kind of figurative Berlin Wall, as much of the literary and art-historical criticism implicitly and explicitly suggests. The city's Francophone and Anglophone visual artists worked collaboratively as members of the CAS, and they often exhibited together.

Biomorphism is not a poetic term: it comes from the realm of the visual arts, and only in those rare cases where a visual artist happens to be a poet as well, such as Jean (Hans) Arp, Kurt Schwitters, and P.K. Page, have critics considered biomorphism in relation to poetry. In Canada, Marian Scott adopted the idiom in her abstract painting of the 1940s: the modernist poets who likely saw her paint-

ing at CAS exhibitions and possibly at her home, where meetings for *Preview* and other social events were held, engaged with the images and themes of Scott's biomorphic paintings in their own poems.

Many female modernists first experimented with biomorphism in the 1940s. Typical biomorphic imagery—the egg, the internal body, and the cell—and reproductive themes were perhaps appealing to Page and Waddington as a way of communicating the unique experiences, challenges, and anxieties of their gender. For Scott, biomorphism represented an opportunity to evoke a maternal force in her painting, something she had previously attempted to accomplish by painting other kinds of organic images, such as flowers: biomorphism enabled a more obscure and less delicate subject matter with which to achieve this maternal ambience.[228] Waddington's poem "The Crystal," meanwhile, also suggests a maternal theme, with its womb-like space of the chrysalis that encloses the female speaker. It is evident that Page eventually associated biomorphism with a "female whimsy": when she turned to the practice of visual art, however, eventually she was able to find some sort of resolution to the aesthetic conflict of a male / geometric and female / biomorphic dichotomy that she struggled with throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. Each of these artists and poets drew on the iconography, themes, and organic colours of the biomorphic idiom to consider women's issues in a very abstract and indirect way.

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[228] Based on her journal, it is clear that Scott was searching for a subject matter that could communicate the beauty and wonder of maternal generative powers. Writing about her botanical paintings in 1939, she commented on this very goal: "Yes there is room for my growing pictures[.] [H]ow wrong these men are when they lable [*sic*] them phalic [*sic*], don't they know the maternal instinct is the strongest instinct in woman—these are maternal pictures[,] pictures trying to express the wonder of growth" ("February 24, 1939").

Although biomorphic modernism appealed to female artists and poets, it was not a "female modernism" *per se*, nor was it only present in artistic creations by women. In the visual arts, many male artists, such as Jean (Hans) Arp and Joan Miró, experimented with biomorphism. As I noted, Marcia Brennan even argues that in his *Cubism and Abstract Art* catalogue, Alfred Barr synthesized his dichotomy of geometric and organic abstraction—albeit inconsistently—to suggest an exclusively male concept of the modernist artist in which only men experiment with either type of abstraction. In Canada, the photographer John Vanderpant's close-up images of vegetables and plants are some of the earliest biomorphic works to appear in this country. Many male poets, such as James Wreford, James Reaney, and—as I discussed in Chapter Two—Louis Dudek, also included the organic imagery, themes of genesis and flux, and magnified perspective characteristic of biomorphic modernism. The idiom may have appeared forcefully in the work of female modernist artists and poets in Canada, but it was (contrary to the picture literary critics of that decade painted) a mainstream form of modernism by the time they turned to it in the 1940s.

The various idioms and modes I have discussed also reveal Canadian modernists' interest in, as well as their engagements and continuing struggles with, abstraction between 1930 and 1960. In the thirties, as Rifkind and Irvine have shown, Livesay experimented with social realism as a way of connecting with people and social issues. As the poet began to develop a new poetics of affective landscape in the mid-late 1930s, her poems increasingly exhibited abstract elements helping the poet convey the affective dimensions of place. In her early 1940s poem "Motif for a Mural," it is clear that Livesay considered the expressive

possibilities of abstraction as a more forceful means of connecting with people and social issues than her earlier socialist poetics. Other poets of the forties, many associated with the little magazine *First Statement,* continued to experiment with social realism. *Preview* poets, however, were among the first Canadian poets to engage seriously with the kinds of abstraction they observed in paintings as a means of exploring and promoting human agency. Once *First Statement* poets became exposed to these artistic works, their poems increasingly strayed from realism to explore the potential of abstraction to engage with the issue of human agency. Although contemporary poetry critics favoured geometric abstraction, Page, Waddington, and others experimented with biomorphic abstraction throughout the decade and into the 1950s. The poets of the fifties, meanwhile, commonly focused on creating energetic tensions between abstraction and iconicity, tensions that they observed in the paintings of *P11* artists, such as William Ronald. Canadian poets and artists did not merely accept abstraction from European or American models; instead, they continually questioned its social value, aesthetics, and ability to engage with Canadian readers and viewers.

It might appear that I have been decade-bound in discussing the rise of an interartistic modernism in Canada, but I have actually been interested in pivotal years and periods for modernism in this country. In discussing Livesay's poetry in the 1930s, for example, I focused on the transformation of her poetics following the publication of "Day and Night" in 1936—coinciding with the creation of the Popular Front and the start of the Spanish Civil War—and I compared her poems from before and after this significant year. My analysis of Livesay's poetics of affective landscape, in fact, concentrates primarily on the period of 1936-47,

when she was developing a "poetry for people" through the landscape genre. Although Chapter Two deals with the 1940s as a decade, the discussion pivots around 1945—when *Preview* and *First Statement* merged to form *Northern Review* and when the Second World War ended. The year had a consolidating impact on 1940s poetics, as *First Statement* poets gained greater exposure to Canadian visual art through the little magazine and began to experiment with the abstract painterly poetics of *Preview.* In the 1950s, I focused significantly on the year 1957, when P.K. Page moved to Brazil and became P.K. Irwin, the visual artist, and when the Greenwich Gallery began hosting the Contact Poetry Readings. Both events helped to shape the look and content of Canadian modernist poetry because they brought Canadian poets closer to the realm of the visual arts. These social and historical periods and decisive years, similarly, mark moments of increased interartistic activity in Canada.

Beyond chronology, this study was organized around three paradigms of interartistic activity. The first paradigm of the relationship between a single artist and poet—in which I examined the meeting between Emily Carr and Dorothy Livesay, their subsequent friendship, and Carr's influence on Livesay's poetics—revealed a very close aesthetic and thematic relationship between the paintings and poems. Because this paradigm involves a poet who conducted intense study of the artist's work by attending exhibitions of her paintings and writing reviews of them, it is not surprising that the themes, images, and aesthetics of the paintings are reflected in the poet's own work. Of the paradigms I examined, this approach to interartistic study yields analyses closest to a Bloomian one-way, dyadic study of influence / intertextuality because of the one-to-one relationship it takes as its

starting point, and because I have specifically endeavoured to discover the painterly qualities of Livesay's poetry. I have not, for example, considered the writings of Emily Carr and the potential influence that Livesay had on her prose. Although Carr began writing as early as 1926, it was the heart attack she suffered in 1937 that forced her to turn almost exclusively to writing as a creative outlet, since the incident "reduced her ability to paint" (Thom, "Introduction" 8). Carr's meeting with Livesay occurred in 1938: shortly after the incident and during this period of more intense writing for Carr. It is possible that Livesay and Carr spoke about writing and that Carr read Livesay's poetry and prose. A two-way model of influence and intertextuality between artist and poet is possible in the case of Carr and Livesay but was beyond the scope of the present study.

The second paradigm of interartistic study, developed in Chapters Two and Three—that of the relationship between a group of artists and a group of poets—has revealed a more complex model of influence involving multiple poets and painters interested in diverse modernist idioms and abstract aesthetics. This interest does not, however, appear to represent a *Zeitgeist*, "a Spirit of the Age, that underlies and manifests itself in every activity," or "a state of development of [a] culture's inner soul" that determines all cultural output (Beardsley 205). Certainly, as we have seen, the shared interests of the artists and poets of the forties and fifties were influenced to some extent by their historical situation—the context of war and the threat of nuclear annihilation—and the cultural history of the nation (suggested by their reactions to the predominance of landscape as genre); but these interests were not absorbed by the poets and artists through some sort of cultural osmosis. As I have demonstrated, the artists and poets worked closely to-

gether, discussed cultural and aesthetic issues at social gatherings and public debates, attended exhibitions, and read little magazines and chapbooks. These various group interactions suggest that the appearance of similar themes, modernist idioms, and aesthetics in both the paintings and poems is more concretely the result of mutual influence than the result of a powerful *Zeitgeist*. The fact that this influence was so widespread can be explained by the scope of interactions established through large organizations, such as the CAS, or open, public events, such as the Contact Poetry Readings. Whether through little magazines, small press publications, gallery exhibitions, or poetry readings, Canadian artists and poets of the modernist era were able to convene, interact, and socialize in ways that had a significant impact on the poetry.

The final paradigm of interartistic study was that of the poet who is also an artist. This paradigm naturally revealed the most clear and consistent engagement with the visual arts on the part of a poet. The relationships between poems and paintings that I discovered were also of a different kind from those revealed through the other two paradigms. First, there were more ekphrastic / reverse-ekphrastic relationships between poems and paintings, as in Page's poem "Bark Drawing" or in her own artwork—her drawing *Leaves Large as Hands*, for example, refers to a line from her poem "Stories of Snow." The poem "Ecce Homo," moreover, establishes a meta-ekphrastic relationship between visual and verbal arts by invoking two sculptures of literary characters: *Rima*, the protagonist of W.H. Hudson's *Green Mansions,* and Jesus Christ, the "protagonist" of the New Testament. Evidently, intertextuality plays a significant role in this paradigm. Second, the artist did not only borrow images, themes, or aesthetics from the vis-

ual arts; she also invoked the visual arts in her poems as a subject matter or theme through which to consider and work through aesthetic issues or crises in her own poetry. Whether through a child's drawing, a sculpture, or the formal garden, Page grappled with a perceived dichotomy of abstract aesthetics in her poetry that she continued to address into the 1960s. Together, the three paradigms of interartistic study reveal the diverse and intense connections between verbal and visual arts throughout the modernist period in Canada.

Although most of the modernist tropes and idioms I discussed were international in origin, such as Surrealism, biomorphic and geometric abstraction, Abstract Expressionism, and so on, Canadian modernists frequently employed these modernist elements to address national culture and local political issues. Both Carr and Livesay, for example, drew on Fauvist colouration and abstraction to create an affective and modernist art drawing on the central place of landscape in Canadian culture to address social injustice in *this* country. Emily Carr's painting *Big Raven* (Fig. 8, p. 77), for example, features the totemic raven embedded in the Canadian landscape and asserting the place of the Haida nation in Canada. In Livesay's documentary poem "Call My People Home," the emotional experiences of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War have similarly marked the landscape, a depiction that implies their connectedness to the nation. Both poem and painting troublingly (particularly for today's viewers and readers) appropriate either the artifacts—Carr's totem—or voices and experiences of other peoples, and ultimately, as Pamela McCallum suggests of Livesay's poem "Day and Night," these modernist works "cannot escape signifying to a certain extent exoticism and Otherness" (205). Artist and poet, however, committed this appropria-

tion in order to highlight and condemn the social injustices that have afflicted these Canadian communities in recent history.

The Surrealist automatism of 1940s Quebec, meanwhile, was specifically directed at the dominance of the Church and government in the province. Borduas's manifesto *Refus global,* published in 1948, is a "passionate attack on all the repressive social, political, historical and religious forces that had shaped the Quebecois people into a servile, repressed and fear-ridden society" (Nasgaard, *Abstract* 83). Denis Reid suggests *Refus global* may be "the single most important social document in Quebec history" (233). In it, Borduas calls for a break from the religiosity of Quebec and calls upon artists to reject convention and embrace spontaneous acts of creation as a sign of revolt. It is significant that one of the main conventions that Borduas broke with was the landscape genre. Many of his paintings bear titles suggestive of landscapes, such as *Marine Cemetery,* or his famous *Leeward of the Island* (1947); as I have shown, however, the artist rejected the compositional standards of landscape painting: the foreground, middle ground, and background. He adopted, instead, an all-over compositional space. In Ruddick's nearly contemporary poem "Fear," the poet did not altogether reject landscape, but he did embrace a landscape that is not a place: "Take any city, say / in mind or innocuous on map / See in the geometry / arrows and blades of it / clipping the edges of hope." This landscape "in mind" is without an identity and is not necessarily "Canadian": it is "any city." Other poets, such as Kit Shaw, also broke with narrative conventions of chronology, which has a similar disorienting effect. Ruddick and Shaw, like Borduas, enact a dislocation of landscape-place that, whether directly or indirectly, confronts the prominence of landscape in Ca-

nadian culture as a marker of national identity.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the ways in which the body-as-landscape trope similarly challenges the primacy of landscape in Canadian literary and visual culture: for P.K. Page, the trope, and landscape in general, accommodated a consideration of gender inequity. The formal garden, in poems such as "After Rain," "Piece for a Formal Garden," and "Arras"—in which S. Namjoshi suggests the "tapestry is like a formal garden"—is a designed and contained landscape often tailored to a geometric aesthetic that threatens female creativity and subjectivity. It is a landscape in which female autonomy and fertility are contained, where the "irregular" shape and paleness of the female form is "bark[ed] into shape" ("Piece"). At the same time, it is also a space in which the female poet's creative force consistently intrudes and deconstructs—where the reader finds her "slipping in the mud" and turning the precision of its "geometry awash," or where the poet's eye can disrupt a "classical" aesthetic by inserting a "peacock rattling its rattan tail" into its ordered and motionless space. In Page's poems, as in many of the other poems I have discussed, landscape is a social and political domain and a genre through which aesthetic as well as social concerns must be addressed.

Throughout the rise of modernism in Canada, these modernist poets and artists also developed a new kind of humanism: one that was inspired by a reintroduction of the human being into Canadian culture in order to energize that culture and explore issues of human agency. At the same time, this new humanism also slightly decentred the human being. Although Jeaneane D. Fowler notes that the word "humanism" comes from the Latin "humanus"—the root of which is "humus" and means "ground, earth"—she also argues that the term "must" in-

volve "a concentration on what it is to be human" (9). Leena Vilkka confirms that "humanism means to have an anthropocentric attitude to nature, to be interested in human welfare, the good of people, above the well-being of the non-human world" (106). For Canadian modernist writers as well as visual artists, the national primacy of landscape art and poetry in the early twentieth century had a profound impact on what Paul Sheehan calls the "anthropometric" considerations of literary modernism:[229] it provoked a continual reconsideration and reworking of humanist art between 1930 and 1960. The modernist poets and artists of this period, in effect, developed a new humanism in which the external world and its non-human organisms held greater significance.

In my introduction, I discussed artists' mounting opposition in the early 1930s to the Group of Seven's nationalistic landscape art, which rose to popularity in the 1920s. Artists such as John Lyman, Bertram Brooker, and Charles Comfort, for example, publicly criticized the Group of Seven's sentimental and nationalistic landscape painting. Douglas Baldwin and Patricia Baldwin note that "[i]n the 1930s, artists began to view Canada in a different way. The landscapes of art in the 1920s were gone, and realism was back. Instead of landscapes celebrating Canada's beauty, painters showed how the Depression affected people" (12).[230]

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[229] Paul Sheehan effectively argues, however, that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a critical engagement with the concept of the human being emerged, an engagement that, accelerated by the Holocaust, helped to establish "the conditions of possibility for the post-war antihumanism dominating continental theory and philosophy in its various present-day guises" (x). Sheehan calls this critical engagement with the human, in the writings of philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger, the "anthropometric": "the taking of the measure of the human" (x). The "defining feature of anthropometric thought," according to Sheehan, is that "the human no longer possesses an *a priori* connection to humanism" (x).

[230] Baldwin and Baldwin's emphasis on realism's role in the 1930s is somewhat overstated. Indeed, Charles Hill notes that in addition to "[f]igure studies [and] nudes. . . still-lifes, industrial scenes, social comment, and abstraction slowly displaced the predominance of landscape" (Hill 12).

Along with a renewed interest in portraiture following the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933,[231] many of the decade's artists expressed a deep concern for human welfare through social realism: the work of Miller Brittain, André Biéler, and Jack Shadbolt, for example, documented the daily lives of working class Canadians. Canadian poets, such as F.R. Scott, Dorothy Livesay, Leo Kennedy, and A.M. Klein, similarly explored socialist themes and issues in their 1930s poems. Rifkind argues that the documentary, in fact, was "the form preferred by 1930s socialists in both poetry and prose. . ." (116), and social realist poetry remained popular into the 1940s. If these documentary and social realist poetics were not direct reactions against the Group of Seven landscape paintings, they were certainly positioned in opposition to a perceived aestheticism (articulated by Livesay among others) in Canadian poetry that often romanticized the beauty and emptiness of the Canadian landscape—epitomized in A.J.M. Smith's "The Lonely Land." The leftist and socialist poetics and paintings of the 1930s and 1940s expressed what Eliza Steelwater calls a "Socialist Humanism" that is "influenced by the desire to create an art that would document, celebrate, and transform human existence. . ." (68). This Socialist Humanism of the 1930s involved a general turn away from the landscape as genre, as content, and towards the human being in both Canadian art and poetry.

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[231] While landscape was still a significant genre for this group of painters, the CGP allowed for a more expansive exploration of subject matter than the Group of Seven and began to include a number of portrait artists in its ranks (Reid 174-5, 80), many of whom were members of Montreal's Beaver Hall Group. Portraiture began to rival the dominance of landscape with the growing interest in figure and nude paintings among CGP painters, many of whom opposed the work of the Group of Seven, in the 1930s. See, for instance, Bertram Brooker's portrait of his daughter Phyllis, *Piano! Piano!* (1934); Lilias Torrance Newton's *Portrait of Eric Brown* (1933); and Prudence Heward's *Dark Girl* (1935).

In the mid-1930s and into the 1940s, Canadian modernists' experiments with the new themes, tropes, abstract idioms, and modes I have discussed represent attempts to account for the social significance of landscape and environment in Canadian culture without disregarding the special status of the human being. The poetry of affective landscape that, inspired by the work of Emily Carr, Dorothy Livesay developed in the late 1930s demonstrates a slight decentring of the human being in her social poetics to address this connection between landscape and humanity. Her concern for the human being and human emotion and experience remained essential to her poetics, but the poems do not display an anthropocentric attitude that places human welfare above the well-being of the non-human world. Livesay's poems "Speak Through Me" and "Scourge," for example, highlight and deride the damage that human violence can cause to the environment: the underlying message of these poems is that plant and animal life should not be ignored for the sake of human capital gain or political concerns. In "Speak Through Me," moreover, the poet makes it her task to think and speak not for herself, as human, but for the "mountains" and the landscape. Livesay's poetics of affective landscape represent her attempt to reintroduce the human being into landscape poetry; they also reflect a broader development of a humanistic poetics and visual art in Canada in which the environment plays a more significant role.

The various modernist forms I discussed in Chapter Two reflect a continued effort into the 1940s to rehumanize Canadian visual and literary culture in order to focus on issues of human agency. The various reviews and essays published in the little magazines, such as Neufville Shaw's "Wasteland" in *Preview*,

demonstrate that the poets of this decade continued to respond, as did the socialist and leftist poets of the early 1930s, to the empty landscapes of the Group of Seven and Canadian art and poetry. At the same time, however, the tropes and idioms they adopted to achieve this rehumanization did not simply reposition the human being in the centre of their poetic and artistic creations. Their experiments with anthropomorphic and biomorphic imagery and aesthetics—as in Anderson's, Ruddick's, and Dudek's poems invoking the body-as-landscape or landscape-as-body trope, or the biomorphic rapprochement between the internal human body and the botanical world suggested in Scott's *Atom, Bone, and Embryo* and Page's "Desiring Only"—do not jettison the environment to focus on the human being. Instead, these forties poems and paintings establish the human being in a symbiotic, or a more troubling parasitic, relationship with the environment. That environment, moreover, is not always "natural": many forties paintings and poems portray urban environments and mechanomorphic imagery, as in Bruce Ruddick's "#25." These poems similarly reflect the anthropometric thought shaping modernist content and aesthetics of the forties because they depict human welfare and agency as dependent on the conditions of the external world. The poets and painters of the forties attempted to bring the human being back into Canadian culture, but they did not bring the human back to the centre of that culture.

The anthropometric considerations of forties poets, in particular, represent another "force" that "helps to explain why the overwhelming majority of poetry written in the Canadian forties was impersonal in manner and matter" (Trehearne, *Montreal* 70). According to Sheehan, Eliot's concept of a "dissociation of sensibility," which informs his doctrines of "impersonality," represents a "devaluation

of contemporary humanity" due to "a loss of agential capability, a 'dimming-down' of *subjectum*" (103). Maud Ellmann, however, more accurately describes a paradox in Eliot's call for a "continual extinction of personality," in which he "hesitates between. . . humanist and anti-humanist alternatives" (39). Canada's forties poets expressed a similar hesitation: on the one hand, they exhibited a broad adoption of impersonalist and abstract poetics—contributing to the "dehumanization of art" that Ortéga y Gasset suggested "divides the public into two groups" (5) and appealed only to a gifted minority—and, on the other hand, they made various attempts to restore "agential capability" to humanity through experimentation with anthropomorphic, biomorphic, and Surrealist images and techniques. The "battle over the status of the subject in modern poetry. . ." that, Trehearne argues, the forties poets waged "within themselves and within their art" (73), was part of their broader struggle to find a place for the human in modernist culture in general and in Canadian culture in particular.

Following the Second World War, when the horrors of the Holocaust became known to the public, Canadian poets and artists experienced a new urge to establish a place for the human being in their work; the national issue of landscape in the context of global crisis and grief grew less and less pressing. This growing concern for the human being in Canadian culture, however, was not easily assimilated with modernist impersonality in poetry. Trehearne has shown that those forties poets who could not accommodate greater subjectivity in their poetry, such as Anderson and Page, typically "fell silent for many years" after 1954 (73). P.K. Page's turn to the visual arts and her various experiments with different artistic media (felt pen, gouache, oil paint, oil pastel, and egg tempera), however,

evince her struggle to find a modernist aesthetic more accommodating to personality and a subjective compositional process. By the 1960s, the poet developed an analogous aesthetic in her poetry and her writing began to flow freely once again.

The forties poets who continued to write into the 1950s, however, immediately resolved to develop a "new subjectivist *integritas*" that would lean towards greater personalism and subjectivism (Trehearne, *Montreal* 73): they pulled the human subject from the periphery and moved him / her closer to the centre of their modernist poetics. At the same time, however, their continued experiments with abstraction engendered a new kind of humanist art in which the human was still subject to an external reality beyond his control. The figurative Expressionism of Layton's poems and Sutherland's book designs, for example, are suffused with subjective personality and focus on the human being, but their abstraction and the tensions between apocalypse and regression they portray simultaneously enact a distancing from the human being. Layton's human figures in "Death of A Construction Worker," for example, are cold and distant: the poet either compares those that are alive, the priest and the officer, to an animal ("like a fat penguin") or reduces their human agency and humanity to their profession ("And shine, officer, / your bright badge / on the cooling corpse"). The Abstract Expressionist paintings by Snow and Ronald, along with Dudek's, Jones's, and Webb's poems, emphasized individuality of expression and a subjectivist perspective: the formal abstraction in these works, nevertheless, represents a "drawing away" from figuration or representations of the human being. Canadian art and poetry of the fifties, therefore, continued to display an ambivalence about the place of the human

in culture and in the world. This recentring and decentring of the human being in Canadian modernism was undeniably related to the wider anthropometric discussions that Paul Sheehan has shown to have framed the modernist period. Nevertheless, it is evident that both poets and artists had an eye on the place of the human in national culture, and that the poets' eyes were continually glancing at the place of the human in Canadian visual art.

Canadian modernist culture, evidently, was an interartistic phenomenon. Not only were modernist poets and visual artists admirers and consumers of one another's works, but it appears that many believed themselves to be addressing, speaking to, or engaging with the issues, problems, and possibilities of the other medium within their own. In Canadian poetry, moreover, the modernist poets worked towards greater cross-fertilization between poetry and painting by working with visual artists on their little magazines. With the rise of the small press movement in the 1950s, a clear dialogue between the arts was established in a new kind of material modernism that placed image and text beside one another through illustration and book design. Poets and artists were certainly not "remote from each other on this continent" between 1930 and 1960, as Earle Birney had suggested ("Poets and Painters" 76). Their poems and works of visual art, moreover, were dialogic creations engaged with both the international and national concerns of modernism.

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