

**MODERN VISION AND NATIONAL MEMORY:
JORI SMITH, THE MONTRÉAL AVANT-GARDE,
AND CHARLEVOIX PAINTERS**

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**Modern Vision and National Memory: Jori
Smith, the Montréal Avant-garde and
Charlevoix Painters**

By Marielle Ayles

a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
York University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

My dissertation examines the Montréal painter and writer Jori (Marjorie) Smith (1907-2005). Building on feminist art historical projects, I situate her production of the Thirties and Forties in relation to the wartime and postwar production of the Group of Seven, and to the work of Québec, Canadian, and international modernists who shared similar convictions about the political value of aesthetic expression. Drawing on Marxist and psychoanalytic theory, I explore the importance of emotion to the formalism of Smith and other members of the Montréal based Contemporary Arts Society to argue that political and economic crises fueled their modernist preoccupation with the affective capacities of painting.

I also examine Smith's involvement with the ethnological activity of Marius Barbeau in eastern Québec to consider how nationalism, gender, ethnicity, language and socio-economics informed the production and dissemination of early twentieth century Canadian art. Smith's portraits of Charlevoix children of the 1930s and 1940s and her memoir of 1998, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, suggest how nostalgia, as the feminine other to History, provides a productive site for examining the urban anxieties that produced a geopolitically specific form of Primitivism. This problematic also leads to a postcolonial theorization of the "modernism" of the rural artists who interacted with Barbeau and Smith. Their privileging of colour relations over Euclidean space, their focus on the everyday and on memory, as well as their "naive" disregard for the integrity of genre and media reflect the achievement of modernist goals by these primarily female artists.

Smith's memoir as an "aesthetic theory" is also crucial to my re-framing of the terms of visual modernism; her reminiscences explore the relationship of sexuality, religion, and mortality to aesthetics. I argue that the multidisciplinary projects of women artists like Smith provide opportunities for revising the monolithic Modernism in terms of diverse practices which refuse the restrictive orthodoxies that police the boundaries between and among aesthetics, politics, the body and the everyday. In these ways, the creative expression of Smith provides an important site for reframing the discussion of modernism(s) in Canada as geopolitically situated, polemical responses to divergent streams in international modernism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Today, I know what I am doing ... and thus resent being represented in public galleries as if I had died in the 1950s.¹

– Jori Smith, 1981

Every ten years or so, journalists and art critics rediscover Jori Smith.²

– Barbara Meadowcroft, 1993

In the mind of the public, Smith belongs to the past. She's usually associated with the time, half a century ago, when – along with Marian Scott, Goodridge Roberts, Philip Surrey and other Montreal artists – she was a mainstay of the Contemporary Art Society [sic].³

– Mark Abley, 1996

I was very well known in the '40s. Today I'm ignored. Nobody's ever heard of me. What a reversal!⁴

– Jori Smith, 1996

I: INTRODUCTION

Jori Smith and Canon Formation

A practising artist until close to her death in 2005, Jori Smith's frustration over being relegated to the annals of art history is understandable. Her comments challenge art historians who focus on the production of women artists during the 1930s and 1940s to consider how their projects reinforce a canon that remains intransigently teleological.

When I began this dissertation, my intention was to expand the discussion of Jori Smith by focussing on the relationship of her art production of the interwar years to that of other

members of Montréal's Contemporary Arts Society (CAS), the ethnological projects of Marius Barbeau in rural Québec, and to the artistic production of the inhabitants of Charlevoix. This approach could not be defined as a recuperative project, since Smith appears in surveys of Canadian, Québec, Charlevoix and women artists of the 1930s and 1940s.⁵ I also knew that I would need to consider how shifting the focus away from recovery would lead to an interrogation of the very structure of the canon. By doing so, I suddenly confronted several problems. Why *is* an artist who had not only been repeatedly distinguished with awards and prizes, but had also produced art into the twenty-first century, represented primarily as a figure of the thirties and forties?⁶ What could Smith's "minor" status tell us about the hierarchies of media and genre that inform the writing of art history in Canada? Is her place in the canon the result of the particular obstacles confronting women during the interwar years; or, does gender continue to operate at a structural level to relegate women to the footnotes of the history of art? In other words, why are women artists always *in recovery*? So I began to think about how the re-inscription of women into art history can either reinforce, or threaten the patrilineal tradition that grounds most disciplinary canons. As I did so, I discovered that while Smith's paintings of the 1930s fit easily into this tradition, her interdisciplinary projects, the importance of non-urban artists to her aesthetic development, and her politics did not. Not only did her activities challenge conventional definitions of femininity, but the artists with whom she collaborated also troubled the criteria that secure the position of "important" Canadian artists. At this point, I realized that a conventional single author

study would not open up a bigger space for Smith in art history. So I decided that one core chapter – Chapter Two – would focus on the alleged opposition between the CAS and the Group of Seven; and that Chapter Three would focus primarily on the Group. I believed, naively, that by exposing the institutional agendas which served to grant primacy to some artists over others, I would then be able to insert Smith's work into a framework that recognizes her contribution as a modernist. The polemics that emerge during the interwar years centre on genre and nationalism, and competing definitions of modernism, but obvious lines of pursuit are not as straightforward as I had originally imagined.

Canadian Art History: Competing Narratives

Instead, the questions I posed opened several cans of worms. First of all, if one looks at the CAS, one cannot avoid talking about the polemics that place them in opposition to the Group of Seven; however, the reverse is not the case. One *can* speak of the Group without devoting much attention to the CAS. My question is: Why? Obviously, I had to come at the problem of History within the conception and reception of the Group as a nationalist organization who introduced a kind of formal innovation into Canadian art. Although there are institutional agendas informing the production of this art historical narrative, the question of *why* Northern Ontario and not Canadians, a specific landscape and not the people, represent the nation is a complicated one. Recently these questions have been tackled by a number of art historians and theorists of visual culture. For this

reason, I am building on, but not reproducing, the discourse analysis of such art historians and cultural theorists as Esther Trépanier, Scott Watson, Joyce Zemans, Lynda Jessup, Laura Brandon, Robert Belton, Eve Mackey and Gerta Moray who have examined the role of museums, governments and print media in promoting artists.⁷ Their research helped to frame my questions about what assumptions motivated the hierarchical construction of genre in Canadian Modernism within larger political and economic agendas. For example, the promotion of the Group of Seven can be tied to federal assimilationist policies that depended upon a particular vision of Canada as a *modern* nation. It also helps to concretize different definitions of modernism. Not only were artists and art historians operating within two general competing definitions of modernism – modernism as formal innovation, and modernism as a response to modernity/modernization – but there is also the problem of how Canadian Art from the late nineteenth century to 1945 is narrated differently in Anglophone and Francophone Canada. In the latter case, either members of the CAS – Lyman and Borduas – or late nineteenth century Québec artists (e.g. J. W. Morrice/Impressionism) are credited with “originating” modernism in Canada. That said, Anglophone Canada has another narrative; the Group of Seven occupy this “foundational” position.

Canadian and Québec Modernism(s): National Identity and History

Political theorists have demonstrated that an exclusive focus on the Anglophone/Francophone divide reproduces the dangerous imperialist essentialism(s)

responsible for the colonization of First Nations Peoples and racism in contemporary Canada. Theories subsumed under multiculturalism, postcolonialism and globalization studies more adequately confront imperialism in North America to deal with our “problematic” cultural history because they recognize how diverse immigrant populations participate in this history. I am indebted to theorists working in overlapping disciplinary fields who theorize how colonialism persists in contemporary scholarship. My project, however, is based on the assumption that the “two solitudes” continues to ground not only contemporary political debates, but the writing about visual culture in Canada. The argument for abandoning analysis of Canada’s bi-cultural identity for more “inclusive,” or “sophisticated” political frames comes dangerously close to reproducing the very progressive model of history my project critiques by displacing it onto political theory. Although the persistence of the opposition between Anglophone and Francophone Canada is perhaps most evident in the impasses produced by each attempt to bring Québec into the federal constitution and in the failures of “translation” which lead to these impasses – federalism/nationalism, separatist/sovereignty – it also emerges most tellingly in land disputes with First Nations in Québec. In other words, the history of French and English Imperialism continues to structure contemporary Canada’s geopolitical identity as a contested space.⁸ To borrow from Foucault’s argument that the heterosexual matrix serves to proliferate rather than secure sexual identities, I would argue that multiculturalism, as cultural myth, is the progeny of Canada’s originary cultural myth as a traumatic split; and that this dualism, even when it is unrecognized,

continues to inform the cultural imaginary. The focus on Anglophone and Francophone Canada, or more specifically, on Montréal as an opposition to Toronto during the first half of the twentieth century serves to highlight the impact of the discourse of “two nations” on communities other than those subsumed under the rubrics of Anglophone and Francophone. For example, in Chapter Four, I examine how communities of First Nations in British Columbia and Québec are conscripted into the attempt to define nation as a point of origin for an indigenous culture. Similarly, in Chapter Six, I discuss how Jewish artists became the symbolic embodiment of the decadent Montréal avant-garde who threatened conservative attempts to restrict Québec art to regionalist traditions.

To re-state the point: I am arguing that two national narratives emerge as an unavoidable problematic in any discussion of cultural production during the interwar period. The failure to confront this issue makes it difficult to recognize Smith’s achievement as a modernist. For example, the opposition between Anglophone Canada and Francophone Québec persists in contemporary art historical projects in terms of an alleged opposition between Montréal and Toronto as artistic centres, which in turn orients the critical discussion of visual modernism in Canada. But few art historians theorize Canadian visual modernism as a symptom of the opposition. Again, Jessup and Trépanier are key to what I’m working towards; Jessup articulates a supposed “opposition” between her work, allied to a large extent with Dennis Reid, and art historians like Trépanier and François-Marc Gagnon.⁹ Although Jessup quite rightly takes issue with the latter’s focus on the Group’s unpopulated Ontario landscapes to differentiate between (Anglophone)

Canadian nationalism and (Francophone) Québec regionalism, the disagreement signals a profound difference in what Anglophones generally view as “regionalism” and what Québec calls “nationalism.” This is a crucial point for me. This is not just a debate over terminology. It informs what objects are chosen and privileged as examples of Canadian Modernism. Rather than falling on one side or the other, I explore this relation as a symptom of the crises that lead to formalist experimentation, experimentation that responded to the problems of modernity and modernization. For this reason, the first two core chapters frame Smith’s work in relation to trends in international modernism and to the landscapes of the Group of Seven. More specifically, in Chapter Two, I examine a key trajectory in European modernism – a preoccupation with History – and how this concern with the past leads Lyman and others to embrace the concept of a “living modern art,” an aesthetics connected to both historical and contemporary art forms, and to political and social contingencies.¹⁰ I contend, with Walter Benjamin, that formalism and modernity are absolutely imbricated in each other. Chapter Three focusses on the Group to explore this intertwining to argue that the empty signifier “nationalism” is being attached to a series of landscape paintings that are apparently “denuded” of History; this gesture produces an anxiety that prompts us to “fill” this empty signifier with Myth. More specifically, I am bringing History back into the discussion of the Group’s formalism by showing how their “empty” landscapes are a commemoration of the Great War.

Modernism, Modernity and Living Modernism

An alternative means of thinking through this history is to consider how conflicting definitions of modernism structure ways of seeing. Until now, I have simplified the terms modernity and modernism to distinguish between modernization and Enlightenment philosophies on the one hand, and creative expression concerned primarily with formalist issues, on the other. But as Susan Stanford Friedman argues, it is impossible not to confront the “definitional dissonance”¹¹ that characterizes attempts to fix the meaning of the terms modern/modernism/modernity, and more recently, the postmodern. For her, there can be no fixity to the term modernism, which, depending on its relation to the other terms in the rubric, can signify either support for, or a break (493) with rationalism, the Enlightenment and “bourgeois philosophy”(494-495). In art history, the emphasis on modernism as a “rupture from realism in the heightening attention to form” (501) has led to its association with a confounding array of incommensurable political agendas; leftist repudiations of Western (imperialist, capitalist) bourgeois values and the hegemonic entrenchment of these same values, either fascistic anxieties about societal degeneration or the liberal apoliticality of Utopianism, either racist and misogynist ideologies or critiques of these ideologies, and so on. I do not offer a resolution to the debates about how to define modernism, debates which are frequently symptomatic of the failure to adequately situate creative practices in relation to specific historical and geopolitical conditions. Instead, each chapter considers how competing definitions of the modern oriented art production and criticism. I am also attentive to

Friedman's caution that "taming" these "definitional dissonances" with "the deceptive inclusiveness of pluralism" risks "reinstating a centre/periphery pattern in which a hegemonic norm is covertly privileged over marginal variations" (501). This problem would be especially counter-productive in a project that argues for greater recognition of the urban and rural women artists of Québec who remain on the periphery of Canadian modernism.

Common to all the taxonomies of modernisms and modernities surveyed by Friedman (and her list is exhaustive) is the slippage between defining the terms, in a purely pragmatic sense, and drawing conclusions about the political value of the modern as ally, or enemy to the ideologies that preceded it. This point, which is not explored by Friedman, is perhaps obvious, but significant because it suggests that the scholarly impetus for defining the terms of modernism is driven by a more profound desire to determine the moral value of certain forms of creative expression. The aim to fix the terminology, then, can serve empty moralizing about the political viability of art objects, artists or movements, and assumes that the goals of modern artists and the meanings audiences bring to modernist works are symmetrical and stable over time. If, as Carol Becker argues, "many artists and intellectuals" have difficulty "absorbing the difficult and controversial works of others or allowing multiple points of view"¹² the task of deciding the political merits of art requires a critical focus on the audience. And, if "the success of artwork need not always be measured in terms of favourable reception but rather by how and why and by whom it is attacked or ignored" and "whether it appears as Other when

measured against predominant cultural values” and the “predominant subcultural values of the art world” (50), then the political meanings of art objects are determined by individual and institutional desires in the present. This does not mean that the historical contingencies in which the works were originally produced and disseminated are irrelevant. In my view, historians of modern art are challenged with the dual “curatorial” task of keeping the objects “alive” by considering how the political meanings attached to them are conditioned by both historical and contemporary contingencies. Not coincidentally, this goal would be consistent with the aims of the CAS to produce *living modern art*, an aesthetics grounded in tradition and the everyday. The reward for this effort is that keeping the spirit of modern art alive provides an antidote to the mortifying effects of fractious attempts to stabilize modernism as ideology.

In Chapters Two, Five and Six, I make a point of focussing on the modernist polemics (as avatars of modernist “dissonance”) which emerged in Canada during the interwar period, and their affinities to (and discordance with) streams in international modernism, to find support for Friedman’s contention that opposing definitions of modern/modernity/modernism signal the profound “contradictory logic” at the core of the “historical and expressive formations of the phenomena” to which the terms refer.¹³ Evidently the conflicts among modernists in Canada cannot be reduced to semantics and disciplinary differences as sometimes happens with the historicization of modernist scholarship;¹⁴ debates over nationalism and genre signal crucial differences in how modernists conceived of the relationship of formalism to politics, and more specifically

for Montréal painters, the relationship of abstraction to Leftism. In Chapters Two and Six, I consider the conflicts that divided the CAS and the Group, and later the CAS and some of their Automatistes members as responses to various reactionary forces that thwarted efforts to create environments where modernist creativity might flourish.

Formalism and Politics: Modern Vision and Affect

Regardless of their positions, painters of the 1930s and 1940s are all, in some sense, exploring the unreliability of vision and its relationship to subjectivity. This concern suggests the body's primacy in modernist conceptions of aesthetic experience, and a concern with the political possibilities inherent to that which escapes cognition. In Chapter Six, I contend that the formalist concerns of Montréal artists reflect a sensorially complex conception of vision. Painting was imagined as a space for new ways of "seeing/being," as a way of bringing other senses into our notions of vision. This embodied conception of vision has political implications; and although most of the artists I discuss largely eschewed explicit social commentary, they believed that art could perform an important political function. Art's revolutionary power did not lie in its ability to transmit messages, but in its potential to make the alienated (or politically anaesthetized subject) *feel*. For Smith and other Montréal painters, painting should represent an "affective" encounter with the object.¹⁵ For this reason, even Smith's still life paintings can be read in politicized terms; and her portraiture represents an indirect expression of humanitarian concerns.¹⁶ Of course, as artists struggled to produce objects

that could “affect” the politically disaffected, they made choices about what to paint. Significantly, they painted the city and its inhabitants. In this chapter, I argue that artists capture the rhythms and transitory moods of a city that no longer exist except in their paintings. The works, then, are profoundly historical in the sense that Lyman and others proposed.

Modern Art and the Problem of Interpretation

Analyzing the affective capacities of aesthetic objects presents a methodological challenge, especially in the wake of the discourse analysis that exposed how the meanings attached to Canadian art of the interwar years support institutional agendas. But this research raises vexing questions: Is it possible to politicize aesthetic objects without turning them merely into symptoms of discourse? Conversely, how can we engage with objects aesthetically without de-politicizing this engagement? Can art historians generalise about the significance of art objects that were meant to encourage subjective responses? These questions might seem reactionary because they ostensibly conflate artistic intention, signification, and spectatorial identification. I am not, however, arguing for a return to a conception of authorial intention prior to Bakhtin, Foucault, Barthes, Derrida and Lacan. In their divergent ways, dialogism, discourse analysis, semiotics, as well as poststructuralism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis helped to politicize art history by proclaiming “the death of the author,” the demise of the fully-knowing, centred (creative) subject of humanism.¹⁷ Although each body of theory suggests ways to theorize

aesthetic objects as sites for the projection of collective fantasies, they do not provide a method for interpreting the affective dimension of modernist works because affect is not located in the inanimate object, but in the spectator's fantasmic relation to it, and in the case of painting, in the identification with an image.¹⁸ This problem is especially significant to my bridging Anglophone and Francophone versions of Canadian modernism, if as Amelia Jones believes, Anglophone conceptions of "avant-gardism" as "radical practice" that "negotiates the rational/irrational" nevertheless "close down the irrational side of modernity in order to make modernist sense of it."¹⁹ It is possible, however, to both analyze the ideological assumptions that orient spectatorial identification, and to theorize how the latter defies "reason." Ideally, one relies on "responding spectators" to theorize spectatorial responses.

With this problematic in mind, each chapter incorporates critical responses to specific works, or bodies of works, by situating them in relation to historical events and to the intentions of key institutional representatives. In some cases, as in the surprisingly emotional responses to Jori Smith's portraits in Chapter Five, critics and art historians inadvertently signal the limits of rationalist – (New) Historicist and/or formalist – models. The divergent, but no less affective responses to the Group of Seven's wartime and postwar canvasses in Chapter Three also show how postwar nationalism fails to fully contain the meanings spectators bring to art. Additionally, in Chapter Four, I consider the different attitudes of Marius Barbeau, John Lyman, and Patrick Morgan and Jori Smith toward Charlevoix artists as a reflection of the competing orthodoxies that structured

urbanites' interpretation of the aesthetic production of rural artists. The reactions of art critics, art historians and students not only provide anecdotal evidence for the in/effectiveness of some institutional frames in orienting interpretation, but, more importantly, a point of departure for my own re-framing of the objects.

Although each chapter critiques the discursive frames that overdetermine the interpretation of Canadian visual modernism, my main objective is curatorial: by bringing aesthetic objects into conversation with each other I aim to make spectators – in this instance readers – *see* them differently. This aim not only informs my selection and comparison of works, but structures the thesis as a whole. The arrangement of the chapters is intended to expose Canadian visual modernism as a formalist engagement with the past. Montréal modernists' preoccupation with memory comes into relief when we recognize a similar impulse in Charlevoix painters on the one hand, and the repression of historical memory in the Toronto landscape school on the other.

II: MAKING A SPACE FOR WOMEN ARTISTS

A Feminist Revision of the Terms of Modernism

The writing of Canadian art history dramatizes the complexity of finding “a place” for some histories. In the wake of several decades of feminist art scholarship that successfully re-inscribed women into the histories from which they had been written-out – and the comments that introduce this chapter demonstrate that Smith maintained a presence since being returned to the art historical consciousness during the 1970s – I had

to question how my project would contribute to a re-thinking of the interpretive frames that continued to position her merely as a colourful footnote to the history of visual modernism. In order to talk about the feminist implications of Smith's achievement, I had to develop a framework that could situate her as a modernist, while critiquing the Oedipal and historical structures that inform her place hitherto in the canon.²⁰ This meant I had to consider the sometimes uneasy relationship of feminism to modernism and to critical theory. As Anna Chave has demonstrated, "the death of the author" in art history has not always served feminist goals.²¹ Although the turn away from authorial intention in the wake of 1960s poststructuralism was useful to the feminist critique of art history's patrilineal structure because it de-naturalized "artistic genius," this "corrective" can mystify the processes that determine which artists are privileged. More specifically, nominating autonomous art objects as the stars of art history does not dismantle, but masks the hierarchies that structure the canon. This problem was reinforced by both the rise of minimalism, and other conceptually-oriented movements, and feminism in art history.²² While the former encouraged rationalist, or cognitive modes of interpretation – what Amelia Jones refers to as the "suppression of subjectivity" – feminism's rallying cry, "the personal is political," promoted the subjective in art production and reception.²³ The ostensible friction between postwar modernist aesthetics and feminist art and theory prompted my "bi-focal approach" to Smith, an approach that brings a feminist gaze to her experience as a modernist who rejected the designation "woman-artist." Chapters Two, Four, Five and Six not only deal explicitly with the particular obstacles and opportunities

for rural and urban women artists in Québec during the 1930s and 1940s, but focus on the problematic tendency in contemporary art history and criticism to elide the distinction between Smith's work and her life as a gendered subject.

Jori Smith as *Irrational Modernist*

The tendency in art criticism to conflate Smith's art and personal life minimizes her rigour as a modernist. Perhaps her candour in interviews about her troubled relationship with her mother, the traumatic loss of a favourite sister, her expulsion from school at the age of fifteen for writing a "scandalously" critical essay on education,²⁴ the paralysing impact of her husband's criticism of her work and his ultimate departure from their marriage, her Leftism, her frustration with art institutions and her refusal to offer aesthetic theories lure critics into believing that her politics and art reflected a dilettante's naive idealism. In reading accounts of Smith's life and work, one senses the difficulty some critics and historians have finding an adequate interpretive framework for her aesthetic; in this void, Smith is aestheticized as a tragic artist, a figure to be rescued by "psycho-biographical" readings of her work. Whatever the reasons, the political implications of "living modern art" as Smith understood it, that is, how her identity as artist was bound to her politics is not adequately recognized.²⁵ Her socialism and support of Québec sovereignty, her initial common-law marriage to a Francophone artist, and her subsistence in the impoverished towns of Charlevoix and Montréal during the Depression not only represent a willingness to question the accepted mores of her milieu, but a

renunciation of Anglophone middle-class security for the life of the artist. Smith was not a modern “bourgeois bohemian,” but a figure who forces a re-conceptualization of the artistic identities available to women in modernist studies. Smith might better be understood as a contributor to *irrational modernism*, Amelia Jones’ term for avant-garde practices that refuse the restrictive orthodoxies that police the boundaries between and among aesthetics, politics and the everyday.²⁶ This “counternarrative” (23-24) recognizes the messiness of modernism, an aesthetics defined by its exploration of the contradictory and unconscious processes with which rationalist art historical accounts cannot contend. In this light, Smith’s emphatic opinions about art, language, identity politics, and even her openness about her body, sexuality, insecurities and painful childhood memories are constitutive of an aesthetics impatient with conventional thinking. In chapters Four, Five and Six, I discuss the implications of this refusal to the raced, classed and gendered identities of practicing artists in Montréal and rural Québec.

The *Woman Artist* and the CAS : Gender as a Modernist Problematic

For artists of Smith’s generation, modernism as both a response to modernity (modernization, urbanization, globalization) and as stylistic rupture (formalism), promised women greater access to the public sphere. The modern city of the 1930s and 1940s not only provided new educational and professional opportunities for women, but the modernist emphasis on formal issues, regardless of subject matter, appeared to “liberate” the artwork from the tyrannical gendering of genre. Painters like Smith and

Marian Scott exploited this freedom by eschewing the designation “woman” artist. This strategy is implicitly feminist, but under-theorized by contemporary feminists; it is an absence that has occurred in part because we recognize that the strategies that served women during the 1930s and 1940s might have worked detrimentally in the postwar years to relegate even practicing women artists to the footnotes of history. Although feminist recovery projects have redressed this problem, women artists still do not hold as prominent a place as their male peers in the history of twentieth century art. The persistence of this patrilineal tradition in art history betrays the discipline’s fundamental resistance to the idea that gender, and other identity categories, are a crucial problematic in visual modernism. Even when artists themselves did not articulate the connection among gender, formalism, history, and urban themes, theoretical hindsight permits us to see that these “modernist” issues challenged traditional conceptions of identity and the body. The work of female and male CAS members represents complex subjective responses to these related questions. It is with this complexity in mind that, in future chapters, I focus on Smith’s project in conversation with other members of the CAS. Together these projects establish an important bridge between the theorization of modernism as a response to modernity and the historicization of modernism as formalist experimentation. More specifically, the modernist recovery of affect – the *feminine other* to masculine reason – suggests that gender is an important problematic in modernist aesthetics.²⁷

Feminist Legacies: WWI and the Re-framing of Canadian Modernism

In her recent book on the art collection of the Canadian War Museum, Laura Brandon asserts that the “growing interest in gender as a category of analysis” brought crucial “insights into specific bodies of art.”²⁸ In light of several decades of feminist art historical scholarship, the comment might seem merely to state the obvious. It is surprising, however, to encounter the acknowledgement of feminism in an argument about the value of the war collection – which consists primarily of works by male artists – as memorial.²⁹ Brandon singles out studies that examine the contrast between historical and contemporary treatments of women war artists of the interwar period to suggest how recent studies opened up a larger field of enquiry that contributed significantly to the contemporary discussion of the relationship of aesthetic production to historical memory.³⁰ Feminism, then, has had an impact on Canadian art historical projects, even when the primary focus is on the production of men. A similar insight informs Amelia Jones’ *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*. The book is not simply a recuperation of the work of a female modernist – Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven – but proposes a “counternarrative” for historicizing and theorizing avant-garde practice during a “particular moment” and “particular place of cultural practice.”³¹ The study of a female artist is also an implicit critique of how gender continues to structure art history. Recognition of the contribution of Baroness Elsa leads to a reconsideration of the avant-gardism of Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray as a response to the trauma of WWI and to the dehumanizing impact of

industrialization and capitalism, forces that emerge in Jones' study as some of the many crises of masculinity that remain undertheorized in art history. As she points out, war is a "*gendering* activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants."³² Her argument that the "willful silence" on the relationship of war to international modernism – with a few exceptions³³ – can be attributed to the association of war, and especially WWI, with a patriotic reactionism is important to my discussion in Chapter Three of why non-combatants like J. E. H. MacDonald defended their work on nationalist grounds during the War, prior to the formation of the Group. When I encountered the projects of Jones and Brandon, which came out in 2004 and 2006 respectively, I had already completed the first draft of my thesis, but I was still struggling to fully incorporate my discussion of male artists into a feminist dissertation. My project participates in the emerging discussion of how women artists not only force a revision of the terms of visual modernism, but expose how art historical memory, like individual memory, is an on-going process that reflects (feminist) desires in the present. I include such artists as Mary Riter Hamilton and Mabel May in the chapter on the Group, not only to emphasize how the failure to address the impact of WWI on visual modernism serves to push an aspect of women's contribution aside, just as it limited their access to the field of war, but to suggest projects that might serve as new points of departure for revising the terms of modernism in Canada. This strategy is indebted to feminists of the 1980s and 1990s who turned their attention to masculinity, the "unmarked" identity category that serves to naturalize the Oedipal anxieties

responsible for the gendering of the canon.³⁴

When I do not address the issue of gender explicitly, my analysis aims to revise the terms in which visual modernism has traditionally been understood, terms that minimize Smith's achievement as an artist. Although Smith is not prominent in the first core chapter, the comments that opened this chapter about her place in art historical memory prompted my discussion of Montréal and Toronto as competing artistic centres. What emerges from this comparison is that Smith's relatively minor place in the history of modernism is more a manifestation of her spatial location, her aesthetic and politics than her gender. In the chapter on the Group of Seven, she makes only a very brief appearance. Smith weaves her way through my project, just as her activities intersect with the different ethnological, political and artistic pursuits that define modernism as an interdisciplinary and global project. Each chapter explores some aspect of the relationship among aesthetics, history and a politicized conception of vision, to highlight the connection of Smith's project to important trajectories in international modernism which have themselves been minimized. If Svetlana Boym is correct in arguing that the preoccupation with History is a neglected trajectory in Modernism, then it becomes easier to understand why Smith's contribution is frequently overlooked. Indeed, it is an unfortunate irony that an artist whose aesthetic was informed by a profound concern with collective memory should find herself relegated to the past of art history.

Institutionalized Fantasies: *The Woman Artist, The Primitive and The Modern*

The contrast between the situation of women artists like Smith, Marian Scott and Ghitta Caiserman-Roth (see Chapter Six) and that of rural artisans and painters Simone-Mary Bouchard, and Berthe and Marie-Anne Simard (see Chapter Five) demonstrates how institutional infrastructures orient the aesthetic vision of artists in gender specific ways in specific geopolitical spaces. Bringing Smith's writing and painting into conversation with the production of rural artists heeds the call of feminist and postcolonial art historians by theorizing the modern/primitive opposition and by challenging the hierarchicalization of genre and media that characterizes traditional art history, to the detriment of women, non-urban and non-Western artists. When we examine the hierarchies of modern/primitive and urban/rural we discover, perhaps surprisingly, that artists who fall under the second term of each opposition enjoyed certain advantages. During the Depression, tourism, federal and provincial training and financial initiatives provided an infrastructure for rural artists, who were primarily women, to produce at a time when many urban artists were forced to find alternative employment. In contrast, Smith confronted the fact that being a *woman* artist limited her access to educational and financial opportunities; urban women of the interwar period might have had greater access to the public sphere than the previous generation, but gender persisted as a restriction for the professional woman artist. A synchronic comparison of women in different communities exposes the obstacles that a diachronic focus on a single community cannot, to show that the hierarchies that secured the urban artist's privilege in

the art historical matrix were fundamentally classed and gendered categories.

Modernism as Dialectic

While some urbanites like John Lyman decried the Québec government's support of objects for the tourist trade, others like Smith recognized that rural artists and artisans had not been "corrupted," but responded aesthetically to modernization and to capitalism. Smith's insights about her rural contemporaries move us toward an understanding of the latter as *modern* artists. The idea that rural artists and artisans succeeded as modernists, while their urban contemporaries struggled to define the terms of modernism, is a radical claim. Nevertheless, many of the urban artists who travelled into the Charlevoix region envied the inhabitants for not having been subjected to the academic training they believed was antithetical to modernism. The rural artists who demonstrated an "avant-garde" indifference toward the integrity of genre and media, and who ignored verisimilitude and Euclidean space to explore the affective potential of colour were *modern* in both the formalist and conceptual sense. The oppositions between the "primitive and modern," and the "tutored and untutored" emerge as fantasies that allowed urban painters to challenge suffocating academic orthodoxies while simultaneously borrowing from, and maintaining primacy over rural artists. Furthermore, the contrast between rural artists, who seemed unfettered even as they enjoyed the patronage of governments and tourists, and urbanites who struggled to achieve aesthetic "freedom" – a guiding principle in visual modernism – exposes the notion of "freedom" as an urban

fantasy that structured art institutions and avant-garde practice dialectically. By focussing on this dialectical relationship, I am aligning myself with theorists who believe that modernism is defined by the institutional critiques associated with “the historical avant-gardes and later with progressive postmodernism.”³⁵ On the other hand, it is important to distinguish between the modernism of self-taught rural artists and the radical interventionism of, for example, Expressionism, Dada and Automatism. My intention is not to conflate “modernisms,” but to expose their common epistemic ground to show how movements in Canada responded to international aesthetics and politics. Just as the “primitive/modern” binary obscures the relationship of formalism to politics, the opposition between modern and postmodern serves to paper over the power struggle to instantiate one term, and all the practitioners subsumed under it, as sovereign.³⁶ Significantly, while Smith claimed not to embrace any particular theory of art, her journals and memoir emerge as important sites for struggling with this dialectic to develop her aesthetic. Not only do her reminiscences on Charlevoix offer a perspective on the people who influenced her choice and treatment of artistic subjects, but her meditations on the importance of age, gender, ethnicity, class, language, religion, history and mortality to the aesthetic sensibility of rural Québécois represent the development of an “aesthetic theory” that informed a lifetime of visual production. Aspects of Smith’s aesthetic concerns are easily overlooked in chronological treatments of her work which fail to account for the dialectical tensions that defined the relationship between artists and their urban environment, and to Charlevoix as a space for coming to terms with these

tensions. In Chapter Four and Five, I argue that the painter's block which prompts Smith's return to Charlevoix in memoir demonstrates the on-going importance of the region to visual modernism as a preoccupation with the past.

Regionalism(s) in the City

One important reason that rural artists are overlooked as modernists is that regionalism itself prompts a set of debates in urban modernism. Members of the CAS, who like Paul-Émile Borduas, believed that regionalism was antithetical to modernist aesthetics would seem to form an opposition to Smith and other artists who supported Barbeau in his efforts to archive the traditions of Charlevoix. But, in Chapter Six, I discuss how Smith's outward-focussed, formalist and politicized aesthetic intersected with Borduas and others in significant ways. The ostensible contradiction in Smith's position supports Esther Trépanier's contention that Québec "regionalisms" of the thirties and forties require emphasis on both the plural and scare quotes.³⁷ For Trépanier, the relationship of form to content in Québec art of the period suggests a hybridization of French post-Impressionism's formal characteristics, and American and Mexican politicized content inspired by "popular art."³⁸ In Smith, we discover this hybridized aesthetic, a politically-motivated art which drew inspiration from the self-taught artists of Charlevoix and French modernists of the early twentieth-century. Smith's aesthetic, then, represents a geopolitically specific modernist response to global and local events, where formalism, political consciousness and a preoccupation with history became

interdependent. In this economy, regionalism is a nebulous term, understood by some as a site of modernist contestation and others as anathema to it. Regionalism is not, after all, a rural phenomenon, but a discourse that responds to urban anxieties about urbanization. In spite of the importance of rural themes in Smith's work, the term regionalist is misleading; it obscures how the rural is constitutive of urban themes. For example, her portraits of Charlevoix children reflect concerns similar to those of co-exhibiting Jewish artists who produced what Ghitta Caiserman-Roth termed "city art," an urban aesthetic that emerged from concerns "about the poor and the state of the world."³⁹ Significantly, artists who produced "city art" formed a common "front" against the reactionary conservatism of the art establishment that promoted a xenophobic regionalism. The concern for the disenfranchised and political crises in Europe which united diverse constituencies from divergent social and political backgrounds, both within and outside the CAS, was founded on a common belief in the necessity of political action, and an avant-garde faith in art's revolutionary potential. Modernism in Québec, then, consists of a two pronged assault on conservatism.

Artists and the Question of Influence: Chronology and Canon

The works of rural and urban women artists, then, are cultural sites in a spatial, rather than chronological, re-imagining of Canadian Modernism. Diachronic surveys that search only for evidence of the impact of trained urban painters on "untutored" rural artists, the influence of senior urban artists on junior artists, and of European modernists

on Canadians obscure key trajectories in visual modernism. In studies of modernism as an urban phenomenon, art historians are less likely to consider the influence of the inhabitants of Charlevoix on Smith's aesthetic than they are to debate whether Smith or Pellán originated a "style" of portraiture, and to perceive Pellán as the more influential because of his direct exposure to French modernism. But if visual modernism is theorized as a response to modernity, then Smith's formalist choices represent a lifetime struggle with political, epistemological and ontological problematics that cannot be reduced to "stylistic" influences. Indeed, the fact that Smith and the other members of the CAS neither embraced nor became the originators of any particular "ism" troubles art history's patrilineal tradition, a tradition that relies heavily on temporal frames to secure a lineage of influence. It also helps to explain why the Group as a "nationalist" movement is more prominent than the CAS in art history: the landscapes of the former fit neatly into a disciplinary framework that is more likely to discern a common aesthetic orientation in the stylistic and thematic similarities among paintings produced at a particular time and place, than in the philosophical problematics with which painters struggle over time. This dissertation is structured by my own feminist response to the demand of Smith's work; work that invites us to cathect to the people and spaces that are the subject of her paintings and memoir. In this feminist framework, Smith's project emerges as a genealogical mapping of nationalist desires in Ontario and Québec.

III: CHAPTER OUTLINE

The structure of my argument is guided by the insights of critical and political theorists who at least since Marx and Nietzsche recognize that History is not the objective recounting of a sequential unfolding of events, but a selective, geopolitically situated and politically motivated practice. My project on Smith aims not only to give her production more prominence in the history of Canadian modernism, but to reframe the latter so that lesser known artists and issues come to the forefront. As I thought about how the order I imposed on my material would further this goal, I was guided by the prodigious interdisciplinary scholarship of recent decades that contended with related challenges. It is worth briefly acknowledging a few of the projects that informed my approach to Smith, projects that are more cultural geography than history insofar as they are structured by spatial rather than temporal frameworks. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*, Anne McClintock's transhistorical and transnational examination of British imperialism was unusual in 1995, not only because it drew upon feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic, and social theories to examine such diverse cultural forms as novels, advertising, diaries, poetry and oral history, but also because it ambitiously spanned two continents and the century between Victorian Britain and the contemporary struggle for power in South Africa.⁴⁰ My examination of the on-going impact of British and French imperialism on the cultural memory of urban and rural, Anglophone and Francophone, and First Nations and Jewish communities demonstrates affinities with McClintock's study of the relationship of visual culture to the cultural

memory of Britain and Africa. Her book nevertheless differs from my own project insofar as its chronological structure emphasizes the diachronic rather than synchronic impact of British imperialism globally, an emphasis which can reinforce teleological versions of History that assume that powerful nations not only overdetermine, but also originate the cultural production of other countries. For this reason, my analysis is organised to highlight the spatial location of specific communities and the sites where they converged at particular times. The creative expression of each community, then, emerges as a geopolitically specific response to international modernism, grounded in overlapping traditions. Marita Sturken's study of the production of cultural memory in visual culture intersects more directly with my issue-driven structuring of the material because it underscores how the moment in which it is written, 1997, frames her view of specific historical constellations. *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* examines the controversies surrounding the AIDS Quilt and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and links them to the then recent debates over the representation of the Gulf War in the popular media.⁴¹ American History in her study is a site of contestation globally, rather than a closed narrative. The approaches of McClintock (an English professor by training) and Sturken (who has a background in studio and an interdisciplinary Ph.D in humanities) to visual culture are not art historical in the traditional sense; they can be classified as politicized forms of Cultural Studies, in the Birmingham School tradition that yokes Marxist, feminist, and critical race theory and draws from the disciplines of sociology, history, ethnology and media studies.

Robert Belton, Amelia Jones, Irit Rogoff and James Elkins are four art historians who synthesize Cultural Studies and Art History – the former structures and brings a critical perspective to the latter – by incorporating canonical works and formalist analyses into their politicized studies. As the play on words of his title suggests, *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture*, Belton’s introduction to visual culture is structured by collisions among divergent interpretive models, rather than a linear historiographic narrative.⁴² The book, which spans traditions from across Canada from 5000 B.C.E. to the twenty-first century, includes a survey chapter of art history framed by a chronology of Canadian political history and “Case Studies,” as well as chapters that provide definitions of key terms, critical concepts and exercises. Although *Sights of Resistance* appears on undergraduate syllabi across Canada, the book resists “textbook closure” (2): the interactive electronic version of the chapter “parallel timelines” invites readers to make their own corrections and contributions (4). Like Belton, I am proposing an alternative to canonical treatments of Canadian art history that are “really concise histories of artists’ *biographies*” (1), by structuring my analysis of Smith in chapters that emphasize her relation to a larger field of institutional and creative practices internationally. Similarly, in *Irrational Modernism*, Jones adopts a method that is not likely to be confused with Positivist (art) history. Her argument about the place of the unconscious in New York modernism prompts “admissions of” her “own overidentification” by “interrupting the seemingly *objective* passages of art historical arguments with intermittent bursts of neurasthenic irrationality” (24-25). This approach,

then, not only traces the historical connections between artistic activity in New York and Europe, but also to the contemporary American west coast by way of the author's identification with her objects of study as a twenty-first century "urban (or posturban) Californian" (231).⁴³ Irit Rogoff takes the overlap between art and the identification with specific geopolitical sites in another direction by allowing geography to structure her analysis of art, even as she refuses to identify *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* either as a "book about [...] art works," or as a "study in cultural geography" (1). These strategic disavowals – her project *is* about art and could pass as an avatar of cultural geography – signal a stalwart repudiation of the disciplinary conventions that limit the possibilities implied by bringing the "relationality" (8) of geography into art history. Rogoff's chapters are organized according to "particular geographic sign systems – luggage, mapping, borders and bodies," linking such objects as nineteenth-century photographs of Ellis Island and recent photographs of workers in Israel/Palestine to the art of Charlotte Salomon (the Jewish German artist "exiled" to a concentration camp), and to the contemporary installations of Palestinian Mona Hatoum. In Rogoff's framework, the histories documented by visual culture do not emerge sequentially, but are sites of recurring and conflicting identifications produced in and by the contested spaces generated by imperialism. Finally, James Elkins addresses the challenge of writing art history in *Stories of Art*, an ambitious, yet remarkably concise book that begins with the "maps" (personal schemas and diagrams) of art history he solicited from students and teachers untrained in the discipline.⁴⁴ His subsequent chapters propose alternative

“mappings” of Western art based on recent political and theoretical interventions in the discipline, and examine the writing of art history outside the West. In the “stories of art” presented by Elkins, Western art history emerges as a terrain to be continually re-mapped.

The organization of my chapters represents a similar re-mapping of Canadian art to highlight Smith’s contribution, and *vice versa*. Each of my core chapters explores some aspect of the relationship among aesthetics, history and a politicized conception of vision, to situate Smith’s project as a modernist response to global events. The first two core chapters examine key aesthetic principles in international modernism and reconsider the history of institutional practices that instituted Montréal and Toronto as competing artistic centres. More specifically, Chapter Two focusses on the intersections between European and Canadian modernism, intersections that lead to a theorization of the polemics that define Montréal painters in opposition to the Group. What emerges from the conflict between Toronto and Montréal artists is a fundamental difference in their conceptions of the place of historical memory in modernist aesthetics. The institutional skirmishes that gave urgency to this epistemological divide is crucial to my argument that Smith’s relatively minor place in the history of modernism is more a manifestation of her spatial location, her aesthetic and politics than her gender. The polarization of Toronto and Montréal artists establishes an important conceptual foundation for Chapters Four, Five and Six, where I discuss Smith’s memoir and her painting; the Group’s ahistorical nationalism provides a counterpoint to the primacy of collective memory in Québec modernism. My decision to move from Montréal of the 1930s to Toronto of the 1920s, to

Charlevoix and back to Montréal of the 1930s and 1940s in the core chapters is a strategy for highlighting the spatial and dialectical relations that define Canadian visual modernism as a response to modernity.

Chapter Three further explores history as a problematic in Canadian modernism by focussing on the Group members who participated in the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF or Fund), to argue that the so-called national school represents a modernist response to global trauma. The examination of the art of World War I in this chapter represents a return, in a temporal sense, to an important, but neglected root cause for the conflicts that would divide the Canadian arts community during the 1940s. Although Smith appears only briefly to introduce the issue of nationalism in the landscape school, this chapter establishes an important basis for my argument in Chapter Four that the Great War was in part responsible for the ethnological and artistic activities that brought Smith to the Charlevoix region. One of my goals in situating Canadian art in relation to war works by international modernists is to encourage researchers to consider the importance of World War I to the development of modernism in Anglophone Canada, and to bring greater attention to the work of women and men from across Canada. Chapters Two and Three, then, serve to frame my discussion of Smith's engagement with issues in modernist aesthetics in subsequent chapters by providing a perspective on the imperatives and material constraints that influenced artists of Smith's generation.

Chapters Four and Five return to Québec artists of the 1930s and 1940s to examine Smith's activities in the Charlevoix region. Chapter Four focusses on her

memoir, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, which provides an account of her trips to rural Québec with her husband Jean Palardy and ethnologist Marius Barbeau. Smith's reminiscences convey a sense of everyday life in rural Québec during the Depression, and provide a narrative frame for Barbeau's archive. I argue that her meditations on the attitudes of her rural friends about history, beauty, mortality and creative expression is the "aesthetic theory" that grounds her visual production. In Chapter Five, I expand on these issues by examining the connection between Smith's painting and the artistic production of Charlevoix artists. Notably, the efforts of governments and cultural institutions to safeguard traditional social values by controlling the creative production of rural artisans demonstrates the crucial place women artists occupied as the preservers of Québec's cultural memory. Again, the works of rural and urban women artists are crucial cultural sites in a spatial, rather than chronological, re-imagining of Canadian Modernism, offering a corrective to diachronic surveys that search only for evidence of the impact of trained urban painters on "untutored" rural artists, the influence of senior urban artists on junior artists, and of European modernists on Canadians.

Smith's production reveals the permeability of the boundary between urban and rural, just as her politics repudiate the conservative regionalist values that instituted it. In Chapter Six, I consider Smith's production in relation to other Montréal painters who became involved in political and humanitarian projects, but resisted pressure to produce explicitly political imagery. In this contentious environment, the formalism of Smith and other painters emerges as a profoundly political manoeuvre. The political convictions of

the CAS and their co-exhibitors found indirect expression in diverse genres that reveal a shared modernist commitment to exploring the affective capacities of painting. The importance of this modernist preoccupation with the irrational to Québec visual modernism emerges more clearly as an important vehicle of political expression through the parallax view that I have developed over the previous chapters. The concluding chapter provides a brief, personal summary of Smith's legacy as an art collector, writer, and painter.

1. Quoted in *London Free Press*, "Artist Contends Names, Not Quality Determine What National Gallery Buys," *London Free Press*, May 16, 1981, in "Artists Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
2. Barbara Meadowcroft, *Rediscovering Jori Smith* (Montréal: Galerie Dominion, 1993), unpaginated.
3. The journalist is referring to the Contemporary Arts (plural) Society. Mark Abley, "Painter Jori Smith's Passion for Art Still Glows," *The Gazette*, April 26, 1996, in "Artists Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
4. Ibid.
5. I am building on the feminist recovery work of such art historians as Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1975); Barbara Meadowcroft, *Jori Smith: Selected Works 1932-1993* (Montréal: Galerie Dominion, 1993) and *Painting Friends* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1999); Rosalind M. Pepall, "Jori Smith, A Painter of Instinct and Passion," in *Jori Smith: A Celebration*, curator Karen Antaki (Montréal: Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 1997).
6. See my Appendix A: Chronology and Major Exhibitions for her exhibition history and awards.
7. See Esther Trépanier's essays: "Modernité et conscience sociale: la critique d'art progressiste des années trente," *The Journal of Canadian Art/Annales d'histoire de l'art Canadien*, 8 no.1 (1984): 80-109; "Deux Portraits de la critique d'art des années vingt," *The Journal of Canadian Art/Annales d'histoire de l'art Canadien*, 12 no.2 (1989): 141-173; and "The Expression of Difference: The Milieu of Québec Art and the Group of Seven," in *The True North: Canadian Landscape Painting 1896-1939*, ed. Michael Tooby (London: Lund Humphries and The Barbican Art Gallery, 1991), 98-116. See also Scott Watson, "Race, Wilderness, Territory and the Origins of Modern Canadian Landscape Painting," *Semiotext(e): Marginal Editions* 17, VI no. 2 (1994): 93-104. Joyce Zemans, "Where is Here?: Canadian Cultural Policy in a Global World" (North York, Ont.: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, 1996); Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 130-152; Robert J. Belton, *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture* (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2001); Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* (Vancouver/Toronto: UBC Press, Seattle:

University of Washington Press, 2006).

8. As we saw during the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, the question of Native land rights vexes attempts to bring Québec into the constitution. One major sticking point is that First Nations' territories remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government unless the communities migrate, or vacate the delineated areas, in which case the land becomes the jurisdiction of the province. First Nations are rightly concerned about questions of jurisdiction if Québec receives special status in the constitution, or in the event of Québec sovereignty.

9. See Lynda Lee Jessup, "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and *The Business of Becoming Nation*" (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1992), n.1, 56-57.

10. Lyman as quoted by Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), 205.

11. Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 8.3 (2001): 510.

12. Carol Becker, *Zones of Contestation: Essays on Art, Institutions, Gender, and Anxiety* (Albany: State of University of New York Press, 1996), 51.

13. Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," 510.

14. See Friedman for a survey and analysis of this issue, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," 493-513.

15. According to Teresa Brennan, affects are usually understood as transitory "surges of emotion or passion," whereas feelings and emotions interpret these sensory states. In this conception of affect – found in traditional psychology and philosophy – affects and emotions originate and belong fully to the individual. See *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 5, 116-117. In Chapter Six, I explore Brennan's alternative theory of affect as a form of communication between subjects and their physical and social environments, and the relevance of this theory of affect to Smith's formalism.

16. This last point elaborates the central argument of my masters thesis on portraits by women artists during the interwar. Marielle Ayles, "Interfaces of the Portrait: Liminality and Dialogism in Canadian Portraiture Between the Wars" (M.A. diss., Carleton University, 1996).

17. I am alluding to the famous essay by Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-148.
18. I am relying on a psychoanalytic conception of fantasy which is neither distinct from, nor forms an opposition to "reality," but represents the subject's active imaginative engagement ("fantasmic identification") with it. The subject's fantasmic identification with the world of objects (both the animate and inanimate, and human and non-human "other") involves both conscious (cognitive, intellectual) and unconscious (emotional, affective, intuitive and sensorial) processes. As the term "fantasmic identification" suggests, this engagement directs the subject's interpretation and attitude toward the physical and social environment. For example, do we identify empathetically or paranoically with the other?
19. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004), 16.
20. Feminists have shown us that the Oedipal myth secures and privileges the activities of men by situating them in patrilineal traditions. For a discussion of the role of patrilineal frames in canon formation see Susan Hardy Aiken, "Women and the Question of Canonicity," *College English*, 48 no.3 (March 1986): 288-299. For feminist critiques of the Oedipal myth in traditional historiographic practices which consider alternative (feminist) genealogical approaches to history see the chapter "Contracting Sex: Essence, Genealogy, Desire" in Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, Corporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and the chapter "Genealogical Feminism: A Political Way of Looking" in Lee Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
21. Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin*, 82 no.1 (March 2000): 153.
22. Ibid.
23. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 21-22. For Anna Chave, the coincidence of theory, feminism, and post-war avant-gardism explains why Hannah Wilke, Eva Hesse and Yvonne Rainer (minimalist artists of the 1960s) are largely excluded from the dominant narrative of modernism/postmodernism. Anna Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," 153.
24. Édith-Anne Pageot, "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon" (Ph.D diss., Université de Montréal, 2004), 47.

25. Édith-Anne Pageot, provides a particularly rigorous exception. See “Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise. Étude d’un cas: le portrait d’enfant,” *Globe: revue internationale d’études québécoises* 3, no. 2 (2000): 171-186.
26. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*.
27. Teresa Brennan partly attributes the feminization of affect, “a sure sign of its slipping status,” to eighteenth century “notions of animal magnetism.” See *The Transmission of Affect*, 17.
28. Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial? The Forgotten History of Canada’s War Art* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 45, 49.
29. She refers to the CWMF as an “under-recognized war memorial or *site of memory*.” Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, xiii .
30. She cites an essay by Brian Foss on Molly Lamb Bobak and Kristina Huneault’s M.A. thesis research on the sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle. Both projects compare historic and contemporary readings of the artists to consider how gender orients their critical reception. Brandon, *Art of memorial?*, 45-46.
31. Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 23.
32. Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 40. She is quoting from the introduction of Margaret Randolph Higonnet *et. al.* ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
33. See Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). Jones also cites Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), noting that neither Cork nor Silver examine the relationship of New York Dada to the War. This absence supports her argument that the issue of masculine subjectivity in the modernism of non-combatants requires attention. Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 39. The studies of French and German modernism by Romy Golan and Thomas Harrison, respectively, also consider the relationship of World War to modernism, although unlike Jones, neither author considers how non-combatant male modernists responded to the War. Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, c.1995); Harrison, *1910, The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996).

34. I am borrowing from Peggy Phelan's book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge), 1993. Phelan's critique of masculinity and sexuality covers wide disciplinary ground, including: performance art, drama, photography, film and the visual materials used by anti-abortionists. See also Kaja Silverman's interdisciplinary book, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge), 1992.
35. Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 13. The list of theorists is seemingly endless (see for example, Peter Bürger, Clement Greenberg, Hal Foster, Frederic Jameson, Andreas Huyssen) and crosses numerous ideological divides. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, London, 1994).
36. As the hyphenated term suggests, "post-modernism" is inextricably bound to the discourse it critiques, just as the contemporary discussion in modernist studies is indebted to politicized Marxist, feminist and postcolonial theories subsumed under the term postmodern.
37. Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Québec, QC: Éditions Nota bene), 215.
38. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939*, 234, 237-241, 271.
39. Although she did not belong to the CAS, her comments refer to artists who did. Donald Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View: 1947-1980* (Montréal: Sir George Williams Art Galleries of Concordia University, 1981), 24.
40. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
41. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
42. Robert J. Belton, *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture* (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2001).
43. I should note that I take issue with Amelia Jones's modernist/postmodernist framing of New York Dada as one in a series of "progressive" movements. Indeed, I find

it odd that her inflected feminist argument about the irrationality of Dada – a movement that, not incidentally, both embraced and critiqued misogyny and homophobia – is placed in a positivist historical frame.

44. James Elkins, *Stories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

**Chapter Two: Polemics and Dialectics
in
Canadian Visual Modernism**

I: COMPETING MODERNISMS: THE GROUP OF SEVEN AND THE CAS

Introduction

l'exemple du groupe des "Sept" de Toronto a prouvé qu'en s'y acharnant, nos artistes trouveront dans notre nature des oeuvres qui commanderont l'attention de tout le monde. Ces artistes ont tracé pour les artistes canadiens la voie de l'originalité en métier d'art. Peut-être ont ils été un peu exclusifs? Les artistes du groupe des "Sept" ne font voir qu'un côté de la nature canadienne: la forêt. Représenter nos milieux habituels, introduire l'humanité [...], dans la peinture, voilà ce que nous pouvons espérer d'oeuvres aussi originales.¹

– Jean Palardy, 1930

In a joint interview in 1930, Montréal artists Palardy and Smith recognized that, in turning to nature, the Group of Seven had both opened up and limited the artistic field for Canadian artists of their generation. Over the years, Smith became even more critical of the Group. In an interview of 1974, she declared that during the thirties "we had broken away from the Group of Seven; we didn't like their paintings at all."² Smith's antipathy toward the work of her Toronto predecessors, artists who had themselves endured conservative hostility to visual modernism, signals how the imbrication of nationalism and genre had become its own constricting orthodoxy for younger modernists. The formation of the Contemporary Arts Society (CAS) in Montréal responded to the frustration of a diverse group of artists who found little support for their outward-looking engagement with issues in international modernism, and their desire, as Palardy put it, to

represent everyday “milieux,” and “to introduce humanity.” This chapter frames subsequent chapters on Jori Smith by establishing affinities between European modernism and the CAS, the association to which Smith belonged during the 1930s and 1940s. The significance of Smith’s memoir writing and her painting as “interdisciplinary” expressions of a coherent aesthetic becomes more apparent when considered in relation to other Montréal artists who shared a similar interest in a key trajectory in international modernist aesthetics: a preoccupation with the past. The polarization between the largely Toronto-based Canadian Group of Painters³ – the expanded Group of Seven – and the CAS, not only signals different responses to international modernism, but the competing agendas of cultural institutions that disseminated their work. Focusing on the opposition between the CAS and the CGP not only helps to elucidate Smith’s concerns by contrasting them to the ostensibly nationalistic aims of some of her contemporaries, it points to how a key structuring dynamic in modernism manifested itself in Canada. The polemics that divided the arts community are symptomatic of the dialectical tensions that characterize modern avant-garde practices, practices that are defined by their assaults on established institutions. In this light, the conflicts between and among the Royal Canadian Academy (RCA), the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), the Group and the CAS represent nationally-specific modernist struggles. The CAS was not modern simply because it embraced European modernism, it was modern precisely because it refused to consolidate itself as an orthodoxy, genre, style, or “ism.” Instead, the membership committed to what John Lyman theorized as a “living modern art,” an aesthetics

responsive to the particular socio-political implications of modernist practices in Canada.

Modern Antagonisms: The Anti-Academy in Canadian Modernism

Although competing visions of modernism distinguished the two associations, it is important to note that the schisms that divided the CGP and the CAS were not primarily aesthetic, but driven by larger institutional agendas. Indeed, the two associations had a great deal in common. When the Group of Seven expanded into the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933, it, like the CAS, included artists working in different genres. More importantly, both provided alternatives to conservative art associations. When the CAS formed in January 1939, the only condition for membership was *non-membership* to the RCA.⁴ Years later, Lyman, commented ironically that many artists during the 1930s and 1940s had viewed “membership in an academy as merely a consolation for having died in one’s lifetime.”⁵ At the time of its formation, A. Y. Jackson shared Lyman’s sentiments about the need for a new association. In fact, his fear that after six years, the CGP was itself becoming an ineffectual “group of mild liberals” against both “the conservatives and the radicals” prompted him to effect amalgamation with the CAS. Lyman declined the merger, but his support of joint membership encouraged Prudence Heward, Anne Savage, Mabel Lockerby and Ethel Seath to join.⁶ Similarly, Jori Smith and Marian Scott participated in the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition of 1942 at the Art Gallery of Toronto, and at the Art Association of Montréal. Evidently if some artists belonged to both, neither association can be said to have

produced a distinctive “style,” nor did they embrace a unifying orthodoxy or “ism.” Indeed, both associations included artists influenced by both Post-Impressionism and modernism. Furthermore, the ambivalent and sometimes contradictory positions taken up by Toronto and Montréal artists do not form a coherent opposition, but represent ongoing responses to debates about the relationship of art to politics. Publications and personal correspondence from this period convey the sense that the arts community in general felt that if political and economic upheaval signaled the coming of a “new social order,” then artists must consider their place in it.⁷ For this reason, the apparent opposition between the Group’s determination to develop an “indigenous” iconography and the CAS’ identification with European art movements should be read through their intersecting interests in different streams in European modernism, and their mutual determination to break with conservative art institutions.

National Institutions and the Hierarchicalization of Visual Culture

In spite of the sympathy which existed between the CAS and the CGP, some members were divided on the issue of nationalism. Debates centred on whether to promote a national iconography grounded in the landscape, or to engage with local and international aesthetic and political issues. Like Smith, John Lyman believed that the search for a national idiom in a “sentimental geography” would congeal into an aesthetic torpor that impeded, rather than stimulated, the production of indigenous art forms.⁸ Artists should be free in their choice of subjects because, as Lyman famously asserted,

“the real Canadian scene is in the consciousness of Canadian painters, whatever the object of their thought.”⁹ The search for a national iconography had produced schisms in the Canadian arts community as early as the 1920s when the National Gallery of Canada’s support of the Group of Seven ultimately led to the former’s break with the Royal Canadian Academy.¹⁰ Although the issue of Canadian “content” remained contentious throughout the Depression, when artists and critics debated the issue in print,¹¹ CGP members were not united in promoting the landscape genre. In fact, members of the CGP, like the CAS and Group of Seven before them, rejected the concept of a national style.¹² And as Anna Hudson has shown, the figurative works of such CGP painters as Paraskeva Clark, Pegi Nicol Macleod, Charles Comfort and Carl Schaefer stemmed from a belief in the social value of art.¹³ These issues would be revisited during the 1940s when the National Gallery and the CAS clashed over which contemporary artists would represent Canada in international exhibitions. In 1942, the Metropolitan Museum of Art cancelled its booking for the CAS travelling exhibition, *Aspects of Canadian Painting*, organized by Lyman. The National Gallery never acknowledged involvement, but the accepted view is that, acting on the advice of A. Y. Jackson, the Director H. O. McCurry pressured the Metropolitan to cancel.¹⁴ Jackson and others argued that the show was “unrepresentative” of Canadian art because of the absence of prominent members of the CGP. Although somewhat disingenuous, Jackson’s claim points to the real reasons for the interference. The Gallery had been attempting for several years to organize a similar exhibition that would have favoured members of the CGP.

During this same period, Lyman used the space of *The Montrealer* to argue against the imbrication of aesthetic production and nationalist agendas.¹⁵ In the words of Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin, “if Lyman spoke through Montreal newspapers, the Group responded by entrenching their control of public and private patronage.”¹⁶ The polemics that divided the associations, then, did not reflect the philosophical unity of each membership, so much as their mutual struggle for autonomy and institutional support. Although there was an urgency to this struggle precisely because it stemmed from a common determination to break the stranglehold of the RCA and other conservatives in the Canadian arts community, the significant difference between the CAS and the CGP was the latter’s willingness to become representatives for a national aesthetic in exchange for institutional support.

This history is familiar territory for historians of Canadian art. Only a few studies, however, situate aesthetic debates and institutional divisions in relation to the establishment of national museums and to federal social policies. In a series of articles, Joyce Zemans examines how the National Gallery’s involvement in the distribution of silkscreen prints by Canadian artists not only helped to promote the Group of Seven, but served federal efforts to shape “our notion of Canadian art and Canadian identity.”¹⁷ Similarly, Lynda Jessup’s analysis situates the promotion of the Group of Seven by the National Gallery in relation to the establishment of national museums as instruments for propagating representations of national identity during the same period. The exhibitions of “French Canadian” and West Coast “Native Art” which coincided with the Gallery’s

promotion of the Group supported a hierarchy of visual culture where the folk art of rural Québec occupied “an intermediary space between aboriginal cultures” and the more “fully realized national form of artistic expression embodied in the Group of Seven” at the pinnacle.¹⁸ Jessup’s point is not only to expose the power relations that structure the canon of Canadian art, but to also show how art historical practices function in a larger web of government agendas. For example, the promotion of the cultural objects of First Nations coincides with aggressive federal assimilationism;¹⁹ and in Chapter Four, I examine how government support for the Québec homespun industry responded to the perceived threat that women’s changing role in industrial society posed to the traditional Québec family. So, even if some members resisted defining their aesthetic in nationalist terms, the promotion and dissemination of the Group of Seven and the CGP’s apparently apolitical aestheticism functioned to support a concept of national identity originating in British colonialism that facilitated other political agendas.²⁰ Federal imperatives, then, informed the institutionalized desire to institute the landscapes of the Group and the CGP as icons of national identity, which in turn served to pit them against the Montréal association to which Smith belonged.

II: THE CAS: *LIVING MODERN ART*

Modernism and Tradition: The Aims of the CAS

When Jori Smith became a founding member of the Eastern Group of Painters (EGP) in the spring of 1938,²¹ and of the CAS in January 1939, relations between

Montréal and Toronto artists were congenial. The EGP marked the membership's first attempt to establish a Montréal-based association of non-academic artists. The informal exhibition society originally included Lyman, Alexander Bercovitch, Eric Goldberg, Goodridge Roberts, and Jack Humphrey of Saint John, New Brunswick (the latter was replaced by Philip Surrey 1939).²² They held their first exhibition at W. Scott and Sons in Montréal and continued to exhibit intermittently over the next ten years. All the members of the EGP became founding members of the CAS the following year,²³ an action that reflected ambitions for a larger more heterogeneous organization. In the early 1980s, CAS member Louis Muhlstock commented on the contrast between the situation of Montréal and Toronto artists:

There was no meeting place for artists. That didn't exist until 1941, when the Federation of Canadian Artists was formed. In contrast, Toronto artists met each other at the studio where artists like the Group of Seven worked; they were in and out of each other's studios and knew what each other was doing. In Montreal, we had no studio but just continued as best we could.²⁴

Further, the closing of W. Scott and Sons in 1939 meant there was no longer a commercial gallery in Montreal that disseminated modern art, and more specifically, modern Canadian art.²⁵ The EGP and the CAS helped to fill this void by providing exhibition venues for the membership, and opportunities for creative exchange. In contrast to other associations in both Toronto and Montréal, the primary aim of the CAS was not simply to promote the production of its membership. In the catalogue to the first members' exhibition in December of 1939 at the Frank Stevens Gallery in Montréal, Lyman explained that the primary objective of the CAS was to disseminate both historical

and contemporary art through public lectures and traveling exhibitions that would emphasize continuity between modernism and the traditions that had been considered “modern in its own time.”²⁶ In this approach, Lyman was probably inspired by the famous New York Armory show of 1913, an exhibition intended to show the connection among works by Goya, Delacroix, Corot, the Symbolists, Impressionists, Post-Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists and such modernists as Kirchner, Kandinsky, Duchamp, the American Edward Hopper and the Canadian David Milne. Similarly, CAS exhibitions exposed Montréal audiences to such Post-Impressionists and modernists as Cézanne, Renoir, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Derain, Dufy, Laurencin, Frances Hodgkins and Kandinsky,²⁷ as well as their historical predecessors Delacroix, Georges de la Tour, Claude Lorrain, Vermeer, Fragonard, Watteau, Chardin, and Goya. Public lectures featured a range of speakers from different segments of the arts community including Edward Rowan, the United States federal government’s Assistant Chief of the Section of Fine Arts who spoke on contemporary mural painting (1940), and Fernand Léger who spoke on the origins of modern art (1943).

Modernism as a *Living Tradition*

Palardy’s comments in the introduction to this chapter suggest that younger Montréal artists were frustrated by the predominance of landscape painting in Canada as early as 1930. In fact, by 1926 a growing number of critics like Lyman – Fernand Préfontaine, Jean Chauvin, Henri Gerard, and Maurice Gagnon – voiced their objections

to regionalist “territorial landscapes” in print.²⁸ The formation of the CAS in January of 1939, then, reflected artistic aspirations that had been gestating for years. The association was determined “to stimulate appreciation of what is active and vital, championing no particular school or tendency.”²⁹ The conflicts between the CGP and the CAS consolidated themselves as an opposition between those who promoted a geographically situated conception of national identity, and those who like Lyman, believed that the “Canadian scene” resided in the “consciousness of Canadian painters,” rather than in the obsession with national symbols.³⁰ The CAS and some members of the CGP³¹ contended that the preoccupation with Canadian iconography inadvertently perpetuated the colonialist sensibility it aimed to challenge. Lyman explained that: “At home the academic corpse filled the air with its pestilential odour; in France tradition was alive. For there is no spontaneous generation in art any more than in organic life. Tradition does not come from rocks and trees; it comes from the hearts and minds of men.”³² The CAS buried the “academic corpse” by promoting a “living modern art”³³ that embraced international influences. In doing so, they drew criticism not only from conservative academicians and supporters of the CGP, but from conservatives in Québec who promoted regionalist themes.³⁴ Just as the landscapes of the Group served the pan-nationalist ambitions of Anglophone Canada, conservatives such as Charles Maillard and Clarence Gagnon believed that “indigenous” regional subjects would serve Québec nationalism.³⁵ They were opposed by a younger generation of critics (including Robert Ayre, as well as Maurice Gagnon, Girard, and Chauvin),³⁶ and in numerous monthly

articles published in *The Montrealer* during the 1930s and 1940s, Lyman launched a polemic against the multiple forces opposed to international modernism.³⁷ In the catalogue for the first members exhibition in December of 1939 he spoke for other CAS members: “All art that has lived ... was modern in its own time. The object of the Contemporary Arts Society is to bring you the modern art of our time - the living stage of tradition, for it is not the work that reduces art to formulas and nature to commonplaces that can claim to be traditional.”³⁸ It was not that Lyman rejected a conception of art tied to cultural traditions – indeed, his invocation of French tradition suggests the opposite – instead, his conception of “living” traditions demanded a historically and geo-politically grounded, yet outward-looking engagement with the sphere of creative activity.

French traditions are intricately, if indirectly woven into Lyman’s conception of modern art as a “living tradition.” Édith-Anne Pageot suggests that his thought was influenced by art historians Henri Focillon, who argued for the primacy of form, and Élie Faure, who believed that art was inseparable from the social contingencies of the era in which it is produced.³⁹ Terry Fenton and Karen Wilken point out that Lyman and other members of the CAS were indebted to English critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell whose aesthetic theories were oriented by French Post-Impressionism’s design over “naturalistic representation,” a system of organisation that “grew out of the visible world.”⁴⁰ Although Louise Déry notes the importance of Faure to Lyman’s thought, she too emphasizes the affinities between Lyman’s theories and those of Bell and Fry. For her, Bell’s influence is evident in Lyman’s anti-academicism and his belief in the affective capacities and social

relevance of aesthetic forms, the value of children's art, and the importance of French Post-Impressionism to contemporary art.⁴¹ In subsequent chapters, I consider how similar convictions inform Smith's aesthetic production.

If Smith did not discuss the impact of art theory on her work, the reasons are that studio activity and exchanges with teachers and other practitioners, rather than art critics, generally play the most crucial roles in the development of an artist's aesthetic. Smith and Lyman's collaboration as painters in the whimsical piece *Cigarette Case*, c.1940-45 (fig. 1) provides material evidence that their respective aesthetics were in sympathy. Further, Lyman's involvement in the Montréal arts scene, and particularly in the CAS, played decisive roles in introducing Smith to international modernism. In Lyman, we discover the legacy of the French painter Gustave Moreau who taught his students to engage critically with the contemporary and historical art housed at the Louvre. In Paris, Lyman studied under two of Moreau's former students: Marcel Béronneau in 1907, and under Matisse in 1909. Both students had received strict academic training at the École des Beaux Arts, but Moreau – a Symbolist – encouraged his students to develop their own aesthetic by exploring intuitive processes. Matisse emulated his former art teacher who “did not set us on the right roads but off the roads. He disturbed our complacency. With him each one could acquire the technique that corresponded to his own temperament.”⁴² In Chapter Six, I examine the impact of Matisse's colour theory on Smith and Lyman; for now, it is important to note that Lyman's conception of modernism was informed by two generations of French painters who, in spite of their divergent projects, shared the

conviction that aesthetic production was predicated on a critical and self-reflexive engagement with contemporary and historical art.

Cultural Diversity and the Nationalization of Visual Culture

Although Lyman believed that consciousness of the relationship of contemporary to historical art would generate visual modernism in Canada, he nevertheless remained sceptical about the idea of a national iconography. The latter ambition depends upon homogeneous conceptions of national identity and culture, conceptions that Lyman recognized were troubled by the diversity of heritages subsumed under “Canadian.”⁴³ In his view, the search for national art forms reflected deep anxiety about the *existence* of Canadian identity: “Is the representation of a Canadian scene requisite to make the result Canadian art, confer on its author a specifically Canadian personality, a characteristically native temperament?”⁴⁴ The rhetorical question reveals an insight crucial to Lyman’s conception of contemporary art as a “living tradition” that was bound not only to art historical precedents, but to the socio-economic present: “One of the many consequences of the Depression was that many a disillusioned go-getter was made to think more of the intangible values. Music, the arts, the libraries, the little theatres, the better films, have met a widening public.”⁴⁵ Although sceptical about art’s capacity to “confer” cultural identity, Lyman clearly believed that it served an important social function in specific historical circumstances. Smith shared Lyman’s views; and in the 1970s, she reiterated her belief that art should mediate between the audience and the social environment: “It

isn't shutting ourselves away from the world entirely, it is exploring our own world."⁴⁶

Smith and Lyman's views on landscape painting and nationalism represent only one aspect of a more fully developed aesthetic position that sought to integrate the arts into all aspects of everyday life.

The *Woman Artist and the CAS : Gender as a Modernist Problematic*

Although all Canadian women won the right to vote federally in 1918, Québec women won the right to vote provincially only in 1940.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Church doctrine, federal laws prohibiting the sale or promotion of contraceptive devices,⁴⁸ women's intermittent access to the public sphere of work and the restrictions imposed upon their waged work during the Depression severely constrained their freedom in material ways. In spite of these limitations, as professional artists, Jori Smith and Marian Scott took advantage of the significant inroads made by nineteenth and early twentieth-century feminists by pursuing careers as professional artists. During the 1930s, such Montréal department stores as Morgan's and Eaton's helped to promote women artists through exhibitions of international and Montréal artists. In February 1933, for example, Smith participated with nine other women in the exhibition "Exposition de peintures par des artistes féminins canadiens" held at Eaton's.⁴⁹ Henry Morgan & Company, through the influence of John Lyman, a cousin of Cleveland Morgan (of the store's executive and an active board member of the Art Association of Montreal),⁵⁰ held several important exhibitions that also helped to support women, including the exhibition of Soviet art in

1935, as well as the CAS and Les Indépendants exhibitions of 1941 (Scott participated in the former and Smith participated in the latter). For a short period, the Montréal branch of the T. Eaton Company under Jeanette Meunier, André Biéler's wife, held annual exhibitions of works by Canadian artists; Smith participated in their exhibition of 1945.⁵¹

Although there were limited commercial venues during the interwar years, the appointment of Max Stern as director of the Dominion Gallery of Fine Art in 1942, and his invitation to Maurice Gagnon (an art historian, critic and teacher at the *École du meuble*) to act as curator of a series of exhibitions,⁵² made the gallery not only the "main commercial distribution point" for Canadian modernists,⁵³ but also an important exhibition venue for women artists. Besides Smith's participation in a group exhibition which included Sybil Kennedy in 1944,⁵⁴ and her solo exhibition of 1955, at least seven exhibitions between 1944 and 1955 were devoted to women: Emily Carr in 1944, Mimi Parent in 1948, Mabel May in 1950, Jeanne Rhéaume in 1951, the Bouchard sisters in 1952, and Ghitta Caiserman and Marian Scott in 1954.⁵⁵

Smith was the only female member of the Eastern Group of Painters (EGP) in the spring of 1938.⁵⁶ In January 1939, she joined the other members in forming the CAS, and by May of that year, including Smith, seven of the twenty-six members were women: Louise Gadbois, Prudence Heward, Marguerite Paquette, Anne Savage, Marian Scott and Regina Seiden.⁵⁷ Scott speculated that the Depression might actually have been a contributing factor in the proportionately high number of women artists during the Thirties: "I have an uneasy feeling that ... they could risk it, more than a great many men

who perhaps would have liked to have started out as painters.”⁵⁸ Although both artists expressed frustration over the social constraints imposed on women – Smith hated social and working situations that segregated women and men, and Scott recognized how motherhood and marriage restricted women’s production⁵⁹ – neither artist thought of themselves as producers of “women’s art.” On the other hand, Scott did not dissociate gender entirely from art production, conceding that “most women painters have something that pulls them away from their painting, and many women are bitter. I have really been fortunate. I have managed to keep part of every day for painting.”⁶⁰ Both Scott and Smith chose marriage partners who did not expect them to give up their artistic careers to play the conventional role of housewife. This choice might not seem remarkable given the opportunities for women today until we consider Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard’s argument that even as contemporary women enjoy greater access to the public sphere, they continue to assume most of the child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. Further, families frequently naturalize, rather than confront how femininity functions as general servitude to the class of men.⁶¹ Membership in the CAS also provided Scott with an escape from her role as wife and mother: “I saw myself [...] belonging to something much larger than myself and Frank and Peter”⁶² because “I stand as myself not as [Frank]’s wife and yes I am liked and respected. I have something to give. I hold my head up ... I am the only woman there who has a child as well as an easel.”⁶³ Presumably, even such childless women as Smith, Anne Savage, and Prudence Heward joined the CAS for similar reasons.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Scott modifies her own claims

to an exceptional situation when she acknowledges another member, Louise Gadbois, who also balanced her roles as artist, wife, and mother to a large family.⁶⁵

Smith only rarely refers to the obstacles confronting women artists. The fact that she remained childless might also have stemmed from her observations of how artists like Scott and Gadbois struggled to reconcile conflicting professional and domestic demands. In a letter to Marius Barbeau of 1945 she grudgingly concedes that gender played a part in the reception of Canadian artists: "It's awful to be a woman painter. You have to be 75, nearly in the grave and paralysed like what's her name out west before any *specific* attention is paid you."⁶⁶ Although she retracts this statement in the next paragraph, insisting that she is "only kidding" and that it is "a state of affairs that is traditional for both sexes in this *métier*,"⁶⁷ Smith recognized that women had more limited access to institutional support. In a letter to the Director of the National Gallery, probably written early in 1943, she expressed interest in becoming a war artist, but worried: "I suppose the government would not consider using a woman artist to paint war scenes?"⁶⁸ Harry Orr McCurry replied that "there is no reason at all why a woman artist shouldn't be employed at least for some phases of the work," but qualified that "it would be difficult, I imagine, to arrange to send women artists overseas," and although he hoped to arrange opportunities for women in Canada, he seemed sceptical about government support.⁶⁹ Further, although there is no evidence that Smith had administrative aspirations, she must have noted that women members of the CAS held little official power in the association.⁷⁰ Certainly her early experience of discrimination at the Montréal École des Beaux Arts

must have alerted her to the challenges ahead. Scott, for example described how, when they were both students, Smith was turned down for a scholarship that “everyone expected her to get.” After she was refused again the following year “the authorities” informed her: “You know, you should get it, but we can’t afford to give it to you, because you are a woman, and you will go over and get married, and you’ll stop painting. This is taxpayers’ money, and we would be criticized for it.”⁷¹ There is no doubt, then, that both Scott and Smith were aware of the obstacles confronting women artists; both welcomed the chance to participate in exhibitions devoted exclusively to women.⁷² Yet Smith, like Scott, chose to describe her aesthetic production in politicized and universalist terms that assume gender-neutrality:

Proust gives you the implements to discover yourself. As he said: “Every man is every other man.” If I know myself, I know you too. Because we are all alike. The same impulses, the same desires. The same pain, the same joys. And so the thing is, in life; is to discover yourself. Because that’s what art is really, isn’t it?⁷³

Feminist and postcolonial theory of the last few decades has shown how the universalist discourse that grounds a great deal of modernist criticism masks the cultural imperialism that orders aesthetic production hierarchically to the detriment of women and non-urban and non-Western “others.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, if we situate Smith’s comments in relation to her specific historical circumstances as a gendered subject, we might understand her universalist rhetoric as strategic: by ignoring the linguistic and socio-economic differences among CAS members, it is an implicitly, if unarticulated, “feminist” demand to escape the snares that might serve to marginalize her production. Indeed, this strategy

would bring her in line with other women artists during the early decades of the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Art, in her own words, becomes a form of self-discovery that binds her to, rather than differentiates her from others. The CAS provided Smith with a forum for meeting other women dealing with similar struggles, and for interacting with artists of both sexes who saw her first as an artist.

Living Tradition and the Aims of the CAS

Since the CAS was unified neither stylistically nor politically, each member, or groups within the association, approached the question of art's social function differently. The elasticity of the term "living modern art" – does one live modern art, or is modern art a living thing? – insists on an aesthetics based in social contingency, rather than fixed formal principles. "Living modern art," understood as the effort to better integrate aesthetic production and "life," suggests affinities with Lefebvre's attempt to reconcile the division between representational space (lived space), and represented space (painting, etc.). The two spaces form a dialectic; neither the art object, nor the social field functions as the *a priori* of the other.⁷⁶ This relationship is crucial to theorizing how aesthetics and politics become articulated in Smith and other Montréal artists who shared an aversion to overtly propagandistic themes. Instead, their political convictions found indirect expression in landscape, portrait, still-life, nude and abstract compositions that reveal a shared sensitivity to the "the intangible values" that might reach the "disillusioned go-getters" described by Lyman. The inclusion of rural painter Mary-

Simone Bouchard, as well as the splintering-off of such groups as the Automatistes and the Prisme d'yeux from the CAS⁷⁷ reveal the diversity of aesthetics that were deemed “living modern art.”

One formal concretization of the membership's shared commitment to social issues was its efforts at inclusivity. Professional artists, teachers, art historians and critics, as well as the general public, were invited to join.⁷⁸ There was one notable exception: Lyman's concept of a “living art” did not include the objects that Charlevoix artists produced for the tourist trade, objects he believed had been corrupted by external and commercial influences. His capacious views on cultural heterogeneity and contemporary aesthetics, then, reflected his ambitions for *urban* artists⁷⁹ who were being pressured by conservatives to produce regionally-themed work. The Society's desire for an inclusive membership responded to nationalists like Maillard whose antipathy toward French modernism was couched in rhetoric that barely veiled the same xenophobic and anti-Semitic anxieties that informed the racist and fascistic provincial policies of Maurice Duplessis and Adrien Arcand.⁸⁰ The concept of modernism as a “living tradition,” which founded the CAS, politicized the position of the primarily urban membership who made efforts to attract artists and non-artists from diverse socio-economic groups. They actively recruited in both the Anglophone and Francophone artistic communities,⁸¹ and drew members of different national origins. Those who belonged to, and/or exhibited with the association included different age, socio-economic, linguistic and religious groups, or as in the case of Smith, self-identifying atheists. It also represented liberal, socialist and

communist ideologies, or, again, like Smith, a combination of beliefs.

These differences contributed to the factionalism that led to the ultimate demise of the CAS. Younger Francophone artists, for example, resented the hierarchical split between “junior” and “senior” artists, which effectively placed the majority Anglophone members in the more privileged category; and they had little respect for the conservatism they perceived in senior members.⁸² The Francophone membership was itself divided on the issue of how the modernism of the CAS should be radicalized. Younger artists ultimately either followed Pellan in seeking “a painting liberated from [...] restrictive ideologies” and from “literary, political, philosophical or any other interference” that would “compromise its purity,”⁸³ or rallied around Borduas in the *refus global* of such apolitical aestheticism.⁸⁴ But during its existence, the association was remarkable for attempting to bridge Montréal’s diverse artistic community, and for insisting on the social and political function of art.

Visual Modernism as *Living Tradition*: History and Formalism

One of the primary objectives of the CAS was to encourage artists and the public to recognize continuity between contemporary art movements and art historical antecedents. Lyman claimed that “to understand the forces that are [at] work in painting today, it is necessary to be acquainted with the trends of modern French art,”⁸⁵ and that “as he [Matisse] once said, it would be a mistake to suppose that there is a break in continuity between the old and the modern painters.”⁸⁶ For Lyman, “modern” painting did

not represent a break with the history of art that preceded it; further, the liberation of painting from illusionism and naturalistic colour did not, in and of itself, differentiate it from art of the past, but signalled a more fundamental shift: “a good many people believe bright colour and heavy emphasis confer modernism. Modernism resides in neither contemporary manner nor contemporary theme, but rather in contemporary thought.”⁸⁷

Lyman defines modernism neither in terms of formal, nor thematic rupture, but as a more fundamental epistemic shift in the contemporary subject’s relationship to aesthetic objects. In this way, his theorization of art’s function does not suggest the form/content opposition that would serve as the basis for the critical reception of modern painting for decades to come.

History and Modernism: Continuity and Rupture

The modernist significance of Lyman’s concern with art historical continuity is easily obscured by postwar formalism. Clement Greenberg’s influential interpretation of American Abstract Expressionism in terms of “pure” visuality detached from signification had a tremendous impact on the theorization of modernism, an impact that eclipsed a key trajectory in twentieth century aesthetics: the preoccupation with history.

Rosalind Krauss throws the importance of history to modernism into relief in her challenge to the Greenbergian conception of modernism as a strictly formalist break with the past;⁸⁸ the discourse of aesthetic rupture is the symptomatic aftershock of perceived historical ruptures. Svetlana Boym concretizes the modernist preoccupation with history

as a neglected “tradition of nineteenth and twentieth-century art and thought” that “needs to be rescued in a Benjaminian manner.”⁸⁹ She believes that the theorist’s famously evocative reflection on Klee’s *The Angel of History* – a threshold figure, who faces the wreckage of the past as he is caught and propelled toward the future by the “storm of progress” to which his back is turned – to be consistent with the aspirations of those “eccentric” modernists who rejected *isms* for a “hybrid tradition of impure modernity” (29-30). In the “Benjaminian” conception of modernity “the search for a new language could explore the dialectics of the past, not only the “esperantos of the future,” to escape a progressive model of history. Politics and art function as a dialectic: the re-thinking of the epistemological foundations of Western political systems challenges the assumptions of traditional aesthetics, and creative expression, in turn, becomes an important forum for attempting to develop the new vocabularies necessary for the articulation of emergent political and aesthetic aspirations. Purely formalist analyses support a version of visual modernism that divorces art production from the very socio-political and economic contingencies that concerned the CAS. Furthermore, Smith’s politics and “interdisciplinary” aesthetic suggests the hybridized “impure modernity” that defines the projects of “eccentric” modernists.

When the focus is on purely formalist concerns, painterly experimentation can be historicized progressively in terms of a set of temporally framed movements, defined and punctuated by decisive ruptures, leading to the liberation of painting from conventional language systems. This model is not only responsible for relegating Smith to the history

of art – even as the living artist continued to produce “living modern art” – but the repetitive return to her work of the 1930s and 1940s. That is, formalist analyses secure her position as a place holder in more general attempts to recognize Québec visual modernism of the period. The place of Smith and her contemporaries remains precarious, in spite of these recuperative projects, because in general surveys of Canadian art, Montréal artists of the interwar period continue to serve as the absent presence that follows and precedes avant-garde interventions. In this teleological version of art history, the Group’s clashes on multiple fronts are mythologized as the first iconoclastic ruptures that signal the arrival of modernism in Canada, followed by the temporal gap that precedes the next wave of modernism, represented by abstraction of the postwar period. In this economy, CAS members as French derivatives, to quote A.Y. Jackson, become key representatives for the lacunae in visual modernism.⁹⁰ Of course the notion of an “aesthetic gap” bracketed by the Group of Seven in the 1920s, and abstraction of the post-war years could only be constituted retroactively. At the time, *living modern art* was not yet a “tradition.” Further, the antagonisms which developed among proponents of the different “modernisms” of the interwar years are symptomatic of the dialectical tensions that define avant-garde iconoclasm as attacks on institutionalized orthodoxies. This dialectical economy is a key structuring dynamic in international modernism.

The Question of European Influences

If debates in Canadian art can be said to respond to historical and aesthetic

ruptures taking place elsewhere and in other forms – and even the preoccupation with national identity is not exclusive to Canada⁹¹ – then attempts to address the relationship of aesthetics to politics in Canada presents several challenges. A common strategy for establishing transnational and trans-historical bridges to international Modernism is to concretize the impact of European instructors and peers on Canadian artists. But this approach can neglect synchronic cross-cultural affinities.⁹² Conversely, comparisons among artists of different countries can overlook the culturally specific ways in which artists respond aesthetically to distinct and converging histories. The focus on influences also produces other blind spots, as when art historians argue for either Smith or Pellan as the originator of an approach to child portraits. As I will show in Chapter Five, this anxiety of influence also obscures the artistic achievements of rural women. It is worth noting here, however, that the impulse to establish a patrilineage of artists is particularly strong in formalist analyses. Further, Lyman’s theorization of modernism as a living *tradition* bound to the past, and destined to occupy a place in the history of art can easily be mistaken for traditional historicism. A way out of these difficulties is to focus on the “living” in Lyman’s formulation of “living modern art.” This focus emphasizes synchronic as well as diachronic affinities, a focus that highlights the need for more studies that compare responses of different nations to related historical events.

Oedipal Beginnings: Canadian Visual Modernism and Global Trauma

Two ambitious interdisciplinary studies serve as useful case studies for re-

thinking the relationship of visual modernism in Canada to international movements not only because they theorize the relation between modernism and global events, but because they both fail to escape the Oedipal lure in history. For Romy Golan, the avant-garde was born out of the French “crisis of confidence” of 1918, precipitated by WWI, and exacerbated by the Depression.⁹³ Thomas Harrison locates the beginning of modernism earlier and elsewhere. For him, Middle Europe of 1910 is the original site for the historical and psychic turbulence that produced the aesthetics of “dissonance” that displaced “traditional harmonies” in the arts and humanities.⁹⁴ He ignores the “more celebrated developments of the avant-garde” of other countries, to find in German Expressionism’s violent extremes, not only the symptoms of the “ideological desperation” that preceded the War, but a “prophetic, unheeded critique” of it. Golan and Harrison’s disagreement about the year, and the primacy of France or Germany as the birthplace of international modernism is the symptomatic legacy of the modernist struggle to articulate the relationship of history to aesthetics.⁹⁵ Both studies fix history as the point of origin for modernist aesthetics rather than theorize the dialectical relations that structure modernism to modernity both synchronically and diachronically. The reason for the disagreement between Golan and Harrison is that, although they recognize that each nation responds in aesthetically diverse ways to its own specific social and political circumstances, they argue, paradoxically, that one nation’s history originates the “modernisms” of other nations. The politicized aesthetics of Smith and other Montréal artists cannot be adequately theorized without first recognizing that *histories* are

constitutive of *modernisms*, just as *modernisms* are constitutive of *histories*.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Golan and Harrison's focus on WWI as the single most important event in metastasizing modernism contributes positively to the theorization of visual modernism in Canada.⁹⁶ The first global war marks an important event for the art of most industrialized nations. It is often figured as an interruption to avant-garde experimentation because many artists left either to fight or to create war records and returned to figurative genres after the war. If the emergence of modernism in Canada during the interwar years seems to "lag behind"⁹⁷ that of the European avant-garde it should be remembered that many of the latter turned away from their earlier experiments. The figurative work of the Group and the CAS might seem conservative in the wake of Fauvist, Cubist, Futurist, and Expressionist interventions of previous decades, but it does bring Canadians in line with some members of the European avant-garde who pulled back from abstraction, fearing that it was bound to the political ideals that had produced the conditions for War.⁹⁸ Significantly, both the Canadian artists who promoted a nationalist aesthetic and the Montréal artists who turned to social realist themes⁹⁹ suggested that the development of modern art in Canada was tied to global conflicts. Indeed, the debates over style and content brought Canadians in line with Europeans who believed in the political urgency of aesthetic questions. As I will show, a progressive view of visual modernism dismisses the production of such figurative artists as Smith as only the first tentative steps toward the formalist maturity of abstract painters.

It is generally assumed that artists in Canada were influenced by artists in other

countries, without themselves being influential.¹⁰⁰ But if modernism consists of complex responses to global events, then stylistic similarities among artists do not necessarily reflect the same philosophical and political convictions. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in terms of a direct influence, even the CAS members who did not study or travel outside Canada were exposed to European modernism through exhibitions, books and friends. If German Expressionism is generally thought to have exerted little influence outside central Europe until after WWII,¹⁰¹ it is because political events isolated Germany from allied nations for most of the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Marian Scott's assertion that Expressionism reached Montréal artists through Fritz Brandtner shows that the movement did exceed European borders.¹⁰² Even if the philosophical principles that guided painters in Germany and France did not coalesce into a particular aesthetic or "ism" for Canadians of the interwar period, Montréal painters did share European modernists' determination to explore the relationship of form to signification. This problematic becomes obscured in the debates that surrounded the Group of Seven's development of a "national idiom," and in the critical dismissal of the CAS as imitators of French artists, in part because Canadian artists, unlike their European counterparts, did not inhabit the spaces of war. They may have felt the political urgency of working out the relationship of aesthetics to history, but "history" in Canadian visual modernism became institutionalized as an opposition between the search for a national myth and a determination to produce a *living tradition*.

III: TOWARD A GENEALOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF VISUAL MODERNISM

Re-envisioning History: Visual Media and Simultaneity

The fact that *The Angel of History* is arguably one of Benjamin's most cited passages suggests that visual media provide an important theoretical site for imagining "an alternative history."¹⁰³ Benjamin's reading of Klee focuses on the simultaneity of temporal "moments," which only *appear* distinct when the desires and exigencies of the present structure them as mutually constituting frames of reference. The contrast between the Group's prominence and the relatively minor place of Smith and other CAS members in art history – this place is even more marginal when we consider the Group's fame outside the discipline of art history – is attributable to the same temporal logic that has difficulty situating the European "eccentric" thinkers, composers, and artists whose projects fail to fit the received history of a formalist Modernism.¹⁰⁴ In the case of the Europeans, their seemingly idiosyncratic and "zigzagging" lines of pursuit trouble the historicization of avant-garde practice by introducing an "alternative understanding of temporality, not as a teleology of progress or transcendence but as superimposition and coexistence of heterogeneous times."¹⁰⁵

If we persist further with Boym's "Benjaminian" reading of early twentieth century aesthetic production we discover that the preoccupation with history is not only a central problematic in modernist aesthetics, but also returns symptomatically in the historicization of modernism itself. The violence of Benjamin/Klee's vision, then, should

be viewed as a call for re-imagining teleological histories. This call is significant to the interpretation of the modernism of the CAS; art as *living tradition* is a formalist intervention that forges synchronic and diachronic bridges between and among art of the period, the “disillusioned go-getters” of the Depression and contemporary audiences. Without over-determining the affinities between Lyman and European theorists, his insistence on defining modernism as a shift in “contemporary thought,” rather than in terms of thematic and stylistic rupture, or as a moment in a longer narrative of historical progress, suggests a refusal to confine the field of aesthetics to (art)historical frameworks. In short, art as *living tradition* is political when it succeeds in establishing fantasmic and affective connections between the living and what is now a modernist “tradition.” For example, the importance of Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious to Smith’s portraiture, in which the living are connected to the dead through memory, responds to the Benjaminian call.¹⁰⁶

The Failure of Language and Modernism: The Manifesto as Aesthetic Theory

In his reexamination of Peter Bürger, Martin Puchner argues that the European avant-garde’s language of rupture – a mode of address best exemplified by the screeching tone and theatricality of the Manifesto¹⁰⁷ – seeks to escape the myths of origins that ground traditional conceptions of history. In fact, Puchner discovers in the manifesto the fundamentals of avant-garde theory and practice: “all artworks of the avant-garde aspire to the condition of the manifesto” (127). Puchner examines the manifesto’s

incoherent vocalizations to argue that avant-garde practices explore the political possibilities inherent to the sphere of non-meaning; in other words, it mimics the “hysteric’s” challenge to the master’s discourse.¹⁰⁸ For feminists, the “hysterical” women treated by Charcot, Freud and Breuer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represent the repudiation of patriarchal strictures, or, alternatively, symbolize female oppression, more generally.¹⁰⁹ In these feminist frames, the syndrome of psychosomatic symptoms can be understood as the physical and linguistic resistance of the subjugated to classed and gendered norms. More recently, what Juliet Mitchell called the “daughter’s disease”¹¹⁰ has been revised to consider the homophobic feminization of men who fail to perform a virile masculinity. This revision, which is grounded in psychoanalytic case history beginning in the seventeenth century, demonstrates how the category of the “feminine” is an identity engendered by social relations that can be applied to all subjects who threaten the heterosexual matrix.¹¹¹ Although the recovery of a pathologized identity that has been used historically to justify the institutional abuse of women and men is evidently problematic – and it has encountered considerable feminist resistance¹¹² – the fact that such famous “hysterics” as Bertha Pappenheim (“Anna O”) and Mary Baker Eddy overcame their adolescent hysteria to become social activists, suggests that the refusal to communicate in the “language of the master” can mark an important step in the development of political consciousness.¹¹³ It is in this sense that the manifesto promises an exchange where non-meaning opens up a space of possibility. For Puchner, diverse art objects represent visceral verbal and visual “screams” that defy

conventional modes of interpretation; their very inarticulateness voices the demand for new forms of signification, and the “writing of an alternative history” (115). All early twentieth century formal experimentation, then, can be situated in relation to a broadly based interdisciplinary re-conceptualization of History. Recognizing how philosophical speculation and avant-garde practices are mutually constituting is crucial to my argument that Smith’s memoir is the articulation of a coherent aesthetic theory that grounds her visual production.

Some members of the CAS – Marcel Barbeau, Borduas, Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Louise Renaud, and Jean-Paul Riopelle – exploited the revolutionary potential of the manifesto when, in 1948, they joined eleven other artists, writers and performers in signing the *Refus Global*, a multidisciplinary project that derives its title from the lead text, a famous manifesto by Borduas that describes the political awakening of Québec to colonialism and the Church.¹¹⁴ The call to social revolution that begins with an indictment of the history of political tyranny since British rule marks their modernist understanding that revolution is predicated on both creative iconoclasm and a politicized relationship to the past. The approximately one hundred page unbound document, which combines manifestoes, essays, drama, poetry, drawing and photographs of art objects, people, exhibitions and performances¹¹⁵ represents the “hysteric’s” refusal to submit to various forms of institutional mastery.¹¹⁶ The radicality of the document is evidenced not only by the outrage it generated at the time of its publication, but in the “hysterical” challenge it continues to present to contemporary

scholarship. In this respect, it is significant that the primary goals of Ray Ellenwood's history of the Montréal Automatistes are to bring greater attention to the group outside Francophone scholarship, and to bridge art historical and literary studies.¹¹⁷ His corrective to the relative absence of interdisciplinary approaches to the artists who crossed disciplinary boundaries, and to *Refus Global* more specifically, suggests how their collaborations continue to resist the discourses of mastery that would anatomize and contain modernist projects according to rigid linguistic, disciplinary and individualistic frames. Although their artistic activities are more overtly politicized than Smith's, her political and aesthetic convictions intersected with the Automatistes in significant ways. This connection is perhaps obscured by the clashes between Borduas and other CAS members, clashes that led not only to Borduas' departure from the association, but also to its ultimate demise.

The difficulty of extricating Klee's painting from Benjamin's theorization of the modern subject's relationship to history¹¹⁸ allegorizes a key problematic in the aesthetic aspirations of several generations of Québec modernists: the imbrication of formalism and the desire to write "an alternative history." Notably, the formalist iconoclasm of the Automatistes and their revolutionary indictment of the past in *Refus Global* contrast with the *living modernism* of Smith and other CAS members, an aesthetic that could more easily reconcile itself to history by keeping its primary focus on the art historical past. In spite of their differences, however, both approaches, like Benjamin's angel, fix an unflinching gaze on History. The conflicts that divided the association are generally

attributed to generational and linguistic differences, and more crucially to the unwillingness of some senior members of the CAS to commit fully to radicalizing the relationship of art to politics, and to embracing non-representational forms. In Chapter Six, I consider these questions in more depth, to argue that the association of figuration with a conservative politics *tout court* depends on a progressive understanding of modernism as a sequence of formalist innovations that cannot account for the resistance of figurative artists to the moralizing aesthetic visions of both the Right and the Left in Montréal during the interwar period. For now, I want to emphasize that the conflict between Lyman's conception of modern art rooted in tradition, and the Automatistes' more revolutionary politicization of it, demonstrate how history became just as important a site of contestation to modernists as nationalism/regionalism. The facts that the CAS membership included Automatistes and other abstract painters, represented a spectrum of political views, and did not rely on the institutional support of conservative national and provincial institutions complicate definitions of Québec modernism that assume a direct correspondence between Leftism and "lesser degrees of figuration." Indeed, as Serge Guilbaut has shown, during the postwar period, American Abstract Expressionism became associated with both right-wing anxieties about and leftist confusion over Cold War politics.¹¹⁹

It is also significant that Smith, along with other CAS members, refused to be identified with a unified style or "ism," just as she refused the designation "woman-artist." These choices represent a rejection of the identity formations implicit to

Oedipalized versions of modernism where, to quote Susan Stanford Friedman, “outsiders become insiders; pariahs become icons; the rebels become Establishment,”¹²⁰ a historical process from which figures like Smith are always *recovering*. If we consider how the nineteenth and twentieth century “isms” that initially antagonized aesthetic norms were absorbed into a Modernist Tradition, then the refusal of CAS members to advance a unified aesthetic emerges as resistance to the orthodoxies to come. I should say that my aim is not a disingenuous inversion of the binary conservative/iconoclast, or to argue for a pluralist accommodation of hitherto “eccentric” modernists within Modernism. Instead, I am arguing with Friedman that the “definitional dissonance” (510) associated with attempts to fix the meaning of the terms modern, modernity, modernism, and the postmodern is not simply the “product of disciplinary background or semantic disagreement,” but signals “the contradictory dialogic” that grounds “the historical and expressive formations of the phenomena to which the terms allude” (510). As we discover in the contestations between and within the memberships of the CGP and the CAS, *modernisms* are defined not only in their opposition to each other, but also by oppositions within (493-497), and by their relation to historical and socio-economic fields that are themselves sites of contestation (493-513).

When the monolith “Modernism” is revised as constellations of conflicted modernisms generated by artists who believed in the political possibilities of creative expression, but struggled with the paradoxes inherent to developing forms that might engage and simultaneously estrange the alienated from their own alienation, what

becomes visible is that the conflicts do not stem from incommensurable fixed orthodoxies. These conflicts are instead processes of contestation for working through what Herbert Marcuse describes as the need to develop “a new morality and a new sensibility”¹²¹ without resorting to moralizing prescriptions and didacticism (xii-xiii, 35, 66). In this economy, the disagreements among Montréal artists are symptomatic of their struggles with inventing forms that could resist conventional thinking, while touching conventional audiences who were in need of, but most likely to be estranged from, modernism.¹²² The conflicts among CAS members are yet another example of how Canadian modernists responded in diverse, geopolitically specific ways to the issues raised by streams in global movements. Again, the polemics are characteristic of the dialectical impulse in modernism. I will show how, in the case of Smith, the elimination of Euclidean space disturbs the fantasy of the spectator’s mastery over the portrait subject to encourage affective encounters with painting. The nature of this encounter raises a number of ontological issues that reflect a more generalized effort to politicize the relation of spectator to inanimate art object.¹²³

Institutions and Avant-Garde Dialectics: The CAS as *anti-museum*

Katherine Swarbrick argues that avant-garde art and its dissemination form a dialectic whereby “the production of works of art is conditioned at every stage of their historical evolution by the institutionalized framework which art itself generates.” That is, “avant-garde praxis [...] throws institutionalized art forms into relief by attacking them

directly.”¹²⁴ While the “increasingly autonomous institution of bourgeois art” serves as a “monument against which the avant-garde artist operates his or her assault,” for modernists “life itself,” defined as the subject’s sensorial engagement with the material world, challenges the conception of art as the origin for institutionalized responses to it (229). Although both the Group and the CAS distanced themselves from conservative art associations, the Group found valuable institutional support in the National Gallery. Whereas, the latter institution defended – and persists in mythologizing – the Group as the vilified avant-garde,¹²⁵ the CAS maintained the avant-garde/museum dialectic insofar as it became the Gallery’s unwitting enemy.

The CAS functioned as an important modernist *anti-museum*. The decision to exhibit both historical art and contemporary art by non-members was just as crucial to the conception of “living modern art” as disseminating the work of its own members because Lyman conceived the gallery space as an evolving intermediary between and among art, artists and the public:

The Function of an art gallery is that of a go-between-between (sic) the community and the history of art by providing means for its elucidation, and secondly, between the community, and its own art in the present state of its continual evolution ... It is in the second role that a gallery’s mediation is most crucial. In the first, if it is alive at all, it can play the game of follow-the-leader. But in the second, values are in development, and a liberal minded and courageous interpretation is necessary. If it is to improve the status of the artist and make it possible for him not to waste most of his energy on pot-boiling devices, if it is to encourage work not destined for the discard, it must throw itself on the side, not of the yes-men of art, the entertainers and taxidermists, but of those who are true to their own vision.¹²⁶

In Lyman’s view, the art gallery served two important social functions. First, in its

traditional role as interpreter, it was an intermediary between the public and art history. Second, the art gallery was an activist intermediary that protected emergent aesthetics from the “taxidermists” who mortified art. Like the “living traditions” it exhibited, Lyman’s art gallery was more manifesto than institution.

When “art and life” and “art and institution” are posited as dialectical poles, there is always the danger of de-politicizing the very practices that are meant to be politicized. Twentieth century fascistic regimes not only demonstrate that dialectical formulations can place aesthetic production at the service of ideological and self-interested ends, but provide the most notorious examples of how the political sphere itself can become aestheticized.¹²⁷ Indeed, the spectre of fascism hovers over the nationalization of the Ontario landscape and Québec rural scenes. Even the apparently more benign Antimodernist nostalgia for “authentic” cultural expressions that I discuss in Chapter Four, where art becomes the “cure” for modern life, depends on a fantasy of cultural homogeneity that aestheticizes the political. The comments of Palardy and Smith that opened this chapter suggest that artists as early as 1930 felt the conscription of art to nationalist causes as a form of tyranny. These cultural fantasies were challenged by the attempts of the CAS to attract a demographically and politically diverse membership of artists and non-artists. Further, Lyman’s attentiveness to social contingency in the politics of display meant that the CAS confronted a critical issue in modernist aesthetics that the Group and its promoters did not: modernist iconoclasm could become constricting orthodoxy when it served institutional agendas.

Conclusion:

The controversies that divided the CAS and the CGP, and later the CAS and the Automatistes members, were *modern* conflicts; they participated in the dialectical struggle between art producers and cultural institutions to negotiate the limits of the aesthetic as a discursive field. Lyman's concept of "living traditions" encourages a genealogical understanding of visual modernism, a genealogy that shows that both the Canadian engagement with international movements and the attempt to develop indigenous forms, represent two mutually constituting aestheticized responses to a larger international crisis of representation, and to global events. In other words, the polemics that framed aesthetic production in Canada participated in a more broadly-based international and interdisciplinary re-thinking of the relationship of aesthetics to politics. A modern *living tradition* could embrace art history and reject moribund academic prescriptions; it could respond to the social environment and resist the institutionalized efforts of Canadian and Québec nationalists to aestheticize the political. The concept of modernism as a living tradition also provides a critical tool for countering hermetic readings of nationalism in the Group of Seven by re-situating their aesthetic in relation to global art movements and political events. In the next chapter, I reconsider the landscapes of the Group as a response to historical trauma, a trauma that was buried by the postwar desire for a national iconography. This averted gaze on history continues to obscure the political in Canadian visual modernism.

1. Quoted in Leon Jalder, "Les Jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy," *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, Samedi 17 Mai, 1930 in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
2. Smith, Jori, "Interview by Charles Hill," June 16, 1974 (7), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993-12-16 in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
3. The Canadian Group of Painters (1933-1969) grew out of the Group of Seven (1920-1933). At the time of its founding, the expansion made it more inclusive; although the landscape continued to predominate (and the membership was primarily Anglophone) the association now included artists from across Canada working in different genres. Women made up one third of the membership. The twenty-eight original members were: Bertram Brooker, Franklin Carmichael, Emily Carr, A. J. Casson, Charles Comfort, LeMoine FitzGerald, Lawren Harris, Prudence Heward, Randolph Hewton, Edwin Holgate, Bess Housser, A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, J. W. G. Macdonald, Thoreau MacDonald, Mabel May, Yvonne McKague, Isabel McLaughlin, Liliias Torrance Newton, Will Ogilvie, George Pepper, Sarah Robertson, Albert Robinson, Anne Savage, Charles Scott, Frederick Varley, William Weston and W. J. Wood. Paul Duval, *Four Decades: The Canadian Group of Painters and Their Contemporaries, 1930-1970* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd, 1972), 14.
According to Dennis Reid, Toronto remained the centre for CGP activities and attracted artists primarily from Toronto. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 175.
4. Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1949* (Edmonton: The Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), 14. Dennis Reid specifies that non-membership to "any Academy" was the condition for membership to the CAS. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 212.
5. Barbara Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends: The Beaver Hall Women Painters* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1999), 134.
6. Ibid.
7. At the time of the Kingston Conference in 1941, Jack Shadbolt described the sentiments of the Canadian arts community of the thirties and forties: "at that time the influence of the Group of Seven, which was primarily landscape-oriented and somewhat remote and romantic [...] had very little to do with the everyday detail of local involvement, political involvement, the workers' cause and the domestic scene in general; this was becoming a necessity – I think something had emerged in Canada." Quoted in Francis K. Smith, *André Biéler: An Artist's Life and Times* (Toronto: Merritt Publishing, 1980), 93.

8. Louise Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique Québécois de 1936 à 1942" (Mémoire de maîtrise, Université Laval, 1982), 144-145.

9. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 125.

10. In 1924 the National Gallery of Canada persuaded the organizers of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, England to include a section of Canadian art. The event was important to the Group of Seven because it brought them international attention. As a result, Eric Brown as Director of the National Gallery was attacked by members of the Royal Canadian Academy who felt the responsibility of juried shows abroad should come under the RCA's jurisdiction. Between 1931 and 1932, RCA members circulated a petition criticizing the National Gallery for partisanship, and urged both a boycott of their exhibitions, and a government investigation. The RCA never took an official stand; however, Charles Hill states that it was generally known that senior Academicians were responsible for initiating the controversy over Brown's support of the Group of Seven. For several months, letters to Canadian newspapers reflected the escalation of an issue which divided the artistic community. In Toronto, artists circulated a counter-petition in support of Brown. In January of 1933, the National Gallery received two hundred and eighty-two signatures of support. Meetings among government ministers, lawyers and anti-gallery petitioners continued until December 1934. Brown would remain as Director; however, art societies remained divided. See the two exhibition catalogues by Charles Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 21-23, and *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 142-151. This endnote is a revised version of an endnote that appears in my M.A. Thesis. See "Interfaces of the Portrait: Liminality and Dialogism in Canadian Women's Portraiture Between the Wars" (Carleton University, 1996), 149 n.88.

11. The debate took place in a now famous series of articles by Bertram Brooker (1888-1955), Elizabeth Wyn Wood (1903-1966), Frank Underhill (1889-1971) and Paraskeva Clark (1898-1986). Brooker promoted an aesthetic which exalted "the holiness of beauty" divorced from the "demand for meaning or moral," or any other form of "propagandistic art" placed "in the service of a cause." See Bertram Brooker, "Art and Society," *Yearbook of the Arts In Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1936): xiv, xxii, xxvii.

Frank Underhill criticized Brooker's views in his review of the *Yearbook*, arguing that artists must consider their relationship to society. See Frank Underhill, "The Season's New Books: Yearbook of the Arts in Canada," *The Canadian Forum* 16 no.191 (December 1936): 28.

A few months later Elizabeth Wyn Wood attacked Underhill's position, and invited artists to "camp for a while on our northern Pre-Cambrian Shield." In her

opinion, artists should devote themselves to “Canadian subjects,” and she argued that “the propagation of ideology” was “not authentic stimul[us] to the Canadian artist.” In divorcing the aesthetic from “ideological” considerations her position seems to parallel Brooker’s; paradoxically, her call for an aesthetic bound to the landscape betrays an ideological position that diverges from Brooker’s celebration of “beauty” divorced from “meaning or moral.” Presumably, the Northern Ontario Landscape, which provided the inspirational source for her own sculpture offered “authentic” Canadian themes. See “Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” *Canadian Forum*, 16 no.193 (February 1927): 14-15.

Paraskeva Clark denounced Wyn Wood’s “exaltation of the individual” which in her opinion posed a threat to both individual citizens and to the community because it blinded “the artists to the forces which approach to destroy that relative security in which he is permitted to exercise his individuality.” See Paraskeva Clark in “Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” *New Frontier Magazine*, Vol.1 no.12 (April 1937): 16-17.

Clark’s position on the necessity of recognizing the political possibilities inherent to aesthetic expression was bound to the socialist convictions she shared with Montréal artists John Lyman and Marian Scott. In fact, the Toronto artist formed friendships with several members of the CAS, and her intimate connection to Norman Bethune, whom she met in 1936, probably helped to solidify her own ideas about the political function of art. The friendships among members of the CGP and CAS speak of the intersections in their politics, further troubling the conception of the arts associations as ideologically differentiated entities. A version of this endnote appears in my M.A. Thesis “Interfaces of the Portrait: Liminality and Dialogism in Canadian Women’s Portraiture Between the Wars,” 154 n.133. See the same source for a discussion of the relationship of Paraskeva Clark’s art to her politics.

12. For a discussion of the institutionalized agendas and ambivalence that defined the “colonial nationalism” of the Group of Seven see Lynda Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 130-152.

13. Anna Victoria Hudson, “Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters, 1933-1950” (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1997). I explored the impact of the Depression and international political crises on the portraits and figurative works of CGP members Prudence Heward, Paraskeva Clark and Liliias Torrance Newton in my M. A. thesis. I argued – in agreement with Hudson – that the interest of these Toronto painters in the figure reflected their shared humanist convictions about the social value of art, and that these convictions differentiated them from members who advanced nationalist themes (see endnote 11). I also briefly discussed Smith’s portraiture. See Aylen, “Interfaces of the Portrait.”

14. The “unrepresentative” selection of Canadian works also forced the alteration of the exhibition title to “Some Aspects Of Contemporary Canadian Painting.” See Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society* (Edmonton: The Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), 22-26.
15. For a discussion of Lyman’s critical work see Déry, “L’Influence de la critique de John Lyman,” 145-148. In Chapter Five, I discuss his indictment of the Québec government’s promotion of the handicrafts of rural artists. Lyman’s criticism was partly driven by his hostility to the regionalism of Québec nationalists. In Chapter Six, I examine the different forms of regionalism that emerged during the thirties and forties.
16. Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin, *Modern Painting in Canada: Major Movements in Twentieth Century Canadian Art* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978), 34.
17. Joyce Zemans, “Envisioning Nation: Nationhood, Identity and the Sampson-Matthews Silkscreen Project: The Wartime Prints,” *Journal of Canadian Art History*, IXX no.1 (1998): 7. See also Joyce Zemans, “Establishing Canon: Nationhood, Identity and the National Gallery’s First Reproduction Program of Canadian Art,” *Journal of Canadian Art History*, XVI no.2 (1995): 7-35; and Joyce Zemans, “Where is Here?: Canadian Cultural Policy in a Global World” (North York, Ont.: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, 1996).
18. Lynda Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” 141-142. In Chapter 5, I explore more fully the relationship of government policies to artistic production.
19. Lynda Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery,” 137-138.
20. Lynda Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery,” 138.
21. Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1949*, 10.
22. The first public meeting in February drew twenty-five more members. An executive committee was appointed with Lyman as President, Paul-Émile Borduas as Vice-President, Fritz Brandtner as Secretary, and Philip Surrey as Treasurer. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1949*, 10.
23. Some CAS members felt that the EGP should disband because it would constitute a separate contingent within the former. But EGP members, who were bound less by formalised aesthetic principles than by mutual respect for each other’s work, refused to disband. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 10-12.

24. Charles Hill, Louis Muhlstock, Marian Scott, Leo Kennedy, "They could split rock ...: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," in *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy/son époque et son message*, ed. David A.E. Shephard and Andrée Lévesque (Ottawa: The Canadian Health Association, 1982), 120.
25. Édith-Anne Pageot, "A Dealer for *Living Art*," in *Max Stern: Montreal Dealer and Patron*, curator Montréal Museum of Fine Arts (Montréal: Montréal Museum of Fine Arts: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2004), 28.
26. Lyman's comments in the January 1, 1940 edition of *The Montrealer* are quoted in Déry, "L'influence de la critique de John Lyman," 134.
27. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 212-213.
28. Pageot, "A Dealer for *Living Art*," 23.
29. The statement appears in a letter to Mrs Pincoe from the Librarian Olive B. le B [last name illegible] from the Art Association of Montréal dated Nov 8, 1944. See "Artists Files: CAS," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
30. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 125.
31. See endnote eleven in this chapter for an elaboration of the polemic that divided CGP members.
32. Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 101.
33. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 212.
34. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 6-8.
35. Maillard was principal of the École des beaux-arts in Montréal. For a discussion of Maillard's views, see Chapter Six and the review article of Charles Hill's *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* by François-Marc Gagnon, "La Peinture des années trente au Québec/Painting in Quebec in the Thirties," *Journal of Canadian Art History*, 3 no.1-2 (Fall 1976): 2-20.
36. Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 1998), 101.
37. The hierarchy of genres endorsed by the RCA originates in eighteenth century France. Landscape painting occupied the pinnacle because it was associated with the

sublime. Although Lyman was not explicitly critical of the French academy's hierarchy of genres, he rejected the privileging of any one genre over another. This becomes apparent not only in his critique of the celebration of landscape, but in his response to Barker Fairley who promoted portraiture. For an elaboration of Lyman's views, see Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 145-148.

38. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 134.

39. Pageot, "A Dealer for *Living Art*," 25.

40. Terry Fenton and Karen Wilken, *Modern Painting in Canada: Major Movements in Twentieth Century Canadian Art*, 34.

41. Although she does not find direct references to Fry's book on Cézanne, which Lyman owned, she sees its influence in Lyman's discussions of formalism in his articles for *The Montrealer*. The different emphases art historians place on theorists who influenced Lyman raise the question of whether we should situate Lyman in the British, rather than the French modernist tradition. That is, who were the most influential: Focillon and Faure, or Fry and Bell? Exploring the affinities of Lyman's thought to different branches of modernist criticism is far beyond the scope of my project on Smith. It is worth noting, however, that Déry's genealogy of English influences returns us to French modernism by way of the Post-Impressionists discussed by Fry and Bell. The question of influence, then, supports my argument that the search for origins in the "age of mechanical reproduction" (Déry's reliance on discovering Fry's book in Lyman's library collection is significant) is not only symptomatic of modernism, but also doomed to failure. See Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 65-66.

42. Sarah Whitfield, "Fauvism," in *Concepts of Modern Art*, ed. Nikos Stangos (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 12.

43. Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 102.

44. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 143.

45. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 149.

46. Smith, "Interview by Charles Hill," 4.

47. WWII, and Québec's fears about the possibility of a second conscription crisis more specifically, were important to women's suffrage. For a discussion of these issues see The Clio Collective, *Quebec Women: A History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women's Press), 263-5.

48. The Clio Collective discusses a case in Eastview – a Francophone suburb of Ottawa – in which a nurse working in her capacity as representative for the Parents' Information Bureau of Kitchener was arrested for distributing contraceptive devices, as well as a brochure describing a dozen contraceptives. See *Quebec Women: A History*, 193.
49. The other participants were: Alberta Cleland, Alice Des Clayes, Berthes Des Clayes, Gertrude Des Clayes, Mary Grant, Kathleen Morris, Jean Muro, Mabel May and Sarah Robertson. The list appears in Édith-Anne Pageot, "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon" (Ph.D diss., Université de Montréal, 2004), 44.
50. It is worth mentioning how these connections extended to the United States. Patrick Morgan, a relative of both Cleveland Morgan and John Lyman, was the first sponsor of the Charlevoix artists I discuss in the next two chapters. He organized the exhibition of their work in New York in 1937. See Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 116, 118 n.26.
51. In Toronto, department stores helped to supplement the income of such artists as Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Paraskeva Clark who were hired for window display. This was also the case in Montréal, where Fritz Brandtner worked for the Eaton's Display Department for two years (sometime between 1934 and 1936). See Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982); Helen Duffy and Frances K. Smith, *The Brave New World of Fritz Brandtner* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University), 89.
52. Pageot, "A Dealer for *Living Art*," 25.
53. Jacques Des Rochers, "Chronology," in *Max Stern: Montreal Dealer and Patron*, curator Montréal Museum of Fine Arts (Montréal: Montréal Museum of Fine Arts: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2004), 83.
54. See my Appendix A: Chronology and Major Exhibitions for the list of participants.
55. According to Pageot, Gagnon was especially supportive of Jori Smith, Marian Scott, Jeanne Rhéaume and the Bouchard sisters, "A Dealer for *Living Art*," 28.
56. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1949*, 10.
57. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 40.

58. Quoted in Cathy Hobart, "Art Transformed," *Branching Out*, XII no.1 (1980): 12 in "Artists' Files: Marian Scott," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
59. Shirley Raphael states that Smith articulated the belief that the artist's profession left little room for marriage, although she does not quote Smith directly. See "Smith Re-appears with Power," *The Gazette*, Montreal, Sat. April 3, 1976 in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
60. Quoted in Cathy Hobart, "Art Transformed," 13.
61. Delphy and Leonard argue that "people, even feminists" would rather attribute the family division of labour "to external factors," such as men's greater earning power, than examine too closely the family relationships and household structures that position women and men hierarchically. Instead, "they want to see marriage (or at least contemporary western middle class marriage) and cohabitation, and especially their own marriages [...] as voluntary agreements arrived at between equal and complementary partners." Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard, *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 97-98.
62. This appears in Scott's diary entry for 8 April, 1940. Quoted in Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 94, 104 n. 14
63. Marian Dale Scott, *Diary*, undated sheet placed just before 10 March 1940. Quoted in Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 94, 104 n.13.
64. The membership lists for 1939, 1942 and 1949 include, in different years, Peggy Anderson, Mary Bouchard, Madeleine Desroches-Noiseaux, Marguerite Fainmel, Denyse Gadbois, Sybil Kennedy, Mabel Lockerby, Marguerite Paquette, Louise Renaud, Jeanne Rhéaume, Anne Savage, Ethel Seath, Regina Seiden, Betty Sutherland, Fanny Wiselberg. I do not have biographical details for all of the artists, but I do know that several of them remained unmarried and childless. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 40-42.
65. Marian Dale Scott, *Diary*, undated sheet placed just before 10 March 1940. Quoted in Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 94.
66. Jori Smith in a letter to Marius Barbeau January 3, 1945 in "Correspondence w/re Artists 7.15 Jori Smith," Ottawa. National Gallery of Canada. Smith is likely referring to Emily Carr (1871-1945), the B.C. artist who only achieved national recognition for her painting after her fateful 1915 meeting with Marius Barbeau. This meeting led to her introduction to Eric Brown, then Director of the National Gallery of Canada, and to such Group of Seven members as Lawren Harris. These meetings would have a tremendous impact on the production and dissemination of Carr's work. Prior to her meeting with

Barbeau, she had stopped painting as West coast conservatism made it difficult for her to support herself on her “modern” painting. Smith is slightly exaggerating Carr’s failure to gain recognition before age “75” since she was included in the exhibition of *West Coast First Nations and Modern Art* at the National Gallery (1927), featured in exhibitions in both Victoria, and the Seattle Art Museum in 1930; and in 1936 she had two solo exhibitions in Toronto, another in 1937 at the Art Gallery of Toronto, and in 1938 at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Nevertheless, Carr did wait longer than her Eastern male counterparts to find an audience for her work; and securing supplemental income proved challenging. See Doris Shadbolt, *Emily Carr* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1994), 39-44. For a more recent politicized analysis of Carr’s production in relation to federal and provincial efforts to assimilate First Nations on the West Coast see Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* (Vancouver/Toronto: UBC Press; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006). The parallels between the careers of Smith and Carr – they not only overcame the obstacles that discouraged other women from pursuing artistic careers, they both collaborated in Barbeau’s ethnological projects, forged personal relationships with communities in regions remote from industrialized urban centres, held political views that challenged many of the conventional attitudes of their respective urban communities – are striking. A comparison of the art and politics of Smith and Carr would make an interesting study.

67. Jori Smith in a letter to Marius Barbeau January 3, 1945 in “Correspondence w/re Artists 7.15 Jori Smith.”

68. It seems likely that Smith wrote to H. O. McCurry sometime in winter, since his reply to her is dated March 10, 1943. McCurry was generally very prompt in responding to correspondence. See Jori Smith, Letter from Jori Smith to Mr. McCurry [undated]; and Harry Orr McCurry, Letter to Mrs. Palardy, March 10, 1943, both in “Correspondence w/re Artists 5.41 W War Records Applications R-S (Canadian War Art Fonds), Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

69. As Director of the National Gallery, McCurry played an important role in securing war commissions for women and men. He not only lobbied the federal government, but used part of the National Gallery’s budget to commission works for possible purchase. See Letter to Mrs. Palardy, March 10, 1943 in “Correspondence w/re Artists 5.41 W War Records Applications R-S (Canadian War Art Fonds), Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

Many enlisted artists produced unofficial work in their off-duty hours. Most notably, Molly Lamb Bobak enlisted as a Private, was promoted to the rank of Lance-Corporal in the Canadian Women’s Army Corps (CWAC) and received a military art commission (to paint a mural in the Personnel Selection building) even before becoming a commissioned war artist. But her situation was exceptional; other women artists were

limited to specific painting projects, and found that military officers were generally unresponsive. For a discussion of Bobak that includes journal entries and reproductions of her work, see Carolyn Gossage ed., *Double Duty: Sketches and Diaries of Molly Lamb Bobak Canadian War Artist* (Toronto: Dundran Press, 1992), 20-21. For a survey of Canadian artists of the Second World War that is unusual (for the time) because of its attention to women's production see Joan Murray, *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1981).

70. As Barbara Meadowcroft notes, there were no women on the Society's executive, and in 1945, Smith and Scott were the only two included in the CAS annual show in Toronto. See *Painting Friends*, 134.

71. Scott quoted in Cathy Hobart, "Art Transformed," 13. The irony that Palardy, and not Smith, gave up painting to pursue research and film-making is not lost on the interviewer.

72. Both Smith and Scott participated in: *Canadian Women Artists* at the Riverside Museum in New York in 1947; *Canadian Women Painters* at the West End Gallery in Montréal in 1949; *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* at the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery in Kingston and *14 Women Painters* at the Galerie Gilles Corbeil in Montréal, both in 1975. Separately, they participated in other exhibitions exclusively devoted to women. For a longer list of Smith's exhibitions see my Appendix A: Chronology and Major Exhibitions; for Scott's exhibition history see Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 263-276.

73. Smith made the statement in an interview which is quoted in the "Press Release" by Andrew Tibor Princz for the exhibition, "Jori Smith: *To Seize the Light I See*," Centre Baie Saint-Paul, 1994 in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

74. See Chapter One and Five for expanded discussions of how art criticism masks the cultural imperialism implicit to Western aesthetic hierarchies.

75. Georgia O'Keeffe provides one famous example of the irritation of women artists with feminist readings of their work, and not without good reason. Some feminists of the 1970s, who embarked on the important project of developing a canon of women's art, relied on essentialist notions about the relationship of gender to artistic expression. These projects helped to legitimize thematics that emerge out of the particular life experiences of women artists as gendered subjects, but they also risked perpetuating traditional assumptions about the contrast between men's treatment of important "universal themes" and women's preoccupation with minor subjects, subjects that are assumed to be, in some sense, tied to their reproductive bodies and to the domestic sphere. For a biography that does not fall into this trap see Laurie Lisle, *Portrait of an Artist: A Biography of Georgia*

O'Keefe (New York: Washington Square Press, 1980); for a good transnational treatment of O'Keefe that focusses on the work of several women artists, see Sharyn Rohlfson, *Udall, Carr, O'Keefe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

76. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 38-39.

77. Both groups turned their backs on the CAS, although they had originally found support in the association. Along with Borduas the younger artists associated with the Surrealist-inspired Automatistes – including Marcel Barbeau, Roger Fauteux, Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Françoise Sullivan, and Jean-Paul Riopelle – embraced a more highly-politicized aesthetic than other members of the CAS. The Prisme d'yeux, or “the anti-Automatiste” faction of Montréal painters, to quote Dennis Reid, was at the other end of the political spectrum. Fourteen artists – including Léon Bellefleur, Goodridge Roberts, Jacques de Tonnancour, Gordon Webber, and Albert Dumouchel – formed the group in winter of 1948. It survived under a year and a half. All but Leduc, Webber and Dumouchel were, at one time or another, CAS members. Leduc and Webber did, however, exhibit with the association. The short lists of Automatistes and Prisme d'yeux members I provide are only meant to show the intersections between the groups and the CAS; see Chapter Six for complete lists of participants. For a short overview of these events see Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 235. Ray Ellenwood's introduction to his translated edition of *Refus Global* provides a succinct analysis that clarifies the complicated history of the relationship between Borduas and the other Automatistes who collaborated on the manifesto: *Total Refusal/Refus Global: The Complete 1948 Manifesto of Montreal Automatists* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1984), 1-23. For a more comprehensive history that provides information about all the Automatistes signatories, see Ellenwood's book, *Egregore: A History of the Montréal Automatiste Movement* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1992).

78. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 12.

79. There were exceptions. Lyman expressed admiration for the work of member Mary-Simone Bouchard. See Chapter Five for a discussion of his views on her work.

80. Duplessis' “Padlock Act” of 1937-1957 provided the legal means to ban meetings, and to arrest those suspected of disseminating seditious materials. The law, which empowered the Attorney General to order the closing – to “padlock” – any house used for the promotion of communism or bolshevism, effectively limited assembly and the production of leftist literature. The restriction of civil liberties and the rise of Adrien Arcand's National Social Christian Party mirrored fascism and anti-Semitism in Europe. I elaborate on the protectionist attitudes about cultural production in Québec in Chapters

Four, Five and Six.

81. This strategy is a significant departure from other associations. For example, the Beaver Hill Hall Group in Montréal consisted of Anglophone artists. Even artists like Holgate and Jackson, who maintained ties to artists in both Toronto and Montréal, associated primarily with Anglophones. The CAS made efforts to attract two linguistic groups by publishing announcements in *The Standard* and *Le jour* inviting professional artists to attend the group's first public meeting. In 1942, most of the artist members were Anglophone, and only a quarter of the associates were Francophone. By 1948 the imbalance was corrected: half the artist members, and well over half of the associates were Francophone. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 12, 23, 28; Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 219.

82. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 28-32.

83. The excerpt from the Prisme d'yeux manifesto is quoted in both Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 30; and Reid, *A Concise History of Painting in Canada*, 235.

84. I briefly discuss the manifesto below. For a translation, history and analysis of its production see Ray Ellenwood, *Total Refusal/Refus Global*. For a more detailed history of the events that preceded and followed its production see Ellenwood's *Egrogore: A History of the Montréal Automatiste Movement*.

85. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 77.

86. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 72.

87. Quoted in, Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 181.

88. Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 7-8.

89. Boym declares it a third tradition, which she contrasts to Clement Greenberg's influence "in the American context," and to Peter Bürger's impact on the interpretation of "Western European artistic movements - particularly surrealism." Unfortunately, she assumes the reader's knowledge of the debates that have canonized these critics in art history. Since Bürger is credited with theorizing the European avant-garde's attempts to integrate "art and life," I find the comparison of his work to Greenberg's formalism a bit curious. Katherine Swarbrick, for example, argues that Bürger's dialectical theorization of the relationship between art production and art institutions in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* bridges aesthetics and the everyday. In light of the continuing interest in Bürger, Boym's argument should be situated in relation to a particular reading of his thought.

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 29; Katharine Swarbrick, "Avant-garde Production and Psychoanalytic Theory: The Story of an Encounter," in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 229.

90. Quoted in Joyce Zemans, "Envisioning Nation: Nationhood, Identity and the Sampson-Matthews Silkscreen Project: The Wartime Prints," 27. Further evidence of how temporal frameworks serve mythologizing versions of Canadian modernism can be found in the literary canon. Such writers as Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert, and Marie-Claire Blais not only occupy a position of primacy in the canon of Quebec literature, but as Barbara Godard points out, with their translation into English, they become the representatives in English Canada for a modernist break with British colonialism. Québec writers, then, function as the compensation for the interwar lacunae in the English Canadian literary canon, while Québec artists signify the alleged fallowness of the period in art history. In Chapter Four, I discuss how different versions of visual modernism are inscribed into surveys of Canadian and Québec history. The intersections between and among these historicizations of Canadian politics, and Québec literary and visual modernism show each discipline supports a version of cultural history as an interdependent system of aesthetic expression. Barbara Godard, "Une Littérature en devenir: la réécriture textuelle et le dynamisme du champs littéraire: les écrivaines québécoises au Canada anglais," *Voix et images: littérature québécoise* (72), XXIV no.3 (printemps 1999): 512.

91. Australia offers an example of another British colony preoccupied with shedding its colonial status after WWI. For a comparative study of nationalism as a response to the war, see David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia, and Canada 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

Furthermore, Romy Golan's consideration of the French urban avant-garde and rural and folk art movements during the early twentieth century and Wanda Corn's study of American and European modernists living in New York during the 1920s and 1930s suggest that the emergence of modernism is inextricably linked to attempts to define national identity. Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1995); Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

92. The idea that the Canadian post-war preoccupation with landscape painting distinguishes it from the cultural production of other nations is misleading for a number of reasons. The history of nineteenth and early twentieth century European art, for example, provides numerous examples of landscape traditions tied to nationalist fantasies of a pristine wilderness, or an imagined rural past. Notoriously, the Nazi conception of

Germany as a unified “heimat” becomes imbricated in the promotion of images of “Aryan” rural workers in painting during preparations for war. Even during the Prussian wars, the Black Forest inspired romanticized conceptions of the landscape. It is beyond the scope of this project to explore the interdependence of representations of nature and nationalism in European art; however, these examples suggest that the nationalization of the natural and agricultural landscape responded to modern anxieties about Western imperialism, colonialism, urbanization, and global conflict.

93. Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars*.

94. Thomas Harrison, *1910, The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996).

95. Debates about the primacy of some countries over others should also be situated in relation to the politics of the day. For example, in Canada during WWI some critics hostile to avant-garde European art were particularly vicious about German modernists, explicitly linking an engagement with German art to political treachery. See the next chapter for examples.

96. The fact that Harrison’s analysis of German art, music and philosophy focusses on the year 1910, several years prior to the eruption of WWI, warrants an explanation. A great deal of scholarly attention has already been devoted to the apocalyptic imagery of Expressionists Wassily Kandinsky, Otto Dix, Franz Marc, and Ludwig Meidner that seems to anticipate eerily the military violence constitutive of the two World Wars. Among other “anachronisms,” these artists provide aerial views of the bombed urban environment that pre-date the invention of WWI bombers. For a representative view see Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

The violence of these visions is usually tied to each artist’s nihilistic belief in how war and revolutionary violence were the most effective means for the radical retrenching of political systems. Like other modernists, many Expressionists believed that artistic iconoclasm was an important political instrument insofar as it provided an imaginative space for re-imagining new worlds; formal experimentation became imbricated in modern revolutionary politics. This would help to explain why Expressionism seemed to uncannily precede the military violence to come, or as Harrison argues, to appear as a prophetic, unheeded critique of it. Thomas Harrison, *1910, The Emancipation of Dissonance*.

97. For a discussion of the “time lag” that exposes the imperialism of the concept, see Homi K. Bhabha’s chapter “The Time Lag” in *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). In my view, Bhabha’s return to the “time lag” in his essay “Postcolonial Criticism” is a much clearer elucidation of his point. See *Postcolonialism*:

Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol.1, ed. Diana Brydon (London: Routledge, 2000), 105-133.

98. See Richard Cork for a discussion of European artists who returned to figurative compositions because of their war experiences. Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War*. As I argue in the next chapter, the war experience for some Canadians is partly responsible for the modernist reaction against academicism.

99. Esther Trépanier argues that Jewish artists in Montréal were not only impervious to nationalist expressions, but also more sensitive to social issues. For a discussion of the preoccupation with urban themes during the interwar years that includes artists from different cultural backgrounds, see *Univers urbain: la représentation de la ville dans l'art Québécois du XXe siècle* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 1998), 76-77. For a discussion that focusses exclusively on members of the Jewish community, see Trépanier's *Peintres juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity Montréal 1930-1945* (Montréal, Centre Saidye-Bronfman, 1987).

100. In this sense, the historicization of Canadian art remains bound to a colonialist version of Canada's political history. In Chapter Three, I not only examine the impact of British modernists on members of the Group of Seven, but situate the production of other war artists, as geopolitically specific responses, to streams in international modernism that have no single originary point. In Chapter Five, I offer a similar argument about the relationship of rural artists (and international non-Western art) to the work of urban artists in Europe and in Québec.

101. Helen Duffy, "Between Two Worlds," in Helen Duffy and Frances K. Smith, *The Brave New World of Fritz Brandtner* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1982), 11-12.

102. Scott, "They could split rock ...: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre – A Conversation Piece," 119.

103. Benjamin's essay "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is at least as important in the history of visual modernism. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217-251. As a footnote: it would be interesting to consider the relationship of visual culture to critical theory by comparing art canonized by critical theory – Velazquez's *Las Meninas* in Foucault, Holbein's *the Ambassadors* in Lacan, and Van Gogh's *Shoes with Laces* in Derrida, to name a few – to art history's canonization of critical works by these same theorists.

104. Boym's list of "eccentric" or "off-modernists" is made up primarily of exiles, including: Igor Stravinsky, Walter Benjamin, Julio Cortázar, Milan Kundera, Ilya Kabakov, Vladimir Nabokov, and Russian writer and critic, Victor Shklovsky. See *The Future of Nostalgia*, 30-1.
105. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 30.
106. In Chapter Five, I examine how a non-teleological view of history and memory is the defining principle in determining the formal choices of both Smith and the Charlevoix painters who rejected Euclidean space and naturalistic colour in compositions that aimed to capture the affective dimension of memory. In Chapter Two and Chapter Six, respectively, I consider the different historical and political implications of a similar evacuation of illusionistic space in landscapes by the Group and in urban scenes by Montréal painters.
107. Martin Puchner, "Screeching Voices: Avant-Garde: Manifestos in the Cabaret," in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam - Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 121-123.
108. For a historical overview of the theorization and treatment of hysteria in psychoanalytic practice, and in feminist theory and activism, see Elaine Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, Gender," in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau, Elaine Showalter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 286-336.
<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ftOp3003d3>.
109. In the words of Cixous, "What woman is not Dora?," see *The Newly Born Woman*, 47.
110. Juliet Mitchell, "Femininity, Narrative, and Psychoanalysis," in *Women: The Longest Revolution* (London: Virago, 1984), 30-2.
111. See Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, Gender," 288-290.
112. For a key text that theorizes the usefulness and limitations of the hysteric as a figure of political resistance, see Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). For a more recent discussion of the polemic, see Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).
113. Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) was born in New Hampshire, became a patient of Phineas Parkhurst Quinby, and went on to found Christian Science. She was famous for

her publications and teachings on health and spirituality. Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936) was born in Vienna, became a patient of Freud's, coined the term "talking cure" to describe his stream of consciousness method, and later became involved in diverse social and political causes on behalf of women, children, and the Jewish community. Both patients became contributors to the medical fields which treated them.

114. With the exception of Marcel Barbeau and Fernand Leduc, who are listed only as occasional participants in CAS exhibitions, the CAS membership lists in Varley include the aforementioned Automatistes. See *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1949*, 40-42. For the contributions and activities of Marcel Barbeau and Fernand Leduc see, respectively, the following websites: "Biography," "La Galerie Barbeau," www.marcelbarbeau.com/; and "Fernand Leduc," "Contemporary Arts Society," www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.

Some of the CAS members were active in more than one discipline (Pierre Gauvreau was a visual artist who wrote and produced for film and television and Louise Renaud was interested in theatre). The other signatories covered a range of disciplines: Madeleine Arbour (a designer and decorator, later involved in radio and television), Bruno Cormier (a writer who later became a psychiatrist), Marcelle Ferron-Hamelin (a visual artist), Claude Gauvreau (a writer), Muriel Guilbaut (an actress), Thérèse Renaud-Leduc (a writer and performer) Maurice Perron (a photographer), Françoise Riopelle (a choreographer), and Françoise Sullivan (a dancer, choreographer and visual artist). Ray Ellenwood, *Egégore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement* (Toronto: Exile Editions LTD., 1992), xii.

115. *Egégore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement*, xi-xii.

116. Not only did the signatories of *Refus Global* steadfastly defend their project against conservatives, they refused its assimilation into the liberalism of would-be allies. For example, the polemical exchange in print and in letters between Gérard Pelletier and Jacques Dubuc, and some of the younger members of the Automatistes, shows that the latter rejected arguments that watered down their critique of religious and institutional ideologies. The signatories of *Refus Global* responded with irritation to endorsements of their indictment of "social institutions" that refused to interrogate the epistemological systems upon which these institutions were founded. See Ellenwood, *Egégore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement*, 151-155.

117. Ellenwood, *Egégore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement*, xiv.

118. If we do extricate Klee's painting from Benjamin's reading of it, we discover a far less mournful figure in the *Angel of History* than might be imagined (the ghostly figure looks askance: is s/he inviting the spectator to share some sort of joke?).

119. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). See Chapter Six for a brief explanation of his argument.
120. Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 8.3 (2000): 503.
121. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 28.
122. For a theorization of the audience as Marxist/modernist problematic, see Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 49-53.
123. See Chapters Five and Six.
124. Swarbrick focusses on Bürger's theorization of avant-garde aesthetics. See "Avant-garde Production and Psychoanalytic Theory: The Story of an Encounter," in *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 229.
125. Jessup argues that Charles Hill's exhibition of 1995 did not challenge mythologized histories of the Group. See Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery," 130-131; and Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada and McClelland & Stewart, 1995).
126. Quoted in Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman," 106.
127. For discussions of the relationship between aesthetics and fascism see Huysen, *Twilight Memories*, 98; Rey Chow, Chapter Two: The Fascistic Longings in Our Midst, in her book *Ethics After Idealism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 14-32; Keith Moxey, Chapter Two: History, Fiction, Memory, *Riemenschneider and the Dangers of Persuasion*, in his book *The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Chapter Three: Landscape as Memorial: The Group of Seven and The Canadian War Memorials Fund

I: FRAMING THE GROUP OF SEVEN

Introduction

I begin by returning to the comments that introduced the previous chapter. In 1930, Palardy and Smith observed that the Group of Seven had “traced the path of originality” for the next generation of artists, even as they lamented how the landscapists had restricted the artistic field.¹ In 1974, Smith revised her earlier opinion, declaring that during the thirties, Montréal painters had completely “broken away from the Group of Seven” and that they “didn’t like their paintings at all. We felt they were so dirty and formless.”² If Smith’s altered perspective can be attributed to the history of conflicts that strained relations between Toronto’s Canadian Group of Painters³ and Montréal’s Contemporary Arts Society during the 1940s,⁴ then it also reminds us of how history continually re-orientates responses to visual culture. Although Smith criticizes the Group on formalist grounds, her objection should be situated in relation to several decades of discursive practices that canonized the origins of visual modernism in Canada as a nationalist project. Indeed, the nationalist discourse that dominated the critical discussion of landscapes by the Group during the early twentieth century persists as a screen that continues to overdetermine the reception of their work, obscuring the connection of landscape to international modernism and to history. This art historical scotoma limits the theorization of visual modernism in Canada as a constellation of conflicted, geopolitically

situated responses to international aesthetics and politics, a limitation that Smith helps to expose. Smith's aesthetic production – and her comments – led to this chapter's examination of the Group's landscapes as a memorial to WWI.

Nationalism and the Group of Seven

Joyce Zemans, Lynda Jessup, Benedict Anderson, Scott Watson and Jonathan Bordo are among a group of cultural and art historians who help to expand the discussion of the Group by turning a critical gaze on the institutional practices that served to nationalize the Group's aesthetic. They each contribute to an understanding of how the evacuation of the human presence from the landscape supports a view of history that served government agendas of the early twentieth century. The representation of northern Ontario as "wilderness"⁵ not only denies the impact of the lumber and tourist industries on the natural environment, but also supports federal assimilationist policies by denying the existence of First Nations, and the European settlers who displaced them. Building on this analysis, I re-frame the discussion of landscape painting in Canada in relation to international politics and to visual modernism. To begin, Bordo's argument that "modern art in Canada is intimately and inseparably linked, unlike other early modernist visual traditions, with landscape painting"⁶ does not contend with the nineteenth and early twentieth European landscape traditions that also became associated with nationalist fantasies. In turn of the century French and German painting, for example, the production of nostalgic rural and natural landscapes coincides with political upheaval in Europe.⁷

Further, the fact that the treatment of rural scenes in Australian painting in the years subsequent to World War I bears uncanny similarities to Canadian painting of the same period suggests its importance in consolidating the association of land and nation for colonies that emerged from the War with a greater sense of their status as independent nations.⁸ If formalist analyses fail to expose the crucial differences among these traditions, each country's historicization of modernism is more revealing.⁹ Commenting on Lynda Jessup's research on the role of institutions in promoting the Group,¹⁰ Benedict Anderson argues that the "peculiarity of the Group of Seven" does not reside in the evacuation of human history, but in "the national meaning that drenches its framing."¹¹ In other words, the nationalist significance attributed to the landscapes is not intrinsic to the images, but to the politics of their dissemination. Anderson elaborates that "nothing suggests that the Mont St. Victoire painted so endlessly and lovingly" by Cezanne "during the childhoods of the Group of Seven was seen by the artist as either *untouched*, or as a sign for something *French*."¹² Anderson's insight raises provocative questions: what would we see in the Group of Seven landscapes if we could overlook the nationalist frames of the postwar period? Alternatively, how can politicized readings of the Group's landscapes frame them other than as the "bad objects" of cultural and political imperialism?

Although discourse analysis politicizes the issues of power raised by the production and dissemination of the Group, it does not propose alternatives to nationalist frameworks, or consider how spectatorial identification with the aesthetic object defies

curatorial control.¹³ The framework I am proposing politicizes the Group's postwar aesthetic as an unrecognized memorial to WWI, a site of remembrance that encourages subjective and affective responses to history. The significance of the works as historical memory goes largely unrecognized – the critical focus is usually on the past they erase – because the questions about the connection of the “first modern war” to modernism that have preoccupied historians, trauma theorists, and film and literary scholars fall largely outside Canadian art history. In history, for example, aesthetic objects generated a debate useful to art history. Jay Winter argues that the most “enduring visions of the Great War” drew imagery from the past, a viewpoint that is at odds with the more common view among such historians as Modris Eksteins that war artists turned to their modernist contemporaries in search of vocabularies adequate to the unprecedented devastation of WWI.¹⁴ Visual culture supports both arguments. On the one hand, there are numerous examples of war works that quote from religious compositions of previous centuries;¹⁵ on the other, the war record consists of compositions influenced by British and European modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The polemic in *History* is useful; it returns me to Lyman's conception of modernism as a “living tradition,” an aesthetics connected to both historical *and* contemporary art forms, and to political and social contingencies.¹⁶ The aesthetic theory of Lyman, Smith and other members of the CAS did not guide the Group in any direct sense – indeed, the discussion of the previous chapter demonstrates otherwise – however, it does provide a theoretical frame for my revision of the relations between and among historical trauma, nationalism and genre in

this chapter. Focussing on Group members who contributed to the Canadian War Memorial Fund (hereafter the CWMF and the Fund) reveals that the aesthetic that served nationalist goals in the postwar period began as a “modern living tradition” in response to the War. This response continues to be obscured by the nationalist frames that overdetermine the contemporary discussion of visual modernism in Canada.

Migrations and Exile: The Canadian War Memorials Fund

There are exceptions. In their catalogue to the exhibition at the Canadian War Museum in 2000, Dean Oliver and Laura Brandon assert that the war art collection not only commemorates the Canadian experience of “the major events of the First World War [...] but it also forms a major building block in the development of Canadian art. Much of the familiar landscape painting of the Group of Seven, for example, owes its genesis to sights seen and recorded in the mud and the trenches of the western front.”¹⁷ Six years later, Brandon explores this genesis in a chapter of her book *Art or Memorial: The Forgotten History of Canada’s War Art*, arguing in more pointed terms that the war works show that the notion that the Group’s postwar aesthetic emerged as a direct response to the land is untenable. She credits recent scholarship that challenges the nationalist myths attached to the Group,¹⁸ and her formalist analysis reveals the significant impact of the War artist members on shaping the artistic vision of the whole Group, a vision influenced not only by scenes of War, but by the international modernists they met overseas.¹⁹ Brandon’s politicized formalist approach is useful because it

recognizes how nationalism obscured the influence of international modernists, who also served at the Front, on the Group. To my knowledge, cultural historians outside of art history completely ignore the impact of the War on the Group.²⁰

Although the reason for this neglect is simple – the absence of a regular exhibition space until 2005 meant the Group’s war works were rarely seen²¹ – the reasons for the latter absence are complex, and a source of on-going speculation among art historians.²² Certainly the lack of funding during the Depression was an obstacle. But even in 1977, Heather Robertson blamed the on-going lack of institutional support on a postwar aversion to war imagery.²³ Reproductions disseminated to schools in 1926, for example, led to charges that the images glorified war.²⁴ And there were concerns about historical inaccuracies. Although the first traveling exhibition of 1919 had been popular,²⁵ when the Canadian War Memorial Fund moved to New York, the German government protested that Derwent Wood’s sculpture *Canada’s Golgotha* (1918), in which jeering Germans surround a crucified Canadian soldier, depicted an event that never occurred.²⁶ Laura Brandon elaborates that the Viet Nam anti-war demonstrations in Ottawa produced institutional nervousness about putting war imagery on public display in later decades. In her view, the protests also contributed to the decision to move the Fund from the National Gallery, where it had enjoyed a permanent display space since 1960, to the War Museum in 1971.²⁷ Throughout the twentieth century, then, institutions feared negative public reactions to the Fund. These examples not only suggest fears about the incendiary capacities of the images, but also the challenges of producing curatorial frames adequate

to the liminal status of the objects as both aesthetic and historical.

Art or History? Institutions and the Anatomization of the CWMF

Other reasons for the invisibility of the war art collection are easier to concretize. As I argued in the previous chapter, purely formalist definitions of modernism predominated in the decades following the Second World War; and this orthodoxy played a decisive role in determining the fate of the Fund. As Director Jean Sutherland Boggs was rationalizing the Gallery's organizational structure, she was also building the Gallery's status as a major North American museum through the acquisition of American Abstract Expressionist, Pop, and minimalist works.²⁸ Most of the Canadian and British figurative artists who had produced the war record did not fit this paradigm. This direction is apparent in the decisions the Gallery made about what to keep and what would remain in the Fund when the latter was moved into storage at the war museum.²⁹ The Gallery retained all the paintings of such British artists as Paul Nash, C. R. W. Nevinson, and William Roberts and Canadian David Milne, painters who occupy a place of primacy in the history of modernism of each nation.³⁰ After the transfer, the Fund had no permanent gallery space, appearing instead in touring exhibitions, commemorative events and books that honored individual artists, or documented major military anniversaries.³¹ The curatorial vision of the War museum, then, made a focus on aesthetic rather than documentary issues unlikely.

The anatomization of the collection also discouraged the National Gallery from

examining the influence of war art on Canadian modernism.³² With a substantive portion of the collection in vaults at the War Museum, charting the development of Canadian modernism in relation to World War I presented a material challenge for the Gallery. In 1992, Director Shirley Thomson noted that it was “somewhat ironic that the transfer of the war collections, formerly in the custody of the National Gallery, has left such a major gap in our collection,” elaborating that “the generosity of the War museum to loan sculpture and paintings from the war collections” had played a crucial part in showing “the continuity of Canadian art.”³³ The comment marks a sea-change in the framing of modernism by the National Gallery and the War Museum. In 1995, the Gallery again borrowed from the latter for the exhibition celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War. As Brandon suggests, these exhibitions helped to reinstate an important aspect of “Canada’s artistic past,” an artistic past that can “play a role in the forming of the memory of war in Canada.”³⁴ Brandon’s belief in the Fund’s capacity to memorialize the war stems from her recognition that the paintings are frequently creative rather than literal interpretations of the scenes. Her comparisons of the differences between field sketches and final studio paintings counter arguments by previous curators for the documentary value of the works, showing that artists frequently sacrificed historical “veracity” for aesthetic aims.³⁵ Notably, the appointment of Brandon, an art historian, as curator of war art in 1992 has played a decisive role in bringing attention to the aesthetic value of the collection.

II: MODERN ART AS MEMORIAL

Memorial and Monument: The Establishment of the Canadian War Memorials Fund

The recent attention to the CWMF's aesthetic and memorializing capacities represents a return to the original aspirations of its founders, aspirations that were obscured by interwar nationalism and post-Second World War formalism. Initiated by Sir Max Aiken – later Lord Beaverbrook – through the Canadian War Records Office, the Fund responded to a single event: the horrific German gas attack on Canadians at the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May of 1915.³⁶ Initially, only British artists were employed; after Canadian artists complained, the program expanded to include them.³⁷ Ultimately, the CWMF employed one hundred and sixteen artists who produced more than eight hundred works that recorded the Canadian war effort on the Western Front, in Britain and on the homefront.³⁸ Although there were photographers already at the Front, organizers of the Fund commissioned studio paintings and field sketches in the belief that “art has a unique ability to record, commemorate, and memorialize.”³⁹ These sentiments were shared by the artists, who like A.Y. Jackson believed that “the old type of factual painting had been superseded by good photography.”⁴⁰ The impetus for the fund, then, was based on assumptions about photography's neutrality, and on the desire for images that could express both national pride and grief. In Arthur Danto's terms, the archive would serve as both a monument commemorating heroic achievements, and as a memorial site for recognizing the human sacrifices.⁴¹

Memorial as Modern Ritual

Although the idea that painting can serve a commemorative function is not without historical precedent, the aim to produce a visual archive as “memorial site” participates in a particularly modern phenomenon. Sarah Tarlow demonstrates that WWI focussed the “modern” preoccupation with rituals of bereavement. The practices that began changing with eighteenth century Western secularization, gained greater urgency during the War as countries searched for forms that could signify their collective grief.⁴² Tarlow does not distinguish between memorials and monuments, as does Danto, contending that the aim of most public memorials is to secure identity and status in relation to war as a political event (76). Indeed, the official memory of most Western allied nations emphasizes heroic achievements that can be incorporated into national narratives. In colonies such as Canada and Australia, for example, battles at Vimy Ridge and Gallipoli symbolize the transition from settler-colony to independent nation-state. Nevertheless, honoring the human sacrifices associated with an unprecedented historical trauma challenged artists for several reasons. The scale of WWI meant that many nations lost more than one generation of men.⁴³ The War also challenged historically and culturally specific assumptions about mortality. Not only had twentieth century urbanites become accustomed to the notion that death would occur at a more advanced age than in previous centuries, but Western deaths had become increasingly sanitized and painless as they moved from homes to institutions. Victorian mourning rites seemed inadequate to the unexpected reversal of these patterns, where the young and healthy died violently,

painfully and “unexpectedly” in massive numbers.⁴⁴ It became the responsibility of painters to memorialize the paradoxical return to the “pre-modern” in “modern” warfare, a responsibility that profoundly affected the direction of Canadian painting.⁴⁵

III: MODERN VISION: VISUAL MODERNISM AND TECHNOLOGIES OF WAR

Visual Modernism As Method For the Unprecedented

The impact of War is perhaps most apparent in the work of the members of the future Group of Seven who participated in the Canadian War Memorials Fund prior to Armistice.⁴⁶ After their commissions to record activities on the homefront, we see a change in the cheerful Impressionist palettes of Frank Johnston (Franz after 1921) and Arthur Lismer.⁴⁷ But the greater proximity of F.H. Varley and A.Y. Jackson to the field of war forced them to develop their still nascent aesthetics more quickly, a development that would be influential.⁴⁸ Varley became more confident with his medium: “I’m glad to tell you I am feeling at home with my paints now [...] I’m gloating in the hundred and one possibilities of the medium.”⁴⁹ Similarly, Jackson joked that the unused white paint he had received when he was expected to join a military expedition to Siberia “was probably [...] responsible for my becoming a snow painter as I had to find some use for it.”⁵⁰ Beyond practical considerations, the War demanded a profound shift in artistic direction. Jackson wrote that “he had no interest in painting the horrors of war” and that he “wasted a lot of canvas” because “What to paint was a problem for the war artist. There was

nothing to serve as a guide.” Trenches had driven war “underground, and there was little to see. The old heroics, the death and glory stuff, were gone forever; there was no more *Thin Red Line* or *Scotland For Ever ...*” For this reason, Jackson felt that his impressionist technique “was now ineffective, for visual impressions were not enough.”⁵¹

Although the soldier who enlisted early and was wounded had demonstrated a resolute patriotism,⁵² Jackson’s comments suggest that his responsibilities as a commissioned artist produced a conflicted perspective on war.⁵³ Varley expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Lismer: “I tell you, Arthur, your wildest nightmares pale before reality. How the devil one can paint anything to express such is beyond me.”⁵⁴ The first modern War produced a dramatically different field of vision from those of previous centuries. Soldiers worked with the most advanced machinery on the surface of the battlefield, as they substituted traditional fixed fortifications for trenches which extended battles “into the third dimension.”⁵⁵ Ford Madox Ford described the disorientating invisibility of trench warfare:

In the territory beneath the eye, or hidden by folds in the ground, there must have been – on the two sides – a million men, moving one against the other and impelled by an invisible force into a hell of fear that surely cannot have had a parallel in this world. It was an extraordinary feeling to have in a wide landscape.⁵⁶

To produce a visual record of the War, artists had to first develop vocabularies adequate to the scenes; but in the terrifying impossibility of “seeing” we discover the “shattering of prior forms”⁵⁷ that characterizes the traumatic event as that which is unrepresentable.⁵⁸

Commenting on his work with survivors of Hiroshima, Robert Jay Lifton describes

survival as “the capacity to enlarge on their own imagery, enlarge on their own experience.”⁵⁹ In other words, trauma acts as the catalyst for aesthetic expression, and aesthetic expression provides the conditions for survival. The members of the CWMF who spent most of their working hours considering how to capture the “unrepresentable” assumed responsibility for producing a vocabulary for the collective survival of a nation. In contrast to writers like Ford, the problem for painters was doubled by their medium: how were they to contend with the paradox of developing a *visual* vocabulary to capture the unprecedented *invisibility* of modern war?

The Search For New Vocabularies

After several months of struggle,⁶⁰ Jackson responded to this problematic by abandoning his impressionist-influenced focus on the effects of light of such compositions as *Algonquin, Spring, 1914* (fig. 2). *A Copse, Evening, 1918* (fig. 3) draws attention to the limits of visual media to fully capture the violence of modern warfare. At first glance the title might seem merely explanatory; however, on closer inspection of the painting, the title underscores the disappearance of the original scene effected by constant shelling. Since the word landscape literally means shaping the land, the piece is an ironic challenge to traditional conceptions of both representational practices *in* and *of* nature, drawing attention to the evidence of violence in an image that might otherwise be mistaken for one of the Group’s postwar windswept landscapes. The composition signals how the War’s radical transformations had driven aestheticized conceptions of natural

spaces “underground;”⁶¹ and the irony of the title, which demands that we hold two opposed views simultaneously, reminds us of the original landscape which now exists only in the imagination. Just as Jackson’s dual role as soldier/artist produces two vantage points on the same field of vision, the image demands that the spectator assume two perspectives by invoking a memory of the original scene as palimpsest. *A Copse, Evening* addresses the problem of “seeing” where vision fails. It also marks what Cathy Caruth describes as a key characteristic of the traumatic: the oscillation between the desire to speak, and the recognition of the dangers implicit to speech. As she articulates the problem, “the danger of speech, of integration into narration of memory, may lie not in what it cannot understand, but in that it understands too much.”⁶² The danger inherent in speaking is not only the loss of what eludes representation, but the narrative excesses that pre-date and overdetermine all acts of enunciation (154). Jackson’s sense that neither the “impressionist technique,” nor the “old heroics, the death and glory stuff” were adequate to the war experience suggests his anxiety about the aesthetic and ideological excesses of artistic traditions. *A Copse, Evening* confronts this problem in its deployment of visual and verbal codes to produce temporal and spatial confusions about the meaning of “landscape” in the field of war.

Representing the Unrepresentable

The War also prompted Varley to abandon Impressionism.⁶³ In letters to his wife Maud, he described catastrophic scenes which defied representation:

You in Canada ... cannot realize at all what war is like. You must see it and live it. You must see the barren deserts war has made of once fertile country ... see the turned-up graves, see the dead on the field, freakishly mutilated - headless, legless, stomachless ... see your countrymen, unidentified, thrown into a cart ... boys digging a grave in a land of yellow slimy mud and green pools of water under a weeping sky. You must have heard the screeching shells and have the shrapnel fall around you, whistling by you - Seen the results of it, seen scores of horses, bits of horses lying around, in the open, in the street and soldiers marching by these scenes as if they never knew of their presence - until you've lived this ... you cannot know.⁶⁴

It might seem paradoxical that Varley provides a particularly evocative description of scenes of carnage as he insists on the impossibility of representation; however, this apparent contradiction registers the challenge of capturing the force of traumatic events. For Caruth, any representation of the traumatic is defined by loss; “beyond the loss of precision there is another, more profound, disappearance: the loss, precisely, of the event’s incomprehensibility, the force of its *affront to understanding*.” It is this dilemma that explains the reluctance of some survivors to translate their experience into speech.⁶⁵ Varley deals with this problem of representation as an “ethical relation to the real”⁶⁶ in *For What?*, 1919 (fig. 5), a painting that goes far beyond Jackson’s irony in its critique of the absurdity of War. In the inadequacy of the small white crosses to memorialize the brutality of “corpses piled up indifferently,”⁶⁷ we discover both a search for, and a refusal of symbolization. This refusal becomes a trenchant indictment of war. But even when Varley’s titles are not critical, the images themselves direct attention to the War’s “affront to understanding.” The graphic scenes in *The Sunken Road-August 1918*, 1919, *German Prisoners*, c.1919 (fig. 6) and *Some Day the People Will Return*, 1918, where devastated

natural spaces mirror the psychic space of the figures, are surely no less powerful critiques of war for their more politically neutral titles. The fact that the emotional state of allied and enemy soldiers are treated with equal empathy also suggests the refusal to legitimate the human sacrifices of war.

IV: A TERRIBLE BEAUTY: THE VIOLENCE OF MODERNIST AESTHETICS

The coincidence of Beauty and War

Arthur Lismer (also a future Group member), was commissioned by the CMWF to record military activity in Halifax as a point of embarkation for legions of men from all over the country,⁶⁸ and for the the arrivals and departures of convoys, hospital ships and troopships from Australia, New Zealand and the United States.⁶⁹ The camouflaged ships were of great aesthetic significance for Lismer: “for I think it will have a great deal to do with the development of our art in Canada.”⁷⁰ Interpreting this provocatively enigmatic statement begins with the question of why the association of war technology and art is surprising in the first place?

For some, war and aesthetics form an uneasy alliance. The critical response to war works is instructive in this respect. One critic reviewing the exhibition *Canvas of War* criticizes the collection for its failure, in general, to capture “what war means, to allow us to experience something of its horror.”⁷¹ Janice Kulyk Keefer wonders if the “problem” lies in technique, and in particular, “the lovelifying brush of Impressionism,”⁷² or in the aestheticized relationship painters have to the scenes. She quotes Jackson on witnessing

the effects of chemical warfare to make her point: “I went with Augustus John one night to see a gas attack we made on the German lines. It was like a wonderful display of fireworks, with our clouds of gas and the German flares and rockets of all colours.”⁷³ When she discovers similar statements by other artists, the initial “easy and justified scorn” Keefer evinces for Jackson turns to questions about the efficiency of visual media, versus the written word, in communicating the brutality of war.⁷⁴ But the fact that she takes issue with Jackson’s written comments, which appear alongside his paintings, contradicts, or at least complicates this proposition. More specifically, Keefer’s revolt against beauty signals the critic’s refusal to recognize how it might be constitutive of war. She does not see how such artists as Jackson and Varley struggled with “the *affront to understanding*” that characterizes war as a traumatic event.⁷⁵ But Varley’s reaction – “One or two silly maimed stumps are left, ghostly mockeries of what they were [...] Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. I find myself marvelling over the metamorphosis from chrysalis to butterfly but I never get beyond marvelling”⁷⁶ – suggests that the apprehension of beauty is a dimension of the war experience. Modris Eksteins discovers that a similar economy structures the response of later generations to the memorials that were once sites of war. Struck by the comments in visitors books at WWI cemeteries across Europe, which frequently register the difficulty of reconciling the “extraordinary beauty” with the horrors of the past,⁷⁷ Eksteins speculates that consternation over the aesthetic appeal of the sites represents a loss of connection with history. But we might modify Eksteins’ conclusion to add that the confusion signals the struggle to re-connect to the past. In this light,

Jackson's discovery of beauty in war is not a manifestation of the artist's indifference to suffering, but a comment on how physical distance produces an emotional distancing similar to the one that Eksteins attributes to the loss of temporal proximity.

Art as Technology of War

Keefer's revolt against the beauty of war paintings stems from the assumption that war and aesthetics form an opposition. As Elizabeth Louise Kahn observes: "in Western culture, art and war are often seen as antithetical: the first constructive and beautiful, the second destructive and hideous."⁷⁸ But art has a long history of military service in commemorative and memorializing practices.⁷⁹ The Great War further troubled the distinction between war and art, not only because the violent subjects that constitute a great deal of the Fund compromise the integrity of each field, but because aesthetics served more fundamentally as a war technology. Henri Lefebvre and Stephen Kern, for example, establish a direct line from the pre-war avant-garde to camouflage, citing Gertrude Stein and Picasso's famous encounter with the machinery of war on the streets of Paris. According to Stein, Picasso, amazed by the first camouflaged trucks, "cried out, yes it is we who made it, that is cubism."⁸⁰ Indeed, Guirand de Scévola, the French telephonist credited with inventing camouflage acknowledged the influence of Cubism on his technology.⁸¹ Artists helped to spread the concept across Europe. With the assistance of the French painter André Maré's notebooks and drawings, England established its own camouflage factories.⁸² German camouflage was already in use by 1916, and the German

Expressionist Franz Marc painted some of the nets and canvases which covered German guns at the battle of Verdun.⁸³ If Picasso and Stein seemed surprised to discover their aesthetic applied as war technology, they presumably understood for the first time the violent implications of their project. Meanwhile, Scévola and the artists who deployed modernist vocabularies in camouflage understood with pragmatic clarity that war had made its own incursion into the field of aesthetics. Marc and other avant-garde painters who had believed prior to the war in abstraction's political potential, now proved it by using abstraction to mask the political's obscene apparatus. The development of camouflage served as the unanticipated continuation of a significant trajectory in the experimentation with illusionism, mimesis, and the limits of representation. The Great War had made soldiers of artists, and artists of soldiers and scientists. In the process, it had undone the integrity of art and war as discrete fields. Lismer's epiphany before camouflage, like Picasso and Steins's, perhaps signals a less politicized, but no less modernist recognition of the convergence of war and art.

Form and Function: Modern Political Visions and Modernist Aesthetics

Stein concluded that, although each country developed distinctive forms of camouflage, collectively they showed the "inevitability" of the "whole theory of art."⁸⁴ The comment is significant for two reasons. First, it suggests that the relationship between camouflage and Cubism is a key principle in modernist aesthetics more generally; second, it indicates that in spite of superficial differences in style, the European

and North American nations that developed camouflage shared an aesthetic “theory.” Without being aware of his own direct influence on the early development of camouflage, Picasso not only recognized it as Cubism’s progeny, but believed that they both performed a “similar cultural function.” He understood their affinities because he did not conceive of visual modernism in purely formalist terms, but as a creative engagement with the social.⁸⁵ Stein elaborated that “the twentieth century has a splendor which is its own and Picasso is of this century, he has a strange quality of an earth that one has never seen and of things destroyed as they have never been destroyed.”⁸⁶ The connection made by Stein between the “destructive splendour” of the twentieth century and Cubism can be extended beyond the latter to establish a conceptual bridge between the modernist elimination of the vanishing point and modernity. For this reason, in spite of their divergent ideologies, such movements as Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism, Vorticism, and even the Nationalistically-invested Group all begin with a “common theory.” Stein and Picasso expose how modernism is profoundly political in ways that nationalism and some avatars of postwar formalism obscure.

But is Stein’s apprehension of beauty in destruction political or a-political? If the focus is on spectatorial identification in the present – a dimension of Lyman’s modern art as a *living tradition* – then the question of Stein and Picasso’s politics is less crucial than how we politicize modernist aesthetics now. Modernist aestheticism is political when it does iconoclastic violence to the conventional, including such oppositions as war and beauty; violence, as Bataille suggested, is not antithetical to modernist aesthetics, but

constitutive of it.⁸⁷ For it to remain political, the object must “remember” the historical circumstances which conferred its iconoclastic identity, and the contemporary socio-political conditions that re-frame this identity. Modernism, then, can simultaneously reject apolitical aestheticism and preserve the integrity of the artwork. To be iconoclastic, art must be *meaningless* – it must defy conventional modes of thinking and representation – but not *meaningless* in the sense theorized by the aesthetes, as art that forgets socio-political contingencies. This orientation contrasts with Aestheticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to such proponents as Monroe Beardsley, art should resist assimilation of all utilitarian and market value.⁸⁸ The intention was to create artworks that were “useless” and “valueless,” other than what was available through the contemplation of the work itself. The aim of aesthetic production, then, was to produce experiences valuable for their own sake. As I argue in the final core chapter, the ostensible apoliticality of Aestheticism, which has been the subject of a substantive body of critical debate,⁸⁹ was a charge leveled at Montréal modernists who believed in the political value of aesthetic production in and of itself.⁹⁰ To understand how this form of aestheticism is political we need only recall the Degenerate Art exhibition that toured in Germany and Austria between 1939-1941.⁹¹

The *Two Arts*: The Undoing of Hierarchy in Pictorial Space and the Spaces of War

The First World War materialised the intersection between war and aesthetics. Just as the muted palettes and abandonment of perspectival space by Cubists led to new

hierarchical arrangements, the abandonment of the distinctively colourful military uniforms associated with aristocratic society signaled a re-imagining of the military.⁹² Further, modern technology and trench warfare prompted a re-conception of traditional military battle lines that organized troops in clearly delineated formations according to rank. By 1916, the modern front line collapsed under pressure from the shelling and the massed offenses responsible for much of the slaughter. Armies adopted a “defense in depth” strategy, which broke up and dispersed the authority of the “one man in the centre.”⁹³ As Eric Leed observes, the new strategy, which dissolved army companies into small de-centralized independent attack and defense squads demonstrates affinities with Cubism’s de-centred spaces.⁹⁴ But the formal affinities between modern war and modernist pictorial space were not superficial. For Kern, the fact that “the line lost its inviolability as a frontier separating two distinct realms in war and in painting” (306) was profoundly political. The “*two arts*,” Cubism and War, were constitutive of revolutionary social and political changes. Just as

the Cubists had sought a new unification of the aesthetic value of the entire picture surface; the war drew together disparate elements of class, rank, profession, and nation, levelling traditional hierarchical distinctions. Uniform crosses threw geometric shadows across the mass graves - a final commemoration of the social levelling of the war. (306)

Again, the symmetry between Cubism and the First World War extends to other projects which took liberties with Euclidean space, including works found in the Fund.⁹⁵ David Milne’s *Courcellette From the Cemetery*, 1919 (fig. 4) gives visual form to the democratizing vision of trench warfare and mass graves described by Leed and Kern.

Similarly, the contrast between the treatment of the foreground and background in Jackson's *A Copse, Evening* (fig. 3) suggests something of the War's violence against the social and natural order. The crater and mud-filled foreground refuses to submit to the laws of perspective that govern the retreating military figures and searchlights. This visual economy, structured by both Euclidean and non-Euclidean perspectives, signals the violent collision of traditional and modern epistemologies, where symbols of Humanism and the Enlightenment – humans and light – are either in retreat, or fail to illuminate the amorphous new forms that predominate.

V: ALLEGORICAL LANDSCAPES: THE SEARCH FOR MEMORIAL SITES

The Return Home: Nostalgia, the Uncanny and War

Artists returned from Europe to fulfill Lismer's prediction about the impact of the War on Canadian art. Before the outbreak of war, painters like Jackson were already becoming disenchanted with the Impressionist vocabulary,⁹⁶ a vocabulary that seemed better suited to the warm light and softer landscapes of Europe. But the war had transformed the landscapes of the Impressionists into scenes of mud and smoke-filled devastation, and in the process, presented artists with a visual field that would be the inspiration for a nationalist iconography. Jackson explained that the methods they employed at the front suited the "swampy, rocky, [...] burnt and scuttled country" which Arthur Lismer described as the "spirit" of painting in Canada.⁹⁷ But it was not simply that they had found a "style" that captured the perceived harshness of the natural environment,

their war experiences had altered fundamentally their relationship to it. Returning from France, Jackson did not want to “paint anything that was serene” but “to paint storms and ... things that had been smashed up.”⁹⁸ Similarly, scenes of carnage framed Varley’s return in memory to Canada.⁹⁹ After witnessing an especially dreadful attempt by soldiers to bury their dead, he wrote to Lismer: “The only things worth thinking of are those intimately *homely* things [...] I want to paint sunshine and burning golden leaves and blue waters and laughing faces. In truth I’m aching to be surrounded with normal things” [emphasis mine].¹⁰⁰ For Jackson memories of northern Ontario, more specifically, represented an important escape from the chaos of war. While recovering in an overseas hospital from war wounds, he responded to Tom Thomson’s death by contrasting “all this turmoil over here” with “the peace and quietness of the north country.” It seemed impossible that the latter “should be the scene of such a tragedy.”¹⁰¹ Jackson’s expression of grief registers not only the loss of a friend and painting companion, but the loss of northern Ontario as a space beyond the reach of World War I.¹⁰²

Varley and Jackson’s “homely” pre-war memories support Freud’s contention that mourning is key to an aesthetic sensibility; it is in the confrontation with the ephemerality of all life forms and our own mortality that we experience beauty.¹⁰³ They also remind us of Freud’s theorization of the uncanny as that which is both strange and familiar. Freud’s essay of 1919 – the date is significant given the psychoanalyst’s attempts to theorize and treat the “shell-shock” of returning soldiers¹⁰⁴ – describes the *unheimlich*, or “unhomely,” as the implicitly male sensation of being torn from the womb. The “unheimlich place” is

associated with female genitalia; it “is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings.”¹⁰⁵ Melanie Klein revises Freud’s misogynist account of nostalgia; for her, the longing for home, or *motherland* represents the desire to return to a maternal body, rather than to a castrated part object. For Klein, this desire for the imaginary mother founds all aesthetic production.¹⁰⁶ Her theory extends Freud’s insight about the relationship of mortality to aesthetics by providing an alternative to the paranoically masculinist account of the founding moment for the longing for lost objects. It also suggests a creative outlet for channeling the ambivalently aggressive impulses that the child first directs toward the mother, and later toward the world. If the creative act represents a constructive channeling of aggression, then modernist aesthetics allegorizes this foundational violence to find the splendour described by Stein.

Canadian Icons: A British Import

The forms promulgated as “indigenous” to Canada not only originated in the battlefields of Europe, but clearly show the influence of British modernists, an influence that Jackson felt should be “imported” to Canada. Roald Nasgaard’s study of the Group shows conclusively the importance of Scandanavian art to their aesthetic; nevertheless, the latter downplayed the importance of foreign influences.¹⁰⁷ But prior to the formation of the Group, the artists were less isolationist. In a letter to the *Montreal Star* of 1918, Jackson asked: “why not prepare the public for Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, Paul Nash, and Nevinson who are doing great works for the Canadian government and are

extremists compared with most of our native artists?"¹⁰⁸ Paul Nash, for example, an English painter who contributed to the CWMF had a tremendous impact on the Group. As Dean Oliver and Laura Brandon suggest, *Wire*, 1918 (fig. 8), an "extraordinarily meaningful war symbol became absorbed into post-war landscape tradition."¹⁰⁹ It reappears in the solitary trees of Varley's *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay*, 1921 (fig. 9), Arthur Lismer's *Pine tree and Rocks*, 1921, and *A September Gale - Georgian Bay*, 1921, Frank Carmichael's *The Upper Ottawa, near Mattawa*, 1924 (fig. 10) and especially Lawren Harris's *North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1926 (fig. 7). We also see Nash's abstracted organic forms in numerous compositions by the Group. In *We Are Making a New World*, 1918 (fig. 11) the treatment of the landscape and the acerbic irony of the title, appear to have been the model for Jackson's *A Copse, Evening*, 1918. The same battle-weary and injured trees of Jackson's composition and Varley's *Shell-Torn Trees*, 1918-1919 return as forlorn monuments to the war in countless postwar images of stripped and sheared off trees: Jackson's *October Morning, Algoma* (Wartz Lake, Algoma), 1920,¹¹⁰ Frank Johnston's *Fire-Swept Algoma*, 1920 (fig. 13), Lawren Harris' *First Snow, North Shore of Lake Superior*, 1923, and Frank Carmichael's *Evening, North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1927 and *Wabagishik: Drowned Land*, 1929 (fig. 12). The expansion of the Group into the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933 quadrupled the membership and introduced new genres; yet the lessons learned at the Front informed the treatment of towns and villages. We can trace a lineage from Jackson's "war-damaged, yet humble"¹¹¹ *Houses at Ypres*, 1917 (fig. 14) to his *Herring Cove, Nova Scotia*, 1919, *Grey Day in Town*, 1923-33,

Indian Home, 1927 and *A Quebec Farm*, 1930, and to the structurally intact, but equally “humble” houses in *Black Court, Halifax*, 1921 by Lawren Harris, and *Cobalt* c. 1926-1931 (fig. 15) by Yvonne McKague Housser. The influence of British and European artists were later downplayed by the Group and its promoters.¹¹²

Uncanny Return: Spatio-Temporal Confusions and New Interpretive Frames

Comparing war records to postwar landscapes does not, in and of itself, apply pressure to the nationalist myths attached to the Group. Indeed, for Kirsty Robertson the renewed focus on the CWMF can reinforce a “monolithic nationalist history” and a “dominant British-Canadian narrative of nation.”¹¹³ The heavy emphasis on “Anglo-Canadian interpretations of war” in the *Canvas of War* exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 2000, for example, assumes that WWI is the “appropriate event around which all Canadians could or should come together,” ignoring how such events as the Québec conscription crisis of WWI and the Japanese internment camps of WWII are more significant to the collective memory of war for some communities (100). Robertson also believes it deployed the rhetoric of “crisis” that Eva Mackey argues “allows the nation to be a site of a constantly regulated politics of identity.”¹¹⁴ The crisis, in this case, is not only grounded in historical conflicts, but the perception of a dangerous ignorance – “Canadians don’t know their history” – that the exhibition attempts to rectify (99). Robertson’s critique participates in a key debate that is important to my project: can the archive overcome the imperialism(s) in which it originated? And, how do exhibition

displays “foster ways of looking” that either conform to, or critique these problematic ideological frames?¹¹⁵ The critic’s own ambivalence is instructive. Although she believes that a pan-nationalist politics defines the exhibition history of the Fund (100), she concedes that it did not “travel” with it to the exhibition’s second venue at the Art Gallery of Ontario. She attributes the change to the post-9/11 cultural atmosphere which brought other works into focus, and to the passing of “the frenzied moment of interest” in WWI.¹¹⁶ But is the problem really that there has been *too much* interest in WWI? Her own example, which praises a painting by WWII artist Orville Fisher for its “eerie resemblance to the collapsed World Trade Center”¹¹⁷ does not explain how representations of WWII escape the imperialism of WWI. Indeed, her reference to 9/11, an event subsequent to the exhibition’s opening, suggests that *Canvas of War* became more politicized when spectators actively participated in bringing meaning to the works that the artists and curators could not have anticipated.¹¹⁸ Canadian art historians like Robert Linsley and Robert Belton, who are attentive to the diversity of spectatorial responses to art objects, provide models for recognizing the importance of affect and emotion in aesthetic experience. By focusing on affect and emotion, we now have a starting point for theorizing how historical contingencies in the present not only colour responses to art, but understanding of the past.¹¹⁹

My question remains unanswered: is it not possible to return to the experiences of Anglophone-Canadian artists without reinforcing a monolithic historical narrative? And, if so how? First, the aversion to imperialism in war art is founded on a more fundamental

aversion to confronting the violence in history. Following Benjamin, we must recognize as historians that “there is no document of civilization which is not a document of barbarism,” and that this “barbarism taints also the manner in which it is transmitted from one owner to another.” According to Benjamin, unlike historicists who protect this barbarism in their identification with those in power – the original “victors” and current “rulers” – the task of the Benjaminian historian is to dissociate from it, to “brush history against the grain.”¹²⁰ It is possible, after all, to distinguish the rhetoric of crisis that serves institutional agendas from real historical crises. This means rejecting the discourses that subsume history into a nationalist myth, while, like Benjamin’s *Angel of History*, not turning our backs on the past (257-258). He warns of the dangers inherent to both remembering – “In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it” (255) – and forgetting: “For every image of the past that is not recognized in the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (255). To negotiate these opposing threats to political consciousness, it is necessary to embrace contingency in historical representation: “Historicism gives the *eternal* image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past” (262). In my view, visual culture is also unique in that it seems to produce especially visceral responses to the barbarism that founds culture;¹²¹ the problem for the (art)historian is how to orient and politicize spectatorial desire. When Benjamin elaborates “It is not possible to discover the past as it really was” (255) his choice of words is significant: “The past can only be seized as an image [...] To articulate

the past historically [...] it means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (255) For Benjamin, apprehension of the past is predicated not only on a receptiveness to it as a dangerous eruption, or *crisis*, but as an uncanny image. Indeed, the familiar and strange “eeriness” Robertson perceives in the CWMF in the wake of 9/11, and my own sense of the uncanny similarity of war and postwar landscapes by the Group exemplify the intuitive processes whereby history might be rescued in a Benjaminian manner from the overwhelming “conformism” of imperialist myth, and of an equally threatening obscurity.

CWMF as Memorial Site

A Benjaminian approach honours the original aims of the Fund as memorial. Returning to Danto for a moment, this means differentiating the Fund from monuments that commemorate the military achievements of the nation. Danto’s claim that monuments frequently embody myths of beginnings is corroborated by the Canadian National Vimy Memorial which marks the event that, for many, signifies the emergence of Canada as a modern nation.¹²² In contrast, memorials mark out a space for honouring the losses associated with an event.¹²³ They do not provide ideologically circumscribed interpretations of history, as narrative scripts that overdetermine spectatorial responses, but instead invite personal rituals of remembrance. The emotionally-charged contestations that surrounded Maya Lin’s memorial to Viet Nam provide famous examples of how sites of remembrance can provide the space for both mourning history,

and for debating and resisting the “conformism” that Benjamin warned can “overpower” the past.¹²⁴ This requires embracing the positive dimension of both spectators’ affective and idiosyncratic identification with aesthetic objects, and the public debates that might ensue.¹²⁵ History’s relation to affect, as I argue in other chapters, is a key problematic for Montréal painters whose politicized formalist concerns reflect their profound preoccupation with individual and collective memory. Their aesthetic “theory” prompted me to re-situate the war and postwar landscapes as a *modern living tradition* that engages with art historical precedents, European modernism and historical and contemporary socio-political contingencies, while insisting on the crucial role of the spectator in making meaning.

VI: RE-FRAMING THE POSTWAR LANDSCAPES OF THE GROUP OF SEVEN

Ontological and Historical Trauma

But what should we make of the melancholic *peacetime* compositions that return obsessively to the scenes of loss and devastation of WWI? They are not memorials to war in any conventional sense, so what are the implications of focussing on their connection to historical trauma? This line of questioning is one strategy for “brushing history against the grain” because it pursues a path ignored by postwar nationalism and formalism. Dominick La Capra argues that the ontology of absence that grounds such Western narratives as the Fall and the Oedipal myth originates in traumatic historical losses that are forgotten over time;¹²⁶ and if literature and oral forms absorb historical events, why

would visual forms not do the same? In the Group of Seven's empty northern Ontario landscapes, we can read the evacuation of the human presence, not only as the erasure of the history of Indigenous peoples and colonialism, but as a means to commemorate the dead who remain buried in Europe. Derrida's conception of history as a "detour between two presences" is useful to politicizing the Group's aesthetic as a response to war. For him, history is "an interval and exile to which one returns after a period of delay and wandering." History, then, is figured in metaphysical terms as a "fall" into time and space, and into signification. In the "fallen" realm of the real, signified presence is unavailable, but it is "preserved and promised."¹²⁷ Derrida's conception of history as the return to events whose "truth" operates as the inaccessible kernel that instigates representation, suggests the ethical imperative that drives all attempts to record memory, and how even those histories that disappear from view might return as images to be seized. Admittedly the de-commissioned artists who brought a new violence to their depictions of the Canadian landscape also shielded it from the full force of the historical event by endorsing the nationalism that became attached to their work.

War, Nationalism and Masculinity

Prior to the War, the Group did not attach nationalist significance to their work. In fact, in 1910, A.Y. Jackson declared that artists would do better to turn their attention to modernist activity outside Canada: "There never will be a school of Canadian art. The natural centre for Eastern Canadian artists will be New York, and it will be better for

themselves and their art when they realize it.”¹²⁸ But after the outbreak of war, future Group members were pressured to defend themselves against such critics as Augustus Bridle who believed that: “Modern art as exemplified most successfully in Germany was but one outcropping of the conditions which brought about the war.”¹²⁹ In this comment we discover the anxious inversion of the connection made by Stein and Picasso between political violence and modernist aesthetics. The difference between them is that conservative critics conflate the latter with predatory German imperialism.¹³⁰ Carl Ahrens condemned the “French” influence on future Group members¹³¹ in more jingoistic terms that associated “the so-called new art” with “a hermaphroditic condition of mind and an absolute lack of the knowledge of drawing, colour, design.” He urged them to abandon their youthful “pastimes” and “their now mis-spent efforts to the destruction of the Hun.”¹³² Significantly, the critic’s antipathy toward modernism is couched in a homophobic attack on the masculinity of the assumed male, civilian artists, supporting Amelia Jones’ contention that War is a “*gendering* activity” that marks “all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants.”¹³³ For combatants the War “opened up a radical incommensurability between the masculine ideal of prewar society – the image of rational, civilized, restrained Man – and the shattered masculinities littering no man’s land.”¹³⁴ Leed specifies that the imposed passivity of trench warfare further compromised the heroic masculinity of previous wars.¹³⁵ But critics’ jabs at non-combatants signal how the War differentiated and feminized some masculinities more than others; as Jones contends “to be a young man who did not fight was a highly fraught proposition.”¹³⁶

When J. E. H. MacDonald, a non-combatant, defended “The *blaze of colour, the shrieks, the daring contrasts* that startled critics” he did so on nationalist grounds and by explaining that the war had produced an “increased perception” in artists: “Canada will surely find herself artistically, as well as nationally, through the trial of the present times.”¹³⁷ The persistent absence of scholarship on the relationship of Canadian visual modernism to WWI as a site of cultural memory should be situated in relation to what Jones views as a more generalized association of WWI with a patriotic reactionism which has produced, with a few exceptions,¹³⁸ a “willful silence” on the relationship of war to *international* modernism. In the attention to how a compromised masculinity becomes articulated to modernist aesthetics in Canada during the War, we discover the seeds for the nationalization of the Group. Nationalism was meant to heal the damage inflicted by historical trauma – defined by the subject’s relation to specific historical contingencies – to the Phallic function responsible for the ontological, or naturalized formative trauma constitutive of gendered identity.¹³⁹ In the postwar years, it is apparent that in the minds of supporters of the Group, who like Augustus Bridle declared that the Group not only made “you realize that Canada is a land of unexploited bigness in paint,” their “aim in art is greater virility – and they got it,”¹⁴⁰ that the restorative to injuries inflicted upon masculinity was a virile nationalism.

Re-framing postwar landscapes by the Group in relation to their wartime production opens up larger questions about visual modernism in Canada. The members of the Group who went overseas were not the only Canadian artists of their generation

influenced by the global event. Although there is little documentation on the Newfoundland painter Maurice Cullen's career with the CWMF, among the thirteen major paintings and twenty field studies in oil¹⁴¹ many show affinities with wartime compositions by Varley and Jackson. *Hangard*, 1918 reveals formal similarities to Jackson's *Houses at Ypres*, 1917 (fig. 14); and the disturbingly graphic *Dead Horse and Rider in a Trench*, 1918 belongs alongside Varley's unflinching perspectives on war. Like Lismer, Mabel May (1884-1971) and the American-born sculptors Florence Wyle (1881-1968) and Frances Loring (1887-1968) documented wartime activity on the homefront, although their subjects were women workers in munitions factories.¹⁴² Florence Carlyle (1864-1923) received a commission for the portrait of the head of the Canadian Red Cross, Lady Julia Drummond.¹⁴³ Other artists, like West coast artist Mary Riter Hamilton (1873-1954) and David Milne (1882-1953) – who was living in New York when War broke out – received their commissions after the start of postwar reconstruction.¹⁴⁴ In Milne's words, it was as if the "dazzle system" or "violent motive" he had developed living in New York sometime after 1914¹⁴⁵ anticipated the violence and ephemerality of the subjects he painted.¹⁴⁶ For artists like Cullen, May, Hamilton, Wyle, Loring and Milne war commissions created the conditions for elucidating mature aesthetics that already showed evidence of modernist influences. Yet these influences were not decisive in determining which artists became prominent during the postwar period. Artists who like Loring and Wyle lived in Toronto and conformed to the landscape tradition of the Group received more recognition than those outside Toronto who did not embrace the Group's

nationalist goals. Those like May who lived in Montréal, Cullen who lived in the Laurentians after 1920,¹⁴⁷ Hamilton who lived in the western provinces,¹⁴⁸ and Carlyle who lived in London, England, were largely forgotten in postwar surveys of Canadian art. Milne was the exception as a landscapist who enjoyed success as a painter, in spite of his hostility to the nationalization of art, and his decision to spend most of his time outside urban centres.¹⁴⁹ According the War a greater place of prominence in the historicization of Canadian visual modernism would bring artists outside Toronto, and sites other than northern Ontario into focus. It would also mean that women artists would escape their confinement in monographs and surveys of women artists.¹⁵⁰

Milne provides an especially clear example of how postwar nationalism and formalism served to obscure the importance of the War to Canadian modernism. Milne's "violent motive" was indirectly responsible for his war art commission. On two-week furlough in London's West End, Milne was arrested by a painting in a private gallery window. Reading the label he was not only surprised to stumble upon a work by a Canadian, but to learn of the existence of a federal program for artists: "It was a painting of a troop ship, a camouflaged CPR liner. On the frame was a small card saying "purchased by the Canadian War Records for 200 guineas" [...] I stood and looked at it. It seemed something like my own work."¹⁵¹ The uncanny coincidence of Picasso's experience of discovering his theory applied in war technology, Lismer's belief that camouflage would "have a great deal to do with the development of our art in Canada,"¹⁵² and Milne's discovery of his "violent motive" in a depiction of it, underscore the

importance of the War in elucidating a key problematic in international modernism: the relationship of violence to beauty. Yet the importance of this problematic to modernism in Canada is obscured by the anatomization of art collections, and the differentiation of the Group as a national movement from such modernists as Cullen, Hamilton, May and Milne.

Like the Group's landscapes, Milne's focus on "the bare spikes of [the] trees and the tangle of shell holes, trenches and wire below them"¹⁵³ in *Maple Copse and Observatory Ridge From Dormy House*, 1919 might easily be mistaken for one of his postwar compositions. And in *Courcelette From the Cemetery*, 1919 (fig. 4) we discover not only the horizontal patterns of form and colour that will serve as the basis for his later approach to the Ontario landscape,¹⁵⁴ but also uncanny affinities with stripped and weather-blached trees by the Group. It can be argued that the latter best served nationalist agendas because the painters, who treated similar subjects in a similar manner, represented an "indigenous movement." Further, their landscapes are geographically recognizable; whereas landscapes by Milne and others are not. We can distinguish the pre-Cambrian shield, the arctic, the Laurentians, and British Columbia in the Group. But is this assumption correct? Once a year for the past several years, on, or around Remembrance Day, I have participated in a team-teaching lecture at the University of Western Ontario that introduces undergraduate students to British WWI poets and to the CWMF. We always end the lecture with the Group's postwar landscapes to show the affinities to war compositions by British and Canadian painters. When I show the last two

slides – (figs. 16-17) – I omit the titles and ask students whether they can determine whether they are scenes of war, or depictions of the Canadian landscape. Some see Northern lights in fig. 16, while others speculate that it is a distant view of shelling at night. Similarly, fig. 17 could be either a local snowy winter scene, or an ash and smoke-filled European battlefield. Sometimes students guess correctly that fig. 16, Jackson's *Gas Attack, Liévin*, 1918, is a depiction of war, and that fig. 17 his *First Snow, Algoma*, 1920, is not. The purpose of the exercise is not only to prove the importance of WWI to our “national iconography,” but to consider the imbrication of nationalism and War to international modernism.¹⁵⁵ Students are generally interested in politicizing the paintings with which they are familiar; and a few bring a sophisticated understanding of critiques of nationalism to the class.¹⁵⁶ After I disclose the titles, I ask that they look at the images again in silence. After one minute, I ask if the placement of war compositions alongside postwar landscapes alters their perception of the Group. Most of the students, who are seeing the war paintings for the first time, say they find them moving. When I ask if they agree with critics who believe the appeal of the works aestheticizes the violence of War, a show of hands inevitably suggests they do not; I say “inevitably” because the question is perhaps unfair, framed as it is by a lecture on very personal literary indictments of war. Still, the possibility of “contamination” between art forms raises the question of why poetry is not charged with aestheticizing violence. I was surprised when one student commented that she found the realization that “people were dying” in *Gas Attack, Liévin* more painful because she had at first found the use of colour beautiful. The possibility

that the beauty with which such critics as Keefer take issue might heighten sensitivity to tragedy had not occurred to me. Another student added that the postwar landscapes, now haunted by the images of war we had just looked at, were also “painful to look at.” My first point is that the nationalist meanings attached to the Group required a selection from a much larger body of work that is not geographically specific, or not as specific as is often assumed. Second, the responses I receive in these classes show how brushing art history “against the grain” requires an affective engagement with aesthetic objects.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion: War Art, Nationalism, and Memorial

Although Group members recognized that their treatment of the postwar landscape emerged from their experience of war, institutional efforts to institute works into a national mythos demonstrates a more generalized, and on-going, if “forgotten” response to historical trauma. It is not surprising that a nation whose history begins with the multiple traumatic histories generated by French and British imperialism, and whose modern identity is said to originate in the battlefields of Europe, imagines its cultural identity in terms of the survival and primacy of an aesthetic project initiated by White Anglophone artists who developed their mature styles during the War. As I argued in the previous chapter, the status of the Group in cultural history reflects what Lyman suggested was anxiety about the existence of national identity. This anxiety grew from the losses of the First World War, losses that Marius Barbeau and Jori Smith believed posed a very real threat to the cultural memory. In the next chapter, I examine how the

endeavour to discover indigenous cultural forms responded to global, political and economic crises in the decades after WWI, a project that became interdisciplinary when the ethnologist Marius Barbeau enlisted artists such as Smith in his bi-coastal ethnological projects.

1. I am translating Palardy's comment: "Ces artistes ont tracé pour les artistes canadiens la voie de l'originalité en métier d'art." Quoted in Léon Jalder, "Les Jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy," *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, Samedi 17 Mai, 1930, in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
2. Smith, Jori, "Interview by Charles Hill," 16 June 1974 (7), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993/12/16, in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
3. See Chapter Two, note 3 for the history of the association and a list of the membership.
4. See the previous chapter for a discussion of the associations' intersecting histories.
5. Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine - Wilderness Sublime or the erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 27 no.4 (Winter 1992-1993): 109
6. Bordo "Jack Pine," 108.
7. For studies that are emphatic in their theorization of visual modernism as a response to political conflict in either Germany, or France see (respectively) Thomas Harrison, *1910, The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996); and Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1995). See my previous chapter for the usefulness and limitations of their approaches to modernism.
8. For example, the rural subjects of such Australian artists as Grace Cossington show remarkable similarities to the landscapes and farm scenes of rural Québec by members of the Group of Seven and the Canadian Group of Painters. See Anne Gray ed., *Australian Art in the National Gallery of Australia* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2002).
9. Laura Brandon argues that the formerly idyllic English countryside bore traces of *memento mori* in landscapes after the War. See "The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century" (Ph.D diss., Carleton University, 2002), 116-117.
 Additionally, Joan Murray argues that both European and Québec traditions influenced the landscapes of Tom Thomson and the Group. See *Tom Thomson: Trees* (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 1999), 1-2. Romy Golan's examination of the early twentieth century urban avant-garde and folk art movements in France also reveals the

imbrication of modernism to nationalism. The Nazi celebration of paintings of “Aryan” rural workers provides yet another example of how the nationalism of Western countries relied on nostalgic fantasies about “home-land;” and even during the Prussian wars the Black Forest inspired romanticized landscapes. These examples demonstrate that the nationalization of nature was not specific to Canada; this postwar fixation took up a key thematic in international modernism.

10. Lynda Jessup, “Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 130-152.

11. See Benedict Anderson, “Introduction - Staging Antimodernism in the Age of High Capitalist Nationalism,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 99-100.

12. Ibid.

13. For a thoughtful discussion of how spectatorial responses frequently defy curatorial aims see Lynn Kellmanson Matheny, “Exhibiting Hitler: Furor over the Füror,” *Museum Anthropology*, 20 no 2 (1997): 39-48. Matheny’s article examines the public outcry over an exhibition of Heinrich Hoffman’s propagandistic photographs of Hitler in Germany, in spite of the critical focus of the exhibition.

14. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 145; Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989). I want to credit Laura Brandon’s thesis for drawing my attention to the opposition between Winter and Eksteins. I initially failed to notice that their arguments form a polemic because there is visual support for both. In my view, the disagreement stems from differing conceptions of modernism. See Brandon, “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century,” 17-18.

15. European and British artists frequently incorporated Christian imagery into their war compositions. The crucifixion that dominates *Sacrifice* (c.1918) by Charles Sims is the most explicitly religious work in the CWMF. Borrowing from the Last Judgement (especially Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel), the cascading bodies in *The First German Gas Attack at Ypres* (1918) by William Roberts also invoke Christian sacrifice. Sims and Roberts were British painters who contributed to the CWMF. For a discussion of religious iconography in the CWMF, see Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial: The Forgotten History of Canada’s War Art* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 27.

16. Lyman as quoted by Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), 205. See my discussion of Lyman's concept of "living modern art" in the previous chapter.

17. Dean Oliver and Laura Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Ottawa: Canadian War Museum, Hull: Canadian Museum Civilization Corporation, 2000), 54-58. In addition to the 900 works in the Fund, there are another 12,000 paintings, sculptures and works on paper. More than 5,000 were produced for the Second World War Canadian records and 300 for the post-1945 Canadian Armed Forces Civilian Artists Programme (CAFCAP). The collection also includes such acquisitions as the maquettes for figures on the Vimy Ridge memorial in France. Brandon, *Art or Memorial: The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art*, xiii.

18. Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial: The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art*, 17.

19. Brandon's approach is informed by cultural theorists and historians in several disciplines. Notably, she credits Charles Hill for insisting on the importance of formalist analysis to challenging the nationalist myths attached to the Group of Seven. He asserts that the nationalism attached to the Group impeded discussion of "art on its own terms – what was actually happening on the surface of the canvas – and ultimately inhibited appreciation of "such artists as Goodridge Roberts and David Milne, as well as "the movement toward abstraction." See Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada: 1995), 288; and "The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century," 135-136.

20. Further, WWI does not enter into the discussion of the polemics that came to define relations between the Group of Seven and the CAS. A number of factors help to account for this absence. First, both associations formed after WWI; the Group of Seven (1920-1933) formed two years after the War ended and dissolved prior to the formation of the CAS (1939-1948).

21. The opening of the new building coincided with the 125th anniversary of the Canadian War Museum, and the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe.

22. In Ottawa, the approaching end to military hostilities instigated plans for two projects that would have brought public attention to war art. Although there were proposals for both an archive and an art gallery in Ottawa (federal officials planned a special building to house the collection of art, artifacts and archival records, while Sir Max Aiken announced his own commissioned designs for a war memorial art gallery) a

decade of lobbying for the buildings failed. The works were deposited at the National Gallery from 1946 to 1971, until both the WWI and WWII collections were transferred to the Canadian War Museum. See Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 1-6.

23. She made the statement at the time of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery's cross-country touring exhibition in 1977. Heather Robertson, *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, and Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1977), 15. Maria Tippett concurs that since 1921 the works rarely emerged from storage because of a collective "revulsion against war." Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, 1984. David Silcox suggests that the seventeenth-century French Academy hierarchy of genres, which ranks "large-scale oil paintings and even military portraiture" higher than drawing, persists in the paucity of attention given to the large collection of field sketches; they are dismissed as preparatory work. See *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David Milne* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), 115. The fact that audiences were not receptive to the war record also had consequences at the more fundamental level of collecting. As Charles Hill observes, the fact that "the public was losing its appetite for such subjects" meant that works originally produced with the expectation of purchase by the Canadian War Memorials remained in the possession of artists. Charles Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 311 n.24.

24. In the 1920s, the I.O.D.E arranged to circulate reproductions to schools across Canada, believing that they would teach children about the "terrible wastage of war," but schoolteachers would not actively support the endeavour. In some cases, they refused to show the reproductions, believing that they would glorify war, rather than "propagate peace." Quoted in Angela E. Davis and Sarah M. McKinnon, *No Man's Land: The Battlefield Paintings of Mary Riter Hamilton 1919 - 1922* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: The University of Winnipeg, 1992), 6-17.

25. The CWMF exhibition in London, England travelled to New York City, before coming to Toronto and Montréal. At Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition the show was attended by 107, 865 spectators – many of whom were returning soldiers – over two weeks. Susan Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial: A.Y. Jackson and the Landscape of the Western Front, 1917-1918," *Canadian Military History*, 5 no.2 (Autumn 1996): 68. The works were not on view again, outside Ottawa, until the Art Gallery of Toronto exhibition of 1926. See Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 69-73; and Brandon, *Art or Memorial*, 54.

26. Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial?: The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art*, 5.

27. In 1960, the Gallery moved from the Victoria Memorial Building, which now houses the Museum of Nature, to the Lorne Building on Elgin Street. Charles Comfort,

then Director of the Gallery, appointed Major R.F. Wodehouse as curator of war art. The sixth floor of the former office building was designated for the collection, and Wodehouse organized displays that celebrated military anniversaries and individual artists. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 42; and “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century,” 160.

28. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 42. Dr. Jean Sutherland Boggs was Director of the Gallery from 1966-1976. She was head of the Canada Museums Construction Corporation during the 1980s, overseeing the Gallery’s building competition in 1982, and Moshe Safdie’s building design to 1985. See Douglas Ord, *National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

29. Some works had been transferred to the newly built Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill in 1921. It received eight of the largest works, many of which draw upon traditional Christian imagery. Not one is “in a modern style.” Brandon, *Art or Memorial*, xvi, 27.

30. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 43.

31. For example, exhibitions commemorated The Armistice in 1978, the invasion of Normandy in 1974, and the liberation of Holland in 1985. Brandon, *Art or Memorial*, 44.

32. When it moved from the National Gallery to the War Museum, the curator of the Fund, Major R.F. Wodehouse moved with it. A historian by training, Wodehouse shared the Gallery’s views on jurisdiction insofar as he distinguished between works of historical and aesthetic significance, Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 43.

33. Dr. Shirley L. Thomson to Victor Suthren, quoted in Brandon, “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century,” 168.

34. Brandon, “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collections as a Site of Meaning,” 169.

35. The third curator of the war art collection, Wodehouse promoted the documentary function of the works. In a 1968 memorandum to then Director of the Gallery Jean Sutherland Boggs (at the time of the proposed transfer of works from the Gallery to the War Museum), Wodehouse stated that both the WWI and WWII collections were “primarily collections of historical records painted by the best available artists of each period. As such they do not fit comfortably into an art museum whose prime purpose is to collect and display examples of different schools and styles of painting and sculpture through the ages.” Quoted in Brandon, “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collection,”

165. As Brandon puts it “one suspects that [Major Wodehouse’s] intellectual concerns reflected his military interests and therefore tended to discount the value of the collections as art.” Brandon, “The Canadian War Museum’s Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century,” 163.

Brandon, an art historian, challenges the opinion of Wodehouse and others who believe in the historical value of the collection. She devotes considerable attention to the issue of “veracity” in war art. Her argument produces evidence from field sketches to show how artists frequently combined, or otherwise altered the original scenes. See especially her chapter “Chapter 10: Answering Visitors’ Comments: Alex Colville and Jack Nichols,” *Art or Memorial?*, 69-77.

36. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945*, 58.

37. In 1916 the Canadian government founded the *Canadian War Memorials Fund* to hire artists to record events on the home and war fronts. The CWMF and the *Canadian War Records Office* were charged with maintaining a record of Canada’s participation in the war. The Fund was maintained in Canada, but the Records Office was directed and partially financed by William Maxwell Aitken. The list of British artists included, among others, William Orpen, Augustus John, Paul Nash, Harold Gilman, William Roberts, David Bomberg, and Canadian born Wyndham Lewis. Several women recorded activities on the “home front:” Laura Knight, Anna Airy, and Clare Sheridan. The Canadians included A.Y. Jackson, Maurice Cullen, Frank Johnston, J.W. Morrice, Arthur Lismer, David Milne, F.H. Varley, J.W. Beatty, C.W. Simpson, Mabel May, Mary Riter Hamilton and the recently immigrated Florence Carlyle and Frances Loring, among others. Some artists – like Lismer – remained in Canada, while others – like Milne and Hamilton – were only posted to Europe after the war ended. For a discussion of the contributions of Canadian artists to the War Records see Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945*; Maria Tippett, *Art At the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); and Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art By Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992); Laura Brandon, “Maurice Cullen, “A Newfoundland Artist of the Great War,” in *ARTSatlantic* 66 (Spring 2000): 44-47. Lawren Harris enlisted in July of 1916 as an instructor in musketry at Toronto and Camp Borden. See Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 62.

Notably, almost all the Canadians were from Toronto and Montréal. Even commissions for munitions factories and portraits of war heroes on the East and West coasts went to Eastern based artists. Mary Riter Hamilton’s postwar battlefield paintings came from a commission for *The Gold Stripe*, a Vancouver based magazine that consisted of stories, photographs, and other memorabilia frequently contributed by veterans. Proceeds went to *The Amputation Club of British Columbia*. For a discussion of

Hamilton's work see Davis and McKinnon, *No Man's Land: The Battlefield Paintings of Mary Riter Hamilton 1919-1922*.

38. Susan Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial: A.Y. Jackson and the Landscape of the Western Front, 1917-1918," *Canadian Military History*, 5 no.2 (Autumn 1996), 62.

39. Ibid.

40. A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1976), 47-48.

41. Marita Sturken expands on Danto's distinction between memorial and monument. See *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 46-48.

42. Sarah Tarlow *Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 151.

43. Bereavement did not come singly; many lost several family members, friends and neighbours. It was difficult for families and the military to commemorate the fallen because graves were hastily dug, or worse: bodies were frequently either left to nature, or the next round of shelling. 60,000 Canadians died overseas, and there were another 173,000 non-fatal casualties.

44. Tarlow, *Bereavement and Commemoration*, 153-154.

45. Tarlow's analysis of England's national and local commemorative practices should not be applied to the Canadian situation without similar sociological investigation. Such research would have to account for religious, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity in Canada. Tarlow's analysis is nevertheless useful to me insofar as her social history of death begins with a global trauma that presumably encouraged a re-thinking of commemorative practices internationally, especially in the industrialized countries that were most directly affected by the War.

46. A. Y. Jackson and F. H. Varley went overseas. Frank Johnston and Arthur Lismer recorded activities on the homefront. Johnston spent several months at pilot training camps in Ontario, while Lismer painted the munitions ships in Halifax. Oliver and Brandon, *The Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945*, 63-69, 70.

47. Both Johnston and Lismer received their commissions to the CWMF in 1918. Johnston was working as a commercial artist when he was commissioned to record the Royal Flying Corps training program in Ontario. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 20.

Although the War had a less decisive impact on his palette than it did other members of the Group, it did prompt his abandonment of sentimental subjects for more structurally-dynamic compositions. Lismer was commissioned to depict naval activity in the port of Halifax, where he had been working since 1916 as principal of the Victoria School of Art and Design. Like Johnston, MacDonald and Varley, Lismer had worked previously as a graphic artist in Toronto.

48. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 18.

49. Quoted in John A.B. McLeish, *September Gale: A Study of Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1955), 68. The War effectively launched Varley's career as a painter. The English immigrant to Canada had been supporting his family as a commercial illustrator in Toronto when the Fund recommended his commission (probably in 1918), in part because of the strength of recruiting illustrations he had drawn for the Royal Flying Corps. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 19.

50. Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 50. In October of 1918, Jackson was notified that he would accompany fellow CWMF artist C.W. Simpson and the Canadian contingent of the Allied forces fighting the Bolsheviks. The artists were delayed when in November of that year peace was declared with the signing of the Armistice. Finally, the plan to send the artists was cancelled in December 1919 due to a shortage of funding and a reduction in CWMF activity. Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial: A.Y. Jackson and the Landscape of the Western Front, 1917-1918," 68, 70 n.40; Tippett, *Art At the Service*, 94.

51. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War*, 19; Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 47-48.

52. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War*, 62.

53. Jackson enlisted as a private in the 60th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in June 1915, was sent overseas in November, and was invalided back to England in June 1916 after being wounded in the hip at Maple Copse near Ypres, Belgium. He was appointed to the CWMF in August 1917. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 19.

Unlike most painters who were not permitted near the action, as an infantryman Jackson not only observed the effects of the war on architecture and nature and on battle-weary troops, but also witnessed the violence of the events as they unfolded. Indeed, in recalling his new posting as a war artist he stated that if the other war artists "had been in the ranks for two years they would know they had a cushy job," Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 48.

54. John A.B. McLeish, *September Gale: A Study of Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1955), 68.

55. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), 302.
56. Quoted in Sandra Gilbert "Preface: Unreal City: The Place of the Great War in the History of Modernity," in *World War I and the Cultures of Modernity*, ed. Douglas Mackaman and Michael Mays (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 2000), ix.
57. Robert Lifton quoted in Cathy Caruth, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 134.
58. See Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle" (68) and Cathy Caruth, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton" (134) both in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 68.
59. Caruth, "An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton," 135.
60. Jackson himself recalled that his first paintings as a war artist "consisted of charming landscapes," Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 48. In agreement with art critics since the War, Susan Butlin nominates *Houses at Ypres* (1917) as the "turning point [...]" Increasingly thereafter, with few exceptions, his war paintings expose the harsh reality of the front in scenes of destruction." Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial," 64-66.
61. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945*, 19; Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, 47-48.
62. Caruth, "Recapturing the Past: Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 154.
63. Brandon, "The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century," 122.
64. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 65.
65. Quoting Shreiber Weitz, Caruth summarizes the dilemma for witnesses as a fundamental crisis of representation where "to speak is impossible, and not to speak is impossible." See Caruth, "Recapturing the Past: Introduction," 154.
66. Caruth explains that "traumatic sight" reveals the ethical obligation which is "at the heart of human subjectivity." Traumatic events, then, are not "ethically distinct" from the everyday; they are events that expose the ethical dimension of memory as intersubjective exchange. See *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 92.

67. Janice Kulyk Keefer believes that the “parody of a suburban picket fence” contributes to the brutality of the scene. “War Gaze,” *Border Crossings: A Magazine of the Arts* 86, 22 no.2 (May 2003): 68
68. John A.B. McLeish, *September Gale: A Study of Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1955), 63-3.
69. Charles Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 66.
70. Although Lismer focusses on the “camouflaged men-of-war of different nationalities” because he finds them “intensely interesting & graphic,” he believes that it is the ships that will grow in aesthetic importance. Quoted in Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 66-67.
71. Keefer, “War Gaze,” 69.
72. Keefer, “War Gaze,” 69. It is unclear whether Keefer discerns an Impressionist influence in the majority of Jackson’s war compositions, which I am arguing mark his abandonment of French Impressionism for British Vorticism.
73. Jackson’s comment appears in a wall text. Keefer, “War Gaze,” 69.
74. Keefer reconsiders her condemnation of Jackson when she discovers that the recollections of WWII painter Miller Brittain are “strangely close to that of Jackson’s.” Although she is critical of Brittain’s likening of the bombing of a German city to “a casket of jewels opening up,” she is a little more generous toward him when she learns that he “was a bomb aimer with the RCAF, performing 34 missions, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.” Keefer’s “easy and justified scorn” for Jackson appears to be informed by her unawareness of Jackson’s experience as a combatant injured in the line of duty. Keefer, “War Gaze,” 69.
75. Caruth, “Recapturing the Past: Introduction,” 154.
76. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience: 1914-1945*, 69.
77. Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, 160.
78. Elizabeth Louise Kahn, *The Neglected Majority: “Les Camoufleurs,” Art History, and World War I* (Landham MD: University Press of America, 1984), 3.
79. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 25.

80. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*, 302.
81. de Scévola, was the telephonist for an artillery unit who interested the French government in his idea of concealing artillery guns under nets splashed with earth colours, acknowledged the influence of Cubism on his invention: "In order to totally deform objects, I employed the means that Cubists used to represent them - later this permitted me, without giving reasons, to hire in my [camouflage] section some painters, who because of their very special vision, had an aptitude for denaturing any kind of form whatsoever." Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 303.
82. In 1917, British Naval Commander Norman Wilkinson developed dazzle-painting for ships, a *trompe-l'oeil* camouflage consisting of geometric patterns of sharply contrasting colours, making it more difficult to detect their size and traveling direction through a periscope.
83. Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 303-304.
84. By which Stephen Kern believes she meant Cubism. See *The Culture of Time and Space*, 304.
85. Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 303. In an obvious sense, Picasso's belief that they served similar functions would seem at odds with Cubist theory. Cubism conceives of the natural world as consisting of multiple ways of viewing objects and scenes. Thus, the multiple vantage points presented in Cubist compositions provide more information about the visual field than single point perspective. Even if objects *look* deformed, and scenes *seem* incoherent to the classically conditioned eye, the aim is to expose and to draw attention to those facets of the objects that the vanishing point obscures. Conversely, in Camouflage the goal is to *disguise* or to obstruct a coherent reading of the object in relation to its environment.
86. Quoted in Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 311.
87. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Marion Boyars, 1987), 90.
88. See Monroe Beardsley, "An Aesthetic Definition of Art," in *What is Art?*, ed. Hugh Curtler (New York: Haven Press, 1983).
89. For a critical discussion of Aestheticism see Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999). Carroll also explores how commemorative and religious art vexes the distinction between aesthetic and utilitarian art, see "Art and Recollection," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39 no.2 (Summer

2005): 1-12. Arguably, even modernist formalism divorced from instrumental concerns is political. The “a-political” aestheticism of American Abstract Expressionism, for example, must be seen as political because it advanced the agendas of Cold War institutions. See Chapters Two and Six for an elaboration of these issues.

90. Ghitta Caiserman-Roth was accused of being “bourgeois” for refusing to use her painting for explicit political commentary. In Chapter Six, I explore this issue in greater depth.

91. The title of the exhibition in German was “Entartete Kunst.”

92. de Scevola’s efforts led to the establishment of an army section devoted to developing concealment techniques for soldiers and military equipment. Directly inspired by recent animal studies, North American camouflage appeared mostly on ships. The British adopted khaki after the Boer War; and the Germans switched from Prussian blue to field gray by the outbreak of WWI. Other countries led France in camouflaged uniforms. Even though the brightly coloured nineteenth century uniforms made them easy targets for the enemy, France resisted change until it had already suffered tremendous casualties. The breech-loading rifle extended the musket’s one and two hundred yards range of accuracy to two thousand yards, and increased the fire-power of a machine gun blast to sweeping lines of bullets, making neat formations of bold red, white and blues suicidal. Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 302-304.

In his catalogue for Edward Wadsworth, fellow Vorticist Frederick Etchells claimed that dazzle camouflage “would never have developed as it did had it not been for the experiments in abstract design made by a few modern artists during the years immediately prior to 1914.” Quoted in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 232.

93. In these formations armies defended the line until the enemy reached the trenches; defenders would then “retreat to a support trench and regroup for counterattack.” Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 305.

94. Quoted in Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, 305-306.

95. To a classically trained eye, Renaissance illusionism would seem mimetic because it reproduces the eye’s apprehension of the visual field, but this is not the case. Perspective supports a particular fantasy of vision. For example, unlike perspectival lines of sight, the eye’s periphery cannot discern objects, only movement. The example shows how abstraction permits artists to introduce aspects of optical perception, including distortions and other sensory experiences, that traditional compositions exclude. Camouflagers further expose realism’s false “truth” claims by executing “paintings” capable of disappearing into, or “becoming” the objects and/or environments they

represent. In other words, camouflage reveals, contrary to conventional wisdom, abstraction to be mimetic.

96. Brandon, "The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century," 113.

97. Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 109.

98. Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial" (68). Butlin quotes from Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War* (106) who quotes from the Ph.D thesis of Ann Davis.

99. War seems to have been the catalyst for Varley's landscapes. According to Charles Hill, his postwar *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay*, 1921 stands as the first "pure" landscape that the artist executed in Canada. See *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 315.

100. John A.B. McLeish, *September Gale: A Study of Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1955), 68.

101. Quoted in Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 63.

102. Hill believes that Varley's *Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay* (1921) is a tribute to Thomson. See *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 315.

103. Karen Hanson, "Dressing Down Dressing Up: The Philosophic Fear of Fashion," in *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 66-67.

104. Freud addressed the psychic impact of trauma in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. 18*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1953-1974), 7-64. At the end of the following decade he theorized the relationship of historical trauma to myth and religious belief in "Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays (1939 [1934-38])," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. 23*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), 7-137. Notably, the shift from a focus on the impact of war on individual subjects to a theorization of the relations among mythmaking, history and identity coincides with a second global conflict, and with the Nazi persecution of Jewish communities that led to his family's exile.

105. Freud, "The Uncanny (1919)," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. 17*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis), 245.
106. Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation, and Other Works*, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London: Hogarth Press 1948), 220. For a summary of Klein's thought on these issues, see Juliet Mitchell, "Introduction," in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 21-23. For a fascinating discussion of the impact of Klein's theories of symbolization in child development on the art production and criticism of her analysand Adrian Stokes (an art historian, critic, painter and poet) see Nicola Glover, "Chapter Three: The Development of Kleinian Aesthetics" in "Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: The British School," *Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and the Public Sphere*, <http://www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap1.html> (June 6, 2006):1-28. I found Stokes ideas about how the violence of the maternal relation structures not only artistic, but also spectatorial desire especially useful to thinking about the orientation of art historians and critics to Smith's portraits in Chapter Five. In the next chapter, I return to nostalgia in my discussion of the collaboration between Jori Smith and Marius Barbeau.
107. Roald Nasgaard, *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
108. Jackson to the Editor of the *Montreal Star* in an undated and unpublished letter c.1918, quoted in Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 18.
109. Oliver and Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian Experience 1914 to 1945*, 66.
110. Brandon refers to the work, but does not reproduce it in *Art or Memorial?*.
111. Susan Butlin, "Landscape as Memorial," 64.
112. Roald Nasgaard argues that patriotism is partly responsible for the downplaying of Scandinavian influences in the Group's aesthetic. See *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890-1940*, 166, 202. Nasgaard's argument finds support in the Group members who during WWI responded to hostile critics by downplaying external influences and defending their work on nationalist grounds. For examples, see Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 67-68. Ironically, Group members rarely referred to the impact of the War on their work. See Brandon, "The Canadian War Museum's Art Collections as a Site of Meaning, Memory, and Identity in the Twentieth Century," 134.

113. Robertson's critique deviates from Joyce Zemans and Lynda Jessup insofar as she is more concerned with how this narrative "served dominant class and corporate interests," than with the relationship of museum practices and government policy. Kirsty Robertson, "We Stand on Guard for Thee: Protecting the Myths of Nation in *Canvas of War*," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures*, 24 no. 3/4 (Fall 2001): 99. See also Jessup, "Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven"; and Zemans, "Envisioning Nation: Nationhood, Identity and the Sampson-Matthews Silkscreen Project: The Wartime Prints," *Journal of Canadian Art History*, 27.

114. Robertson, "We Stand on Guard for Thee," 99. See Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 13.

115. The question is a crucial one in museum studies. In Canada, it has been central to the numerous debates and controversies over the collection, exhibition and repatriation of the objects of First Nations, to name just one example. But Reesa Greenberg's examination of the problems of representation associated with the display of art and artefacts belonging to the Canadian War Museum is most salient to my discussion because it intersects with Robertson's analysis. Like Robertson, she contextualizes the emphasis on the experience of combatants of European descent in the *Canvas of War* in relation to the War Museum's efforts to secure a permanent exhibition space after its failed attempt to allocate a larger space to a Holocaust exhibit. Both art historians contribute in important ways to an understanding of the complexity of the semiotic issues raised by efforts to memorialize the perspectives of diverse communities on the events associated with World War II. The controversy over according a place of primacy to the Shoah suggests that memorializing historical trauma is in some ways incommensurable with commemorating military achievements, and with the display of war technology. See Reesa Greenberg, "Lamentations: The Use of Visual Art in Exhibitions Related to World War II and the Holocaust in Canadian Museums at the beginning of the New Millennium," in *Afterimage: Evocations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Canadian Arts and Literature/Rémanences: évocations de l'Holocauste dans les arts et la littérature canadiens contemporains*, ed. Loren Lerner (Montréal: The Concordia University Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies, Concordia University, 2002), 188-201.

116. It seems contradictory to me that Robertson attributes the dilution of pan-nationalist rhetoric to the coincidence of the exhibition and the deployment of Canadian troops to Afghanistan one month after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, a time when we can assume nationalist sentiments were running high in some sectors of the population. Robertson, "We Stand on Guard for Thee," 102-103.

117. Robertson, “*We Stand on Guard for Thee*,” 103. She is referring to Fisher’s *The Battle for Carpiquet Airfield* (1946).

118. In her analysis of the first venue, Robertson provides a thorough analysis of the curatorial framing of the collection to show how the focus is primarily on the experiences of Anglophone Canadians of European descent; and the images of people-of-colour only serve to downplay the problem of racism in the military. She presents material evidence for her argument with examples from wall texts, and a description of the space and some of the controversies over recent acquisitions. In contrast, her praise for the second exhibition, which only receives three short paragraphs in the conclusion to the ten page article, seems contradictory. Robertson’s positive response to the second showing of *Canvas of War* says little about curatorial choices and museum policy, drawing instead on the positive response of John Bentley Mays who writes for the *National Post*. Her method leaves the reader to conclude that the first exhibition is problematic because of the politics of display; but that the second succeeds because spectators/critics bring idiosyncratic readings to it. My point is not that Robertson’s criticisms of the first exhibition are invalid, but that her argument is compromised because of her failure to address how the meaning of the works changed between exhibitions, a change that appears to stem from her own untheorized identification with current political contingencies rather than display practices.

The *Canvas of War* organizers are not unaware of the importance of current political and social contingencies to how audiences respond to representations of the past. For example, Brandon attributes the unenthusiastic reception that greeted the exhibition when it opened in Calgary and Montréal in 2003 to the unpopularity of the war in Iraq. See *Art or Memorial?*, 69.

119. See Chapter One for a description of Belton’s project. For a concise, yet inflected discussion of interpretative models that compares and contrasts historical and contemporary critical responses to art in relation to artistic goals, see Robert Linsley, “Who Owns Art History?: It is Time for Artists to Reassert their Claim Thinks Robert Linsley,” *Canadian Art*, 19 no. 2 (Summer 2002): 40-47.

120. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257.

121. The numerous controversies that attend exhibitions of visual culture support my claim. Art galleries and museums that display explicit representations of the body and sexuality, and that examine racism, genocide and violence are more likely to draw media and public attention than written texts that deal with the same issues.

122. Arthur Danto is quoted in Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, And the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1997), 47. Applying Danto's definition, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial is part monument and part memorial. The Veterans Affairs Canada website explains that the memorial, which opened in 1936, was restored and re-opened on April 09, 2007, the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The 100-hectare park where the memorial is located was part of the battlefield, and is a gift from France "in gratitude for the sacrifices made by Canadians in the First World War and for the victory achieved by Canadian troops in capturing Vimy Ridge in April 1917." See <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=memorials/ww1mem/vim>.

123. Danto quoted in Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 46-48.

124. See Sturken's second chapter "The Wall and the Screen Memory: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," (44-84, 268-278) in *Tangled Memories*, for a history and analysis of the controversy surrounding Maya Lin's design.

125. In the book which followed the *Canvas of War*, Brandon devotes a chapter to the frequently unpredictable responses to the exhibition. Brandon, *Art or Memorial?*, 69-77. Her concern is with how the representations are understood as historical documents, even when the sketches that precede finished works clearly demonstrate that artists' sacrificed historical "veracity" for aesthetic aims, *Art or Memorial?*, 77. It is important to distinguish the material facts of history from aestheticized interpretations of them; and Brandon's assertion that visual media can overpower curatorial "instructions" is certainly a challenge for curators. Nevertheless, in keeping with the original aims of the Fund as a memorial to WWI, we should be less concerned with documentary veracity, than with painting's capacity for communicating emotional truths. Signalling the difference must involve more than wall texts which can never adequately compete with the power of the image. And why would we want them to? Future exhibitions might consider how to display the Fund as a memorial site, a space that would encourage visitors to engage in personal rituals of remembrance. Such sites do not promote themselves primarily as sources of documentary knowledge.

126. Dominick La Capra, "Reflections on Trauma, Absence, and Loss," in *Whose Freud?: The Place of Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Peter Brooks and Alex Woloch (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 178-179, 196.

127. The passage, taken from *Writing and Difference*, is quoted in Joseph Adamson, "Metaphysics of Presence," in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*, ed. Irena Makaryk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 589.

128. Quoted in Jessup, "Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," 130.

129. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 67.

130. This association helps to explain a persistent absence of scholarship on the affinities between German and Canadian Modernism. In a letter MacDonald never sent, he responded to Ahrens' charges:

One fails to see why the experiments of Canadian artists should not be as "legitimate" as those allowed artists in France. We have a new country and a country practically unexplored artistically and it would seem therefore that courageous and thorough experiment is not only "legitimate" but vital to the development of a living Canadian art ... But if this Canadian new "school" so-called were attempting nothing but to follow the lead of French Innovators, Mr. A. could not consistently object as his own style is founded on that of the Barbizon school. Certainly he does not himself experiment. His art is one of multiplication not addition.

In the same letter, MacDonald not only defends artistic experimentation on patriotic grounds, but contrasts Ahrens position as "fireside critic" to that of A. Y. Jackson who was then serving in France, and to Lawren Harris who was undergoing military training at the time. See Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 68. Notably, MacDonald's sense that "a living Canadian art" could only emerge when artists liberated themselves from academic constraints anticipates aspects of John Lyman's conception of a "living art."

131. The implicit attack on MacDonald, Thomson and Harris was in response to the O. S. A. annual spring exhibition of 1916. Ahrens made the comment to a journalist for the *Toronto Daily Star*. Quoted in Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 67-68.

132. Quoted in Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 67. Ahrens was a former RCA member.

133. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 40. Jones is quoting from the introduction of *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, *et al.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

134. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*, 47-49.

135. Soldiers were passive in the sense that most of their time in trenches was spent waiting for combat. Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, England, 1979), 164.

136. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada*, 40.
137. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 68.
138. See Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-garde Art and the Great War*. Citing Kenneth Silver's *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925*, Jones notes that neither Cork nor Silver examine the relationship of New York Dada to the War. This absence supports her argument that the issue of masculinity in the work of modernists who did not go to the Front requires further attention. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 39.
139. For Jacques Lacan's theorization of gender as a formative trauma and its relationship to the phallus as the signifier that structures relations between the two sexes see, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock), 281-91. For key readings of Lacan that argue for the usefulness of his theory to feminism, see Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974); and Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose ed., *Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne: Feminine Sexuality* (London: Macmillan, 1982). For a feminist reading that argues Lacan's theory does not escape the heterosexist logic it purports to critique, see Judith Butler's chapters "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" and "Phantasmic Identification and the Assumption of Sex," in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 57-120.
140. The comment appeared in an article of 1920, and is quoted in Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 95.
141. Laura Brandon, "Maurice Cullen: A Newfoundland Artist of the Great War," *ARTSatlantic* 66, Vol. 17 no. 2 (Spring 2000).
142. Sculptors Florence Wyle (1881-1968) and Frances Loring (1887-1968) produced small bronzes of women workers in factories and munitions plants. May was sent to the Northern Electric Plant in Montréal to paint the women who replaced conscripted soldiers. Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993), 55-56. See also Julia Heller and Nancy G. Heller eds. *North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).
143. Carlyle served in the Women's Land Army during the War doing hospital work and supporting the Red Cross from sales of her work. The portrait is in the collection of the War Museum. Tippett, *By a Lady*, 56-57.

144. Both Hamilton and Milne found that their usual method suited the rapid, but accurate topographical approach to watercolours required by the British army. Hamilton, who went to Europe after 1918 as reconstruction began, found that unpleasant working conditions forced her to develop as a painter. Commissioned by the Vancouver based magazine *The Gold Stripe*, Hamilton endured not only a “cold and uncomfortable” military hut and inedible food, but risked attack from “gangs of criminals” to complete most of her battlefield paintings *in situ*. Angela E. Davis, *No Man’s Land: The Battlefield Paintings of Mary Riter Hamilton* (Winnipeg: The University of Winnipeg, 1992), 13, 22.

David Milne received his war art commission from the federal government, but like Hamilton, only after the start of postwar reconstruction. He moved back to Canada from Boston Corners in New York State after conscription, served as a private in Canada, Britain, and France before receiving his war artist commission after the Armistice. By 1919 he was working for the War Records Program at the rank of lance-corporal. Ian M. Thom, “Boston Corners,” in *David Milne*, ed. Ian Thom (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1991), 67-71. David Silcox, *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David Milne* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), 93.

145. Thom, “Boston Corners,” 72.

146. Ibid.

147. He lived mainly in a cabin he built around 1920. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 125.

148. She lived in Winnipeg between 1926-1929 before moving to Vancouver. Davis, *No Man’s Land*, 38.

149. As Dennis Reid puts it, Milne was interested only in “pure painting” and not the Group’s “aggressive nationalism.” During the 1920s and early 1930s Milne spent time in New York State, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montréal, but lived mainly outside urban centres in Temagami, Longstaff’s Pump Works at Weston (northwest of Toronto), and Six Mile Lake on the Severn River north of Orillia. He continued to move residence until his death, and preferred small towns and the country to Toronto. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 170-176.

150. Whereas the male war artists I discuss appear in both Dennis Reid’s 1973 and 1988 editions of *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* none of the women do (since Loring and Wyle were sculptors they are necessarily excluded). With the exception of Hamilton, all the women are included in Maria Tippett’s *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, a book published in 1984, eleven years after Reid’s first edition, and after a decade of feminist recovery projects.

151. David Silcox, *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David Milne*, 92.
152. Lismer focusses on the “camouflaged men-of-war of different nationalities” because he finds them “intensely interesting & graphic,” but he believes that it is the ships that will grow in aesthetic importance. Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 66-67.
153. Thom, “Boston Corners,” 77.
154. Milne’s description of the “most important things I have developed in my painting” establishes a direct link between his post-war aesthetic and his war records: “The use of colored streaks to mark the boundaries of shapes - contours. This was developed in France through a desire to mark the contours of battle fields simply and decidedly. Used notably in the drawings from St Eloi and Gravenstafel.” Quoted in Thom, “Boston Corners,” 94.
155. The comparison of wartime and postwar compositions illustrates Griselda Pollock’s argument that style serves as a form of self-promotion by instituting the artist into the scene. Her argument that Van Gogh’s frenetic brushstrokes and Gauguin’s flattened and contoured surfaces not only became identified with Arles and Tahiti respectively, but also served to remind tourists of the artists who produced them, might be applied to the Group: is it possible to separate Northern Ontario from the Group of Seven’s treatment of it? Bringing the war and postwar works into conversation with each other disrupts this identification. Additionally, although the Group’s signature style “lays claim” to specific regions in Canada, unlike Van Gogh and Gauguin, their stylistic affinities and subjects (they frequently painted the same sites from similar vantage points) compromises the individuality of their formal signatures (Varley’s *Stormy Weather - Georgian Bay* and Lismer *A September Gale* provide a good example). Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 69-70.
156. It is worth noting that in my experience, most of the students in English at the University of Western Ontario are descendants of several generations of Canadians. Students who have recently moved to Canada, and who are seeing the Group for the first time, are sometimes bemused by the nationalist significance attributed to the postwar landscapes. The reactions of the latter frequently helped to push class discussion of the relationship of War to nationalism by de-naturalizing it.
157. I am grateful to the students of *English 254E* at the University of Western Ontario from 2002-2006. The “curatorial experiments” in which they participated were invaluable to this chapter.

Chapter Four: The Urgency of Myth: Jori Smith, Marius Barbeau and History

When we came to Charlevoix County in 1930, Baie-Saint-Paul was hardly more than a village, sprawled haphazard fashion near the St. Lawrence River. A small tangle of twisting, narrow streets, the hamlet lay at the broad base of a triangle of land formed by the valley of the Rivière du Gouffre [...] At the end of the valley, mountains towered above the settlements [...] To our eyes, long accustomed to urban landscape, the valley appeared an oasis.

A great many of these small farmers were poor, their lives as barren as the land around them materially, but not poor in spirit. Far from it. How I envied them their spirit of love and concern for one another [...] We came to like these people of the poor concessions so much that, in the Spring of that year, we went to live high up in the mountains in the concession of La Misère between Baie-Saint-Paul and Les Eboulements.

Little happened in the lives of the people of the concession that might distinguish one day from another. Each season brought with it its own traditional patterns of behaviour, routines which had endured since the first days of the settlement. Geographic isolation, too, had played a part in encrusting these patterns by making the region virtually immune from outside influences or pressures to change [...] Change, when it did come, would sweep the old ways with the force of a tidal wave. How fortunate it was that Marius Barbeau and a few others, realizing what was about to happen, worked so assiduously to document that doomed culture. ¹

– Jori Smith, 1998

I: VISUAL MODERNISM AND NATIONALISM

Introduction

Smith's comments are taken from *Charlevoix County, 1930*, a memoir that draws from her recollections and journal entries of the 1930s, and offers a portrait of rural life just prior to the dramatic transformations Smith later witnessed. Her evident fondness for the land and people of Charlevoix is the focus of this chapter, a fondness that suggests

how nostalgia – a form of memory that Kim Sawchuk describes as the “feminine other” to history – establishes an empathetic bridge between the present and the subjects forgotten by history. Her reminiscences not only provide a personal perspective on life in rural Québec during the 1930s, but are also a meditation on the relationship of mortality to aesthetics and memory. In this sense, Smith’s memoir is the clearest articulation of her “aesthetic theory,” a theory that serves as the ground for the visual art I discuss in subsequent chapters.

Smith’s nostalgia for Charlevoix is also the point of departure for examining a key problematic in modernist aesthetics: Primitivism. In this respect, her remarks about the importance of Marius Barbeau’s ethnological research, and the villages of eastern Québec as a “doomed culture” are especially significant. When Smith accompanied her husband Jean Palardy and Barbeau on research trips to Charlevoix County during the 1930s, she helped to fulfil Barbeau’s goal to involve urban artists both in the preservation of cultural traditions, and in the production of an indigenous *modern* art that would be bound to these traditions. In this sense, Barbeau and Smith’s overlapping projects contribute to the representation of Canada as a modern nation. This chapter begins with a review of recent historical surveys to show that although historians scarcely credit artists with affecting the course of history, they do recognize the role of artists in nation-building. In Anglophone Canada, for example, the Group of Seven’s northern Ontario landscapes figure prominently in Canadian social and political histories that trace Canada’s movement from settler-colony to independent nation-state. In this way, Toronto artists play a significant

role in the narration of nation. Similarly, in Francophone Québec, artists figure prominently in the narration of its cultural history. Furthermore, the figures of the “Indian” and the “habitant” serve to embody a mythic ancestral past in both versions of the historical narrative, betraying a shared nostalgia for the supposed authenticity and simplicity of rural life. In the overlap between art and ethnology, then, we discover not only the effort to involve artists in the writing of cultural history, but the attempt to direct the course of visual modernism in Canada. My discussion takes up the implicit invitation of these projects by bringing Smith’s memoir into conversation with the extant histories of Canada and Québec to explore both how Barbeau’s collaborations with artists participated in the writing of these histories, and how Smith contributes to the historical memory.

Surveying Canada: The Artist in History

In English language social and political histories, the northern Ontario landscapes of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven occupy a prominent place in the narration of Canada’s movement from settler-colony to Modern nation. Kenneth McNaught provides a typical example of how the Group comes to embody “the renewed search for identity (at least, English-speaking Canadian identity)” in historicizations of the 1920s.² In general, histories of Canada fail to mention that such artists as A. Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer produced numerous compositions of rural Québec. The emphasis on landscape painting as the shared ground among members serves English-speaking Europeans’ vision of a

distinct cultural identity rooted in a specific geographical region in Canada, and provides the symbolic representations that inspired works in other disciplines.³ Indeed, Robert Bothwell goes so far as to suggest that the Group succeeded where all other art forms failed.⁴ The visual arts do not merely *represent* an aspect of an existing cultural identity, but participate in its production by providing what cultural theorist Eva Mackey describes as the “mobilization” of “a symbolism of unpeopled and rugged wilderness.” This mobilization emerges from Canada’s desire to differentiate itself from other modern nation-states: “it is a northerness that is not American, and a harsh wilderness that is *not European*, or at least *not British*.” Paradoxically, “the northern discourse of the Group of Seven,”⁵ which sought to disengage from an identification with the imperialism that constituted Canada geopolitically, suggests the history of relations with these other nations. That is, the evacuation of history from the natural environment betrays a conception of nature based on the fraught and anxious challenges of early colonial life.

This was an intensely political manoeuvre. As Edgar McInnis suggests “writers as well as artists tended to turn for their subjects either to the *primitive* and remote aspects of Canada or to the distant past.”⁶ The landscape imagery that symbolizes a national modernist iconoclasm also represents a conservative attempt to preserve a colonialist vision of cultural history. For Carl Berger this apparent contradiction suggests that the search for “authentically Canadian modes of expression necessarily involved a critical attitude to the past.”⁷ While their observations refer explicitly to the Group’s reaction against academicism, the association of the Group’s landscapes with “the distant past”

and with the “primitive” raises an issue that Svetlana Boym believes is central to modernist aesthetics: the preoccupation with history.⁸ Notably, in histories of Canada the “primitive” and the “distant past” became spatialized in the present; “remote” sites in Ontario serve as projective screens for nationalist fantasies. Barbeau’s ethnological projects reveal a similar concern with history, in this case spatialized as the Northwest coast, and rural Québec.

Artists also play an important role in the narration of Québec history. For example, *Le Guide culturel du Québec*,⁹ includes a short chapter on art production. Again, the Group’s landscapes signify the post-war search for national symbols. In contrast to English language histories of Canada, however, the authors oppose the Group’s nationalism to the Québec scenes by Rodolphe Duguay and Marc-Aurèle Fortin that belong to no “particular school” (207- 208). This comparison of the Group to Québec artists effectively severs nationalism from what English-language histories figure as the arrival of visual modernism in Canada. For Québec historians, visual modernism does not “pierce the Québec scene until the 1930s” with John Lyman’s efforts to raise public awareness about the arts through regular contributions to *The Montrealer*. In English-language histories of Canada, images of rural Québec represent the regionalist dimension of this broadly based nationalism.¹⁰ For historians of Québec, nationalism and modernism are in opposition to each other. Nationalism, in these instances, designates artists such as Alfred Laliberté who remain bound to Francophone traditions.¹¹

The “crisis of abstraction” in the 1950s effectively decided the issue of the

relevance of nationalism to modernism by eliminating “subject matter” from the visual field.¹² But during the 1930s and 1940s the issue of nationalism figured prominently in the aesthetic debates, producing, among other fault lines, a schism between Toronto and Montréal artists. As a result, regionalist/nationalist forms took on even greater significance. It is not surprising, then, that histories written almost half a century later overlook this aspect of art production in Québec. For the authors of *Quebec Since 1930*, the “urban settings” of the CAS “represented a break with the primitivism and ruralism of the Canadian and Quebec landscape” and “reflected a desire to update the practice of art by bringing it closer to modern life.”¹³ This effectively writes out of history the landscapes and village scenes produced by the CAS members who travelled to Charlevoix County as well as rural member Simone-Mary Bouchard, who made her local experiences the subject of her art.¹⁴ If Canadian history remembers the first “modern” art movement in terms of a geographically situated aesthetic, it is because the empty landscapes of the Group seem to mark Canada’s emancipation from cultural imperialism by evacuating all traces of colonial history. Conversely, in Québec histories, the landscape genre becomes identified with a colonialist sensibility, and the oppressive Church and State controls that produce it.

Unlike histories of the province, regional histories of Québec re-frame these orthodoxies. Indeed, the histories of the Charlevoix region generally suggest that rural Québec competed with northern Ontario for primacy as an important site of inspiration for both Toronto and Québec artists during the 1920s and 1930s. In the journal

specifically devoted to Charlevoix, most issues contain articles devoted to the artistic presence in the region. In general, such contributors as Françoise Labbé believe that Clarence Gagnon's arrival in Baie-Saint Paul in 1900 served to attract the younger generation of artists who followed A.Y. Jackson in believing that "Baie-Saint-Paul est le centre d'art le plus animé au Canada."¹⁵ Serge Gauthier believes that these external influences institute Charlevoix as an idealized landscape into "l'histoire de l'art canadien," while local artisans and "popular or naive" painters, encouraged by the tourist trade, contribute to this "page intéressante de l'histoire de Charlevoix."¹⁶ In this way, Gauthier suggests a distinction between the local artists and artisans who contribute to the local economy and to the history of the region, and the Toronto and Montréal artists who secure a place for Charlevoix in the history of Canadian art. In their own ways, both contributed to the "folklorization" of Charlevoix, which is now cemented by the development of tourism.¹⁷ As Gauthier notes, the popular conception of Charlevoix as an artifact of an idealized Norman past derives from "d'universitaires urbains." He locates the origins of this mythologization of the region in 1916, when Marius Barbeau begins his efforts to document Québec folklore.¹⁸

II: BARBEAU'S *INTERDISCIPLINARY* PROJECT:

Nationalism(s) and Visual Modernism

Barbeau establishes a conceptual bridge between Canadian and Québec cultural histories in a number of publications on the visual arts.¹⁹ In *Painters of Quebec* he situates

the arrival of modern painting in the province prior to the First World War with Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Côté, who, in spite of the obvious “influence of the French School [...] comes very near responding to the Canadian environment to the full.”²⁰ While Barbeau believes that Clarence Gagnon’s scenes of rural Québec represent a significant contribution to painting, it is “a third painter, Marc-Aurèle Fortin [who] brings us into the next phase in the short history of modern painting in Quebec - a phase purely Canadian” (11). Although these assertions bring Barbeau in line with Québec historians who regard the post-Impressionist influence as marking Modernism’s arrival in Québec/Canada, he identifies modernism with Canadian nationalism.²¹ In fact, his study of Québec artists emerges as an argument for their primacy as Canadian Modernists. Barbeau’s conclusion is perhaps most revealing in this respect. He reserves his final comments for Stanley Cosgrove, asserting that “in him we now find a new element or inspiration in Laurentian painting that bids fair to enrich our Canadian vision.”²² In this gesture, Barbeau designates the Québec Laurentians, rather than northern Ontario, as the privileged space for invoking a national culture.

Since Barbeau defines Canadian Modernists as painters who focus on Québec rural life, he not surprisingly institutes Toronto artists into a regionalist history of the province. *The Kingdom of Saguenay* mixes fact, anecdote, myth, and testimonial in a collection of essays that encompasses Charlevoix and the areas eastward to the Saguenay River. For Barbeau, A.Y. Jackson, here figured as “Père Raquette,” displaces Clarence Gagnon as a regional painter because of the former’s preference for the snowshoes that

inspire his nick-name. Gagnon “introduced skiing to the district,”²³ but “the snowshoe and the Quebec *cariole* are signs of permanence, while the ski and the automobile belong to an age of quick changes” (75). According to Barbeau, the spread of the ski becomes an artistic liability:

most of the painters on skis, including Clarence Gagnon, who have sketched scenes of springtime at the Baie St. Paul, have left the district not to return. But Père Raquette still comes to the back country that never ceases to furnish him with new themes because he knows better than the others how to fathom its secrets and find inspiration. (75)

Modern skiing apparel is responsible not only for the “disappearance” of traditional practices, but also for the emigration of such artists as Gagnon. The notion of permanence again enters Barbeau’s discussion of culture when he explains that Jackson, as “Père Raquette, is comparable only to Krieghoff in taking “pleasure in searching the soul of the people of ancient Quebec” (76). He conceives of the artist as a visionary who divines “secrets” from the natural and cultural landscape, recognizing the inhabitants of rural Québec as an embodiment of a distant past. Barbeau’s conception of Charlevoix conforms to Bakhtin’s chronotope, a fictional setting, in which “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space.”²⁴ In Barbeau’s comments the historical past becomes “flesh” and “artistically visible” in the natural and human environment. If his nostalgia seems more “artistic” than scientific, it not only demonstrates Johannes Fabian’s insight that myth-making is constitutive of anthropology, but points to the “museal sensibility” that Huyssen believes has “infiltrated all areas of

everyday life.”²⁵ Barbeau’s insistence upon the “timelessness” of anthropology’s “primitive others”²⁶ denies the contiguity of non-industrial communities and the dominant groups that study them. It constitutes Charlevoix, to borrow from Foucault, as a heterotopia,²⁷ or “counter-site” (22-27) to the vertiginous city. As a “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live,” a heterotopia provides “a mirror,” or an “over there” for self-reflection (24). Charlevoix as heterotopia, then, provides a vantage point on modern urban space by existing in real time as a living museum that “accumulates” time (26). As Kim Sawchuk explains, the spatio-temporal disorientation produced by the monumental architectures, technological speed, and standardized time that constitute urban space generates the “antimodernist” desire for an imagined historical moment when “the sense of time accommodated the rhythms of the body, the movements of the sun, the rotation of the earth, and the passing of the seasons.”²⁸ Indeed, Smith makes a similar point to explain Barbeau’s presence in rural Québec: “Each season brought its own traditional pattern of behavior which had endured since the first days of the settlement [...] It was fortunate that Marius Barbeau and a few others, realizing what was about to happen, worked so assiduously to record that manner of life which was soon to disappear.”²⁹ For Sawchuk the aestheticization of the body’s relation to pre-industrial social and natural environments is characteristic of international modernism;³⁰ but Smith’s comments suggest that in Canada, at least, economic crisis helped to further stimulate antimodernist sentiments. In the farming community of Lotbinière, for example, “the economic depression had not greatly affected the ancient

rhythm of agricultural life.”³¹ Notably, the belief in an opposition between a diachronic urban culture and a synchronic “primitive” culture serves to institute the space of the rural other into a national narrative. While sites in northern Ontario are emptied of history to provide the space for projecting Anglophone Canada’s nationalist fantasies, Charlevoix becomes saturated with French history.

Barbeau: *The Primitive and the Modern*

Barbeau’s efforts to inscribe images of rural Québec by both Toronto and Montréal painters into a still emerging history of Canadian modernism seems to challenge historians Thomson and Seager. They contend that the early twentieth century “goal of building a *Canadian national spirit* was the antithesis of the French-Canadian resolve to survive as a French Catholic nation.”³² Both of these supposedly incommensurable aspirations found expression in his unstinting promotion of Québec culture in a more broadly based Canadian nationalism.³³ Of course, he did recognize that the latter involved more than an exclusive focus on the former, even if the supposedly northern Ontario “wilderness” did not figure as an object of study. Instead, Barbeau turned to the objects of his own anthropological research and later to urban painters. In explaining the originary cause of his research Barbeau recalled that as a college student he had been startled by his encounter with Abbé Prosper Vincent, who “although he was a priest, he looked like an Indian.”³⁴ Barbeau’s surprise results neither from Vincent’s Huron heritage, nor from his vocation, but from the intersection of the two. The apparent incongruity of the somatic

and sartorial codes which mark the Abbé stereotypically as both “Indian” and Francophone Catholic trouble the supposed distinctiveness and integrity of the two communities, and especially the concept of the Québécois descended from French ancestry. Indeed, if we take Barbeau’s racialized conception of the Abbé Prosper Vincent at face value, the priest’s body exposes the history of contact between Europeans and First Nations peoples. Anthropology becomes the discourse whereby the other will be classified and segregated from the “pure” point of origin.³⁵ Interestingly, it is the incongruity of this formative experience, its perceived conflation of opposites, that produces the desire to search for and separate that which is the true “soul” of Québec from the primitive other. The anxious vision of “racial intermingling,” then, is domesticated into the melancholy foundation of a kind of research that will work to sever the “primitive other” from the “habitant” by denying the implications of their historical connection. My intention in focussing on this incident is not simply to expose Barbeau’s racialized assumptions, but to situate his fantasmic identification with the communities he studied in relation to a larger cultural imaginary. In other words, Barbeau’s personal motivations speak of the shared cultural fantasies that underpin the institutionalized visions of his generation.

Why did Barbeau turn to urban painters as a means of aiding this project? To begin, twentieth-century painters participate in a long history of colonial Europeans’ mythologization of “indigenous others,” which finds expression in such painters as George Heriot (1766-1844) and Paul Kane (1810-71). Notably, Krieghoff, the artist that

Barbeau singles out as Jackson's "forerunner," and the apparently best equipped to search "the soul of the people of ancient Quebec," contributes not only to the image of the "habitant" but to a second "primitive other." Krieghoff's scenes of First Nations' encampments along the St. Lawrence help to define the artist as a painter of colonial life, just as West Coast communities help to secure the reputation of such artists as Jackson as *modern* painters. Barbeau's collaboration with artists to document First Nations began during the 1920s, when the Canadian Pacific Railway commissioned him to author the text for *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies* (1923).³⁶ The CPR also purchased the drawings by New York portraitist Langdon Kihn that became illustrations for the book. But as Lynda Jessup argues, Barbeau's nationalist conception of Canadian art history emerged from his contact with members of the Group of Seven.³⁷ He claimed that Jackson approached him suggesting "Why don't you use some of ourselves, Canadians [...] I had not thought of this before, of asking a Canadian painter to come with me. Indians, and their work formed part of our big exhibition on the Northwest Coast at the National Gallery in 1927-28."³⁸ The artists were charged not only with making visual records of what they saw, but also with offering "their opinion as to the quality of this art."³⁹ Although Barbeau's collaborations with artists might seem to anticipate cultural theorists who theorize the problems inherent to Western anthropology's uncritical "borrowing" of aesthetic concepts from art history, and vice versa,⁴⁰ his reliance on the opinions of artists was premised on modernist assumptions about the universality and timelessness of aesthetic principles.⁴¹ Indeed, the combined discourses of art and

anthropology serve to support the “modern-art-culture-system” which James Clifford argues “classifies objects hierarchically.”⁴² As Barbeau elucidates his views on the relationship of his ethnology to modern art, it becomes apparent that he privileges Western urban art, insisting that “what was worthy in Indian and French-Canadian arts unfortunately belongs to the past.”⁴³ Further, this kind of cultural production provides “the materials for the future arts of Canada, either musical, literary or plastic. They are the basic materials. These are available to all Canadians and the modern arts cannot develop in a way that reveals originality unless these are known by our artists and creators of present day.”⁴⁴ By relegating the aesthetic sensibilities of non-Europeans and rural communities to the past, Barbeau betrays the same Eurocentric and imperialist assumptions that grounded modern aesthetics and anthropology in Europe.⁴⁵

In Barbeau’s view, it is the use of “primitive” motifs that secures a nation’s status as modern. The speech he delivered on the occasion of the exhibition *Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* at the Art Gallery of Toronto in January 1928, and again at the Art Association of Montreal one month later helps to situate historically the “primitivist” impulse that motivated Barbeau’s collaborations with artists: “These manifestations of Canadian art, both ancient and modern, are of vital significance. They speak of the country that is ours [...] Thanks to them [...] we may no longer fear that death will wholly obliterate our generation. Something of our times will survive.”⁴⁶ In the connection Barbeau establishes between “ancient” and “modern” art, we discover the apparently contradictory desire for both traditional and transcendent aesthetic principles,

which he reconciles by detaching modernism from the history of European art, and by writing modern artists into an “indigenous” cultural history. For Andreas Huyssen the “attempt to find a new mooring”⁴⁷ in the nostalgic turn to mythical histories occurs when a nation confronts “some imminent traumatic loss” (5). Barbeau’s comments suggest that his genealogy is a response to the incursions of the First World War on the living memory of a generation, and the concomitant loss to the collective memory. In 1941, he expressed similar fears about the impact of global war on Canada’s cultural development.⁴⁸ Anxiety about the present and imminent future, then, informs the “modernist” preoccupation with mythical “primitive” pasts (165). This genealogy effectively detaches aesthetic practices from their historical and cultural origins to produce national myths.⁴⁹

Barbeau and Smith in Charlevoix

Barbeau’s collaborations with artists in Eastern Canada between 1925 and 1928,⁵⁰ and during the 1930s shared the same aim: to recover, document, and to use Québec’s rural traditions as the basis for an emergent modernism. Barbeau’s preservationist efforts, then, continued to serve national aspirations for the culture that were not exclusively ethnological. In 1941, he referred to his collection of objects, sound recordings, and oral recollections as a history that would serve as the “warp of a new tapestry.”⁵¹ The Montréal artists, including CAS members Jori Smith, her partner Jean Palardy, and Stanley Cosgrove, as well as co-exhibitor Jean-Paul Lemieux, assisted Barbeau in collecting furniture, pottery, carvings, and rugs. These trips brought the urban artists in

touch with the Charlevoix or Murray Bay “Primitives.” A few of the loosely knit group of local artisans and self-taught⁵² artists who had been producing for a largely American tourist trade became hosts to, subject matter for, and co-exhibitors with the CAS.⁵³ A variety of visual media record the importance of the region to this generation of “modern” artists. Furthermore, the large collection of objects – carvings, stained glass, books, furniture, rugs, and household objects – acquired by Smith and Palardy, and now housed by Canadian museums,⁵⁴ contribute in a more formal sense to the historicization of the region, as do the latter’s documentary on Charlevoix’s popular painters, and his book on Québec furniture.⁵⁵ Similarly, Jori Smith’s recently published memoir of her experiences living in the area during the 1930s demonstrates its significance to urban artists as a source of inspiration. While most of these documentary and creative projects romanticize rural life by ignoring the visible presence of industry,⁵⁶ they celebrate the late arrival of modern technology. Smith’s comments exemplify the general sense of urgency that artists attached to their projects: “I’ll tell you why they were important. They [the residents] were living exactly as in the eighteenth, seventeenth centuries, like their parents and like their grandparents [..] The war and the advent of radio abruptly and drastically changed this way of life forever.”⁵⁷ Since Smith echoes Barbeau’s sentiments about the impact of modernization and World War II on rural Québec it is not surprising that she believes in the ethnologist’s efforts to “assiduously [...] document that doomed culture” (65). Although urbanites frequently acknowledge the harsh living conditions, these constraints become aestheticized in the nostalgic desire to safeguard the traditional

practices of French ancestry.⁵⁸ While Algonquin Park demarcates a space for a primordial past by evacuating the history of Aboriginal peoples and the industrial ventures of European-Canadians in the region, Charlevoix becomes a mythologized site that effects a similar erasure.

III: SMITH'S MEMOIR AND NOSTALGIA

Nationalism and the Fantasy of *Race*

If protectionist attitudes about French culture obfuscate the history of contact between First Nations and European Canadians, Smith's memoir helps to expose it. On the one hand, the "one-room shanties, where ten to fifteen families lived," which flanked such towns as Saint-Urbain, effectively segregated First Nations' residents from other townspeople. The latter "disliked and distrusted" the former because "they held only squatters' rights" and "lived mainly by poaching salmon in the summer and hunting in the winter" (31). On the other hand, the social "differences" between the groups is called into question by Smith's observation that "Whites and Indians alike had engaged" in these illegal practices "regularly for centuries"(31). Similarly, Smith's memories of the families with whom she, Palardy, and Barbeau socialized – the same families Barbeau interviewed about local customs – reveal the permeability of the boundaries that divided the communities. For example, Smith describes their friends the Fortins as "part Indian"(67) and Rose Lavoie as "at least three-quarters Indian" (62). Since she does not explain her quantification of the "racial" mix she perceives in the Fortin and Lavoie

families, it is difficult to assess how the people she describes identified themselves, or even if they discussed their family genealogies with her. Nevertheless, the asides which pepper her recollections of the people in no way suggest that the maintenance of racial purity was a concern for the townspeople themselves. Instead, the question of ethnicity was overdetermined by the socio-economic differences that separated impoverished “Indian squatters,” wealthy urban tourists, and the other villagers who survived on farming, fishing, and tourism. For this reason, the concept of “race” at the basis of ethnological and artistic activity in the region emerges as an urban fantasy.

How do the ethnological and creative objects generated by the nostalgia for mythic pasts contribute to the historical consciousness? The word nostalgia derives from the late seventeenth century experience of war, when the Swiss doctor Johannes Hoffer coined the term to describe the condition of homesickness that afflicted Swiss soldiers fighting abroad.⁵⁹ It seems, then, that the structure of feeling and memory originated in the experience of war. Borrowed from the Greek words *nostos* for return home, and *algia* for pain, nostalgia and *nostalgie* translate into English and French as a longing for home. Svetlana Boym argues that “by the twenty-first Century the passing ailment” has “turned into the incurable modern condition”(XIV). Moreover, Susan Stewart theorizes nostalgia as the obliteration of history through a conservative valorization of an imaginary past.⁶⁰ Certainly, the “primitivisms” of the interwar period demonstrate the conservative tendency to safeguard mythologized versions of Canadian history, while “forgetting” the real historical traumas that produce the longing for home and country in the first place.

Nevertheless, as Boym suggests, nostalgia encompasses complex forms of subjective and collective memory which should not be dismissed simply as a denial of material events.

Nostalgia: Recovering the “Feminine” in History

In a crucial insight, Kant believed that a sensibility that combines melancholy, nostalgia and self-awareness does not objectify the past, but rather heightens sensitivity to ethical ambiguities, and to the arbitrariness of social constraints.⁶¹ Where historical objectivity necessarily objectifies the past by inviting cognitive responses to it, Smith’s aestheticized projects invite an emotional identification with history. In this sense, we can think of aesthetic pleasure as a structure of feeling which opposes the anaesthetizing effects of disciplined detachment. Sawchuk describes nostalgia as a sensorial form of history which troubles the “somatophobia” of traditional philosophy and historiography. Nostalgia is demeaned in part because of its association “with the feminine, which is itself associated with the irrational and sentimental” (161). But what would it mean to recuperate the disavowed “feminine” in history? Or, to put it differently, what does a focus on the affective dimension of history contribute to our understanding of the past?

Smith’s memoir suggests that the aestheticization of the past moves us toward embodied conceptions of history that either expose, or counter the epistemic assumptions that structure our relation to the past as other, or in the case of Primitivism, the other as the past. The memoir not only participates in Barbeau’s attempt to recover Québec’s mythic past, but exposes the genealogy of the “pure laine” as a fantasy. Unlike Barbeau’s

recordings of folk songs, and his catalogues of artisanal motifs, Smith's reminiscences about her encounters with the local residents make repeated references to the bodies that carry the visible traces of a long history of contact between Europeans and First Nations. Memoir writing and other aesthetic forms are more likely to produce embodied conceptions of history because they introduce the sensorial, emotional, and fantasmic dimension of the narrator's perceptions. The chronological structure of the document (Spring 1930 to Summer 1936), for example, maps the region surrounding Baie-Saint-Paul according to the desires, social interactions and seasonal considerations that prompted Smith and Palardy to move house among the villages of Baie-Saint-Paul, Saint-Urbain, Petite-Rivière-Saint-François and the concessions of La Misère (between Baie-Saint-Paul and Les Eboulements), and La Décharge on Rivière du Gouffre, a concession within the confines of Saint-Urbain.⁶² To put it in Nietzschean terms, in its focus on the materiality of everyday life, the subjective gaze of the author, and the institutional desires at the basis of Barbeau's genealogy, Smith's memoir offers a *genealogical* critique of it.⁶³ This point is illustrated in one passage where Smith contrasts her pleasure with Barbeau's impatience over his interview subjects' digressions:

Man as an individual did not interest Marius, at least not as a field of scientific study. [After he would leave, it] was often the case that one of the children, tantalized by some allusion to the mysterious past, would tug at a grownup's sleeve and ask, *Dis donc, maman, qu'est-ce que vous alliez dire de notre grand-père lorsqu'il s'est sauvé dans le bois pendant la guerre?* [...] On those few occasions when the children were able to loosen their mothers' tongues in my presence, they showed such rapt interest in what was being said that it was obvious they had never heard the tales before. (63-64)

Her reminiscences are peppered with colloquialisms that are difficult to translate, but convey a sense of the curiosity and ingenuous wit of the children of the community. The French in the quotation above translates roughly into English as “say mom, what were you going to say about the time that our grandfather ran-off into the woods during the war?” The passage suggests how a subjective and emotional – that is, an “undisciplined” – approach to cultural memory introduces the “digressive” and “anecdotal” elements that fall outside the ethnographer’s field of enquiry. It demonstrates how ethnographic and artistic interest in the region brought a dimension of the community’s history to the next generation who frequently had never heard the tales before. By leaving certain comments in French, Smith chooses to let the speakers “speak for themselves.” This choice demonstrates a respect for the other’s voice and signals her recognition that, as an anglophone learning to speak French, she is more of an “outsider” than Barbeau: “To our neighbours and our new friends in Charlevoix, we were to say the least, exotic. Especially me, “une anglaise” (18). It also suggests Smith’s intuitive understanding that all historical narratives engage in forms of translation that necessarily transform the original sense of different accounts. Frequently, she signposts for the reader her own editorial role; for example, she introduces the child’s question cited above with the generalization: “*It was often the case* that one of the children, tantalized by some allusion to the mysterious past, would tug at a grownup’s sleeve and ask ... [emphasis mine]” (64). Smith, then, undercuts the truth claims of direct quotation, and asserts her own authorial voice, reminding us of the subjective dimension of all historical accounts.

IV: MEMOIR AS FEMINIST GENEALOGY

Recovering the Body Abjected from History

A focus on the subjective in history moves us toward a genealogical understanding of the past. In Nietzsche Moira Gatens discovers more than a method for critiquing extant histories; she considers how his thought can serve the *writing* of history by introducing a critical focus on the body and sexuality.⁶⁴ Smith's memoir recovers the "feminine" in history in a literal sense when it addresses gender issues directly. To explain why children had little knowledge of the "tales of long-forgotten exploits, feuds, and romances," that Barbeau believed too "idiosyncratic for his research," Smith contrasts the women, who could be drawn into conversations about the past, with the "taciturn" men who would only respond with brief answers to direct questions. While she admits that "perhaps amongst their own kind, they were more communicative," (64) this last point is a sore one for the author who expresses frustration with the gender divisions that characterise rural social gatherings:

As with any other veillée, the men and women were segregated and only rarely would any conversation spanning the gender groups take place [...] I often felt a trifle cheated at being shunted off with the "womenfolk," as by now I had grown more familiar with the chatter typical of such gatherings. Straining to catch snippets of conversation from the male enclave, I used to wish my ears could stretch clear across the room. (84)

Although the memoir does not provide any indication that other women resented gender "apartheid," Smith associates the latter with the women's inferior status in the community. Her annoyance, then, points to the contrast between her expectations as a

female urbanite, and those of her rural hosts. The separation of women and men into social groups was part of a broader strategy for discouraging “illegitimate” sexual activity (24). Indeed, according to Smith, sexual encounters prior to marriage were rare because short courtships consisted of chaperoned visits (23); and at *veillées*⁶⁵ – impromptu evenings of conversation, singing, and dance – tradition dictated “that when the same boy and girl sat together on one or two occasions, they were engaged (often without any declaration) and would marry in the spring” (22).⁶⁶ In Charlevoix, where Church dictates ruled most aspects of everyday life, the gender segregation Smith resented can be explained as a stratagem for preventing non-institutionally sanctioned forms of sexual activity.

Presumably, the *veillées* which took place in the kitchen/dining/parlour area (usually the largest room in the house) did not afford many opportunities for sexual transgression. Indeed, Smith’s annoyance over the separation of women from men at social gatherings signals the contrast between an urban self-regulating or “panoptic” relation to societal expectations, and the more direct institutional controls of Church and family which ensured conformity in the villages.⁶⁷ Smith’s surprise that a similar “vigilance” extends to even much younger children and siblings (23), provides further evidence that rural Québécois had little faith in taboo as a mechanism of social control.

In spite of the restrictions on social interaction, Smith found numerous occasions to meet with both female and male members of the community on fishing expeditions, during harvests and the social events in which she, Palardy, Barbeau and their frequent

visitors participated.⁶⁸ Even as she figures Charlevoix in terms of heterotopic stasis “coming as we did from the city – and from the twentieth century – there were many kinds of information and advice we would gladly share,”⁶⁹ she recognizes her own “otherness”: “I was the only English-Canadian around there and I was considered a curiosity and a freak. But it was marvellous how they accepted me [...]” She believes that her neighbours trusted her because of their shared circumstances: “They had gotten used to us, I suppose, because our obvious poverty made us *one of them*” (64). Several incidents not only demonstrate Smith’s affectionate rapport with the men of Charlevoix, but that the latter sometimes asked for her advice on personal matters. On one occasion, Alzarius (Tremblay), a recently widowed friend solicited her for advice on how to purchase a corset for a potential marriage partner.⁷⁰ This intimacy is sometimes disconcerting for Smith, as when her neighbours fail to meet her expectations of social convention. She is, for example, initially irritated during the conversation with Alzarius, which has been preceded by an accidental encounter as she emerged from her bath; and she is equally disconcerted by off-hand references to the “daily ablution” she and Palardy took “au naturel” in a small brook they had thought was just their “clever secret.” Smith comes to see villagers’ attitudes about the body “as just part of country ways” (87). The incidents simultaneously betray Smith’s urban condescension, and a growing awareness that her own modesty betrays conventional attitudes about the body. Smith’s knowledge as a modern woman, and her expertise as a shopper more specifically, made her an ideal, if unlikely, advisor. In other words, men like Alzarius brought her into their confidence

not in spite of her “otherness,” but precisely *because* she was an urban woman.

Smith recognizes that her difference granted her a similar authority with the women. Although she was considered “a curiosity and an object of pity,” having “been married six months” but showing “no signs of pregnancy,”⁷¹ she was solicited for advice about birth control by:

a young married woman who had just given birth to her third or fourth child. When she broached the subject of birth control with me (because I was childless, I suppose), I leaped at the chance to tell someone at last about the rhythm method, which was permitted by the church but never publicized outside the large urban centres. Nowhere in Charlevoix had I ever met anyone who had heard of it as a way to plan family size. Not realizing the hot water I was stepping into, I told my neighbour all I knew about the method. The very next Sunday, the parish priest denounced me from the pulpit before the entire congregation, reviling me as a creature sent by Satan and warning his parishioners of the danger of befriending me. Fortunately, I had made many friends by this time, and, as no one really liked the curé or took his advice seriously, the affair came to nothing. Though we continued to live harmoniously with my neighbours, this had been a lesson to me: never again would I give advice on birth-control. (26)

In the draft version of the memoir, Smith elaborates that although she was “approached on the matter more than once in future years,” she remained firm in her resolve (23). If Smith backed away from her role as advisor, she had nevertheless emerged as an opinion leader who threatened the parish priest’s authority.

Smith’s memoir frequently expresses empathetic frustration over the situation of women for whom sterility, menopause, and death were the only escape from servitude to their reproductive bodies.⁷² While she recognized the necessity of large families in farming communities where modern machinery had not yet replaced physical labour⁷³ she had difficulty accepting the Church orthodoxies that exacerbated poverty, women’s health

problems, and infant mortality. Although *La Communiante*, 1944 (fig. 19) can be read as a critique of Catholic rites of passage (see Chapters Five and Six), her indictment of the Church is more apparent in the memoir than in her visual work. In her *Church at Baie St. Paul*, 1930 (fig. 18) the size and centrality of the Church is off-set by the soft browns and off-whites that delineate it; the institution is integrated harmoniously into the social space it dominates. In contrast to the painting, her memoir condemns the Church in stories about priests whose appalling abuses of power were indirectly, and even sometimes directly, responsible for the deaths of children.⁷⁴ Smith's written accounts not only expose how the Church created the conditions of possibility for institutionalized brutality, but bring the names, personalities, and emotions of those who were affected into the historical record. The memoir's personal and anecdotal account of how religious institutions regulated the "feminine sphere" of sexuality more specifically, brings both a critical and *affective* dimension to social histories of the region. In this way, Smith answers the feminist call for genealogical approaches to history that bring gender, the body and sexuality into analyses of institutional power.⁷⁵

Art and Mourning

Returning to my earlier discussion of nostalgia, describing Smith's project as a recovery of the "feminine" does not imply an exclusive focus on gender and sexuality, but a more fundamental "embodied" rendering of the past which includes the sensorial and affective "events" abjected from History. As Kristeva has shown, the abject functions as a

border region between life and death that maintains the integrity of the living body. The cadaver, particularly when it is “seen without God and outside of science,” is the “utmost in abjection” because “it is death infecting life.”⁷⁶ Smith’s recovery of the body abjected from History confronts the boundary zone theorized by Kristeva by exploring the relationship of aesthetics and mortality in a number of situations that include encounters with corpses. Not surprisingly death plays a significant part in structuring Smith’s narrative. In the third chapter, I suggested that the monumental losses of WWI were especially staggering for urbanites whose modern health facilities and treatments had made death not only less visible, but less common among the young. The ubiquity of suffering and death which defined rural life must have similarly shocked urban-dwellers in subsequent decades. Indeed, questions of mortality frequently frame Smith’s memories and point to a central thematic in her creative production: the connection between an aesthetic sensibility and the ability to mourn. In an interview, she made an associative link between an aesthetic sensibility and mortality: “After my father’s second heart attack, I remember him saying, *what has it all been?* He wasn’t asking us that, he was asking himself. But there *is* no meaning in life. That’s why we should enjoy it! I love nature and art: They’re the only things I need.”⁷⁷ Smith, like Freud recognized that the failure to appreciate transient beauty represents a “revolt against mourning.”⁷⁸ In the draft manuscript “Souvenirs of Charlevoix County,”⁷⁹ Smith incorporates a journal entry describing her unexpected grief over her mother’s death: “I was a sensible woman who had long ago come to terms with the total lack of affection and caring that separated my

mother from me, so why were my eyes brimming and my throat constricting?”⁸⁰

Significantly, the meditation on grief interrupts Smith’s discussion of the relationship of aesthetics to culture, and I will return to this important structural issue below. She describes the events leading up to her unwitting failure to fulfill a promise to her mother to “not let her face her final moments alone,” marvelling over her own body’s expression of guilt and loss: “Why was my body taking over, insisting on expressing feelings (or symptoms, if you prefer) my mind and heart had long ago disavowed?”⁸¹ The unpublished manuscript extends the journal entry:

At first I felt only a deep relief. It was over. This long-lasting waiting for Godot [...] sitting now beside the silent telephone, looking out onto the skyline of Montreal, still enveloped in morning smog, I waited, almost as though I were expecting some subconscious reaction, indeed, preparing for it. And it came. I was calm. I was glad my mother’s misery was over. Suddenly my throat constricted. Now, why was this happening? [...] I was reminded, and this will seem frivolous, of two years ago, when, upon leaving for Sardinia, I went to my neighbours to give them my darling cat to look after during the winter months. I knew that he would be happy there, on his familiar plateau, yet when I said goodbye and turned away, there it was, the terrible constriction in my throat and the uncalled-for tears running down my face. I swear it, I had been calm about leaving my cat, just as I had been calm about hearing of the death of my mother. Why does the body take over and insist upon expressing its own feelings, deeper grief than I, consciously was capable of.⁸²

The expanded journal entry is omitted from the published memoir, suggesting that Smith must have ultimately viewed it as tangential to her depiction of Charlevoix. But why the original impulse to include it? In the manuscript, she explains the associative link between the events taking place in Montréal, and her account of a different time and place: “It has been hard to return to my recollections of my earlier experiences in P. R.

[Petite Rivière] since the death of my mother. Her end made me think of that of madame Noella, entirely different though it was" (122). For Smith, the primary difference is the contrast between the peacefulness of her mother's death and Madame Noella's suffering; but the lack of affection between Smith and her mother also distinguishes their relationship from the intimacy and tenderness Madame Noella shares with her daughters. Although Smith claims to have found it difficult to write after her mother's death, the latter's illness had been the original motivation for producing the memoir: "I couldn't paint. My mother was dying and I had to live in Montreal [...] I suppose my mother's dying depressed me and I had to see her almost every day, so in order to pass the time of day I wrote a memoire of those years (sic)."⁸³ Her mother's final illness had been not only the *cause* of Smith's memoir, but had provided a vehicle for working through a *painter's block*.⁸⁴ Smith, then, associates her creative production with mourning the end of a troubled relationship with her mother.

The memoir is not simply a vehicle for the author's expression of grief; instead, I am suggesting that it serves as the medium for Smith's more profound exploration of the relationship between aesthetics and mortality. Returning to an earlier point, it is significant that the meditation on grief above interrupts her discussion of aesthetic sensibility. In the draft manuscript, the journal entry about her mother's death follows rather abruptly on observations about villagers' reactions to compliments:

When I first arrived in Charlevoix so many years ago, this habit of understatement puzzled me and when I got used to it, it never ceased to amuse me, I, so addicted to superlatives. For instance, if I were to say to a mother that her child was pretty,

the mother would look with curiosity at the child and answer, “Ouais, vous trouvez?” and then add, inevitably, “elle est pas infirme toujours,” or “elle est pas laitte.” Not once in all those years was I successful in my little game of trying to trap any of them into admitting the child was pretty. As a rule, they were not given to enthusiastic outbursts, neither in joy nor in sorrow were they extroverts. At times it seemed as though superstitious fear [tempting?] the “evil angels” [...] behind their reserve. Or was it that the severity of their religion squelched any appreciation, or even acknowledgement of gratuitous forms of beauty. My own frequent exclamations over some manifestation of beauty in Nature or Man were always greeted with a look of curiosity and bemused puzzlement. Emotional displays of the sort appeared to embarrass them, and they’d glance uneasily at whatever had provoked my enthusiastic outburst: “Ouais, ouais, c’est ben beau, je suppose que c’est beau, mais on a toujours vécu icitte et on regarde plus. C’est comme ça.. Ça prend des étrangers comme vous pour remarquer.”⁸⁵

Smith’s comments seem to suggest that “superstitious” anxiety, or less condescendingly, a Catholic suspicion of vanity and pride, explains the lack of effusiveness on the part of villagers.⁸⁶ On the other hand, her explanation lacks conviction. The integration of the passage above with her journal entry about her mother’s death is therefore significant; the author, in an associative sense, recognizes that the enigma of rural Catholics’ appreciation of beauty is bound to issues of mortality.

Historical Memory and Understatement

This moment in her reminiscences is only one example of Smith’s on-going effort to define the relationship between an aesthetic sensibility, religious belief, and mortality. Even as she suspects religion motivates their aversion to compliments, her friends’ frequent off-handed dismissals emerge as a form of phatic communion that assumes an alternative conception of beauty. This difference manifests itself as a different orientation

to artistic expression – the subject of the next chapter – and to ontological questions. First, agricultural communities who rely on the natural environment for sustenance necessarily have a different orientation to the landscape than painters from the city. Second, the fact that Charlevoix painters rarely produced portraits signals a different aesthetic relation to the body. Socio-economics, then, played a significant role in framing farmers' appreciation of both the land and human physiognomy. As Smith notes in her published memoir, everyone who wanted to marry – “no matter how plain the girl or how ugly the man” (24) – could find a mate, either in their own concession or in one nearby. Whether or not Smith was correct in her assessment that physical attractiveness was less esteemed than strength and stamina in this pre-industrialized rural economy – her urban gaze might not have recognized how the latter attributes could have had erotic value – she offers a historical cause for inhabitants' alleged indifference to personal appearance:

According to local legend, a steamer carrying a large troupe of second-rate actors and actresses from Paris had shipwrecked in the bay, and the survivors had been cared for by the villagers. Unfortunately, before the convalescing thespians were well enough to move on to their engagements in Montréal and Québec City, some of them managed to infect more than a few villagers with syphilis, thereby launching an epidemic which was to have tragic consequences for future generations of Charlevoix families. In time, the disease – called “le mal de la Baie” – would spread throughout the entire County, and rare were the families who were spared their effects. Decades later, memories of the epidemic still wielded a macabre power over the thoughts and fears of the region's inhabitants. (11)

“Le mal de la Baie” legend originates with an epidemic that struck the whole Charlevoix region between 1782-1796. It hit Baie-Saint-Paul especially hard, possibly affecting more than thirty percent of the population.⁸⁷ Alternate versions of the story blame post-

conquest Scottish mariners rather than French actors, although the actual origin of the disease, a form of syphilis named “mal écossais” or “sibbens,” is unknown. Given the virulence and rapid spread of the disease, historians believe un-hygienic living conditions the primary cause.⁸⁸ Even the mythologized version of history provided by Smith in her published memoir illuminates inhabitants’ allegedly “superstitious” aversion to certain forms of attention: “It was not uncommon for a mother to acknowledge a compliment on the beauty of her child with this swift and anxious reply: *Il a tout son esprit, au moins*” (11). The response shows that “memories of the epidemic still wielded a macabre power over the thoughts and fears of the region’s inhabitants” who believed that the event’s legacy persisted in “the unusually high number of mental defectives in the region” (11). Baie-Saint-Paul’s architectural space also serves as a monument to the tragedy: “In the village itself, there were three large buildings, the church, the convent, and largest of all, the insane asylum”(10). The monumentality and prominence of this last architectural site featured in Cavin Atkins *Asylum Baie-Saint-Paul, Québec, 1937* (fig. 20), helps to situate the mother’s apparent indifference to all but her child’s mental health by recalling a historical trauma that continued to inform the life of the community.

V: MEMOIR AS AESTHETIC THEORY

Mortality and Beauty

Death shadows even the joyful moments recalled by Smith. Her anecdotes are frequently punctuated by the premature death of one or more of the participants. Noting

the high rate of infant mortality she remarks that “no great regret was ever expressed” because “as they saw it, after a proper christening, the baby would go off in a white pine box to join the heavenly chorus of sisters and brothers, and cousins”(19). Smith discovers this same attitude more generally:

I was particularly struck by the matter-of-fact, almost casual manner in which they related their stories. To them, sickness and death, though heartrending, were such common occurrences that they had become little more than banal, everyday events, of no lasting importance. I must admit that I found their uncomplaining acceptance of calamity admirable, even though ignorance and superstition may have been partly responsible for their fortitude and stoicism. (85)

The inhabitants remain enigmatic for Smith, who recognizes that “ignorance and superstition” can be only “partly responsible” for their stoicism. In fact, her friends constantly challenge her assumptions about their relationship to Catholicism. In recalling the painful death of Madame Noella, for example, she recognized that it was “so terrible to witness that her daughters, even now cannot speak of it without bitter tears, unwilling even as devout Catholics to accept it with resignation: “*C’était horrible, elle a souffert le martyr, elle qui était si bonne, c’était injuste.*”⁸⁹ Contrary to Smith’s expectations, religious belief heightens rather than softens the daughters’ sense of the injustice of their mother’s suffering.

But it is another event, described only in the unpublished manuscript, that forces Smith to confront the limits of her own understanding of the relationship of faith to religious belief. It is worth citing at length the passage in which Smith confronts this limit. Marie-Anne Simard, a painter friend (see figs. 24, 38, 39),⁹⁰ had been receiving

daily visits from curé Tremblay during the final two years before she succumbed to tuberculosis (126). Although Smith admits she remained ignorant about the content of these exchanges, she recognized that:

Whatever kind of conversation took place Marie-Anne derived little comfort from these private têtes-à-têtes. One afternoon before supper, I joined her on the upstairs verandah. It was only a month before she died. I saw that she had been weeping and asked what was the matter, dreading what she would say. “Vous le savez bien, Jori, je suis entrain de mourir, ne me dîtes pas le contraire, je m’en vais petit à petit.” Her face was wet with tears, yet she was not weeping. I said nothing, I gazed in front of me at the splendid sight of the river at high tide, at the sky so luminous that the houses on the south shore were plainly visible. A goelette was anchored off shore waiting for the tide to turn [...] Just below us were the wild cherry trees thick with their dark fruit some of which I had picked and which now lay uneaten in my hands. Next to the ancient lilac tree was the two-seater swing which Aimé had built only this summer thinking of the pleasure it would afford his sister. But Marie-Anne after admiring it and trying it out had never returned to it. Its bright shiny red paint made a sharp contrast to the deep green of the grass. The hundreds of swallows lined the telephone wires, the older ones were teaching their young to fly. It was wonderful this world of ours and my friend was about to leave it forever. (127-128)

For Smith, the touching exchange in which the two friends confront Simard’s impending death brings into relief a lovely, and equally ephemeral summer evening, reminding us of Freud’s insight that an aesthetic sensibility is founded on the ability to mourn. The fact that the intensely emotional moment evokes a vividly “painterly” landscape to which Smith returns decades later signals her on-going exploration of the relationship of aesthetics to mortality. Notably, if she appears to have set aside painting for writing during moments of grief, her affecting accounts nevertheless draw upon the artist’s keen visual faculty.

Faith Versus Belief

It is worth examining Smith's long meditation more closely. As Simard despairs over the injustice of dying young, Smith confronts her own assumptions about faith:

I could not find a word of comfort, not a word. She continued to weep for a while and I sat silent and still after throwing the sticky cherries down below. Two blackbirds swooped down to seize them. "Marie-Anne, je ne peux pas vous offrir de confort (sic), hélas. Nous mourrons tous, tôt ou tard, c'est le destin de tous les humains, de tous les êtres vivants [...] La vie et la mort sont les grands mystères. *Vous êtes croyante, vous avez la foi ...*" She interrupted me with a gesture ..." C'est justement ça, j'ai peur que je n'ai pas la foi, c'est ça qui me désespère, je ne crois plus et j'ai peur de la mort, terriblement peur. Ah si vous saviez comme c'est effrayant de se savoir près de la mort. Et sans aucune espérance." I did not answer, I was too stunned at such words from a girl of Marie-Anne's religious upbringing, [Emphasis mine]. (128)

Ironically, Simard's confidence in Smith stems from the latter's *lack* of faith. While Smith recognized that her atheism marked her as "pagan"(8), she had not anticipated that religion could produce doubt as well as belief; and she hopes that Simard's confusion is no more than a temporary anxiety produced by the curé's "nightly exhortations about heaven and hell" (128-129). As Smith begins to weep, Simard apologizes: "Pardonnez-moi, je voulais tellement vous dire ce que j'avais sur le coeur. Il n'y a, comme vous le savez, personne d'autres à qui je pouvais parler ainsi [sic]" (129). This young rural woman seemed to have grasped the implications of Smith's atheism more fully than Smith understood the former's crisis of faith.⁹¹

Smith's failure of understanding stemmed from her conflation of faith with belief; she assumed that the latter guarantees the former. According to Slavoj Žižek, however, belief is an interpretive system which frequently precedes, but does not require faith – or

“action” – on the part of the subject. Faith, on the other hand, is the assertion of “the symbolic pact,” “a binding engagement” or commitment to belief.⁹² One can also have faith without belief; that is, one can “feel bound by some symbolic commitment” without believing in a formal ordering system (110). Smith’s mistake, as a non-believer was to assume that Catholics necessarily have faith; but to borrow Žižek’s example, “one can believe in ghosts without having any faith in them.” In other words, neither belief nor faith function as the *a priori* of the other. Sadly, while Smith had assumed that religious belief would necessarily provide the solace of faith for Catholics, their grief was sometimes heightened by it. Just as Madame Noella’s daughters felt the injustice of their mother’s suffering, Simard’s skepticism about immortality increased her sense of the injustice of dying young. She did, nevertheless, find reassurance in her exchange with Smith:

“Merci, vous êtes toujours gentille. Et avant que vous partez je veux que vous sachiez que je vous laisse mon rosier, vous l’avez si long admiré, n’est-ce pas? Vous penserez à moi en le regardant, come ça je ne mourrais pas tout à fait.” A fleeting ironical smile accompanied this remark.⁹³

For the two friends, the exchange of a sacred object for the promise of immortality in memory becomes a compensatory gift for Simard’s impending death.

VI: THE DEBT TO HISTORY

A Settling of Accounts: Smith’s Memoir

Smith distinguishes painting from her memoir’s historical function when she

explains that the latter is not written “from the point of view of a painter, but of what I experienced as *a witness* to the French Canadian life at that time which was so different from now, you know [...] although *it has nothing to do with me*. It is me observing people throughout those long years I lived in Charlevoix County” [emphasis mine].⁹⁴ Even as the draft manuscript exposes how the intersection between her mother’s death and her aesthetic struggle are woven into her memories of Charlevoix, she insists that the document is neither autobiographical, nor written from her viewpoint as a painter, but from that of a detached observer. In the next chapter, I discuss the impetus for Smith’s painting; but for now, the differentiation of writing from painting is important because it reveals Smith’s desire to bear witness, a goal which might account for the omission of her mother’s death in the final version of the memoir. The editorial cut, however, does not obscure the question that frames her recollections: how to confront mortality and loss? Even as Smith acts on the conviction that the memoir carries a greater burden of impartiality than her paintings, we discover in her struggle with editorial voice an attention to the “desire in history” Nietzsche defined as genealogical.

If the memoir’s exploration of mortality, grief, and aesthetics calls into question Smith’s assertion that it has “nothing to do” with her, as genealogy it does offer a critical supplement to Barbeau’s historical contribution. Paul Ricoeur’s critique of traditional historiography helps to elucidate the convergence between Smith’s and Barbeau’s projects. He argues that while the historian’s “constructions do aim at being reconstructions of the past,” and her/his “recourse to documents” makes them “subject to

what once was,”⁹⁵ the past eludes the process of historical writing insofar as it “dulls the sting of what is at issue, namely, temporal distance” (144). More crucially for Ricoeur, historians must make their accounts accord with previous historical and archival documents which are already generated by a theory of the past. An effect of these demands is to constitute the past as *Same* (145-147). Conversely, invoking Hayden White and others – and Foucault should be added to his list – he argues that the practice of history also involves an opposite distancing gesture, whereby the past is made to stand as *Other* to the present (147-148). Ricoeur’s way of “saving” the past from these two approaches is to join them under the sign of the *Analogous*, a strategy that emphasizes the “resemblance between relations rather than terms *per se*” (151). The approach can be productive insofar as the notion of resemblance implies an identification with, rather than objectification of the past, and it proposes a method for writing history that goes beyond genealogical *critiques* of existing histories. Further, identification with “relations” rather than “terms” insists upon an indeterminacy that resists reifying the past. Indeed, Ricoeur would seem to be describing Barbeau and Smith’s projects when he elaborates that whether the work appears “under the sign of friendship or that of curiosity” historians “are all moved by the desire to do justice to the past. And their relationship to the past is first of all that of someone with an unpaid debt, in which they represent each of us who are the readers of their work” (152). He elaborates that the concept of debt is “common both to painters and historians: They all seek to *render* something, a landscape or a course of events. In this term *to render*, I see the desire to *render its due* to what is and what

once was” (152). Together, Barbeau’s and Smith’s projects represent a *rendering* to the past which implicates readers who encounter the diverse objects that constitute their archives. And if the historian’s “debt to the past” is “a debt of recognition to the dead” that makes historians, artists, and readers “insolvent as debtors”(142-143) the significance of the past is an on-going process that must be decided by each generation.

If history is founded not only on a sense of debt to the past, but “to what is” then Smith and Barbeau’s projects represented a gift to the communities at the time. Even if digressive answers to his ethnological questions were of little interest to Barbeau, he nevertheless recognized the immediate impact of his ethnology on his young informants: “It is surprising how they have been preserved in the memory of the old people. The younger generation now are interested in radio, television and such entertainments, and they give up. We think they have, but you only have to gather these people together and start them in a *veillée du bon vieux temps* and they give you a good evening of old folksongs.”⁹⁶ For Barbeau, the archive as documentary process was part of its legacy, just as for Smith, children’s interest in the stories that fell outside Barbeau’s scientific enquiry serve a similar function.⁹⁷

1. All three of comments appear in Jori Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930* (Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 1998). See pages 9, 14 and 65 respectively.
2. Kenneth McNaught, *The Pelican History of Canada* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 238-239. For another example of this view see John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager's *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).
3. See Edgar McInnis, *Canada: a Political and Social History* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1982), 441. John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, 168.
4. Robert Bothwell, *A Traveller's History of Canada* (London: Cassell & Co, Windrush Press, 2001), 81-82 .
5. Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 42
6. Edgar McInnis, *Canada*, 440-441.
7. Like Edgar McInnis, Carl Berger believes that landscape imagery in Canada represents both a national form of modernist iconoclasm and a conservative attempt to preserve a colonialist vision of cultural history; however, he believes that the apparent contradiction suggests that the search for "authentically Canadian modes of expression necessarily involved a critical attitude to the past." Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 54-55.
8. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
9. Lise Gauvin and Laurent Mailhot ed. *Le Guide culturel du Québec* (Québec: Boréal Express, 1982), 207- 208.
10. For example, J. H. Thompson and A. Seager single out Maurice Cullen and Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Côté as Québec painters who "marry art and nationalism" in anticipation of the Group of Seven. They also contrast A. Y. Jackson, who "could paint Québec," to the "English Canadian poets and novelists," who ignored "French Canadian characters." See Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, 162, 172. Similarly, Edgar McInnis ties Québec subjects to Canadian nationalism, although he believes that in spite of "occasional efforts to depict Canadian life, notably the studies of habitant life by Cornelius Krieghoff during the earlier part of the century, it was to nature that most of the artists of ability were attracted." The latter "produced a vigorous and

original movement in Canadian art” by turning to the rugged beauty of both “northern Ontario and the Laurentians.” See McInnis, *Canada: a Political and Social History*, 440-1. By focussing on the Group’s images of Ontario, other historians imply that depictions of rural Québec had little impact on the Canadian cultural imaginary. For a representative example, see McNaught, *The Pelican History of Canada*.

11. Gauvin and Mailhot, *Le Guide culturel du Québec*, 20. In other words, although federal nationalism functions as the lens through which both Canadian and Québec historians remember the 1920s, Toronto art production, defined almost exclusively by Ontario landscapes, bears little impact on the historicization of Québec. Furthermore, for Anglophone historians of Canada, images of rural Québec represent the regionalist dimension of this broadly based federalist nationalism.

12. I am borrowing from Denise Leclerc’s exhibition title *The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: The 1950s* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992).

13. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, François Ricard ed., *Québec Since 1930*, trans. Robert Chodos and Ellen Germaise (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1991), 137-139.

14. In *Québec, a History: 1867-1929*, the same authors emphasize the formalist aspect of modernism in Québec when they credit James Wilson Morrice for introducing “the language of modern painting.” They argue that the Group’s popularity may have obscured the “new commitment” to formalism “but this was a development that did not affect the Québec art scene directly. John Lyman devoted a small book to Morrice [...] and restored him to his rightful place as the forerunner of modern art in Québec.” Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert ed., *Québec, a History: 1867-1929*, trans. Robert Chodos (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983), 563.

Whether (art) historians credit Paul Émile Borduas or Lyman with introducing modernism in Canada, they do so on formalist grounds. In art history especially, Borduas and his circle mark the arrival of international modernism in Canada. See Patricia Smart, Alan Conter, and Gilles Lapointe, “The legacy of *Refus Global*: A Round Table Discussion Held at the Biennial Meeting of the American Council for Québec Studies, Charleston SC, November 1998,” *Québec Studies*, 29 (Spring/Summer 1999): 93-104.

15. Françoise Labbé, “Une Longue histoire d’art,” *Charlevoix: revue de la société d’histoire de Charlevoix* 10-21, no.20 (novembre 1994): 12.

16. Serge Gauthier, “Sept personnages du *Temps d’une paix* et l’histoire de Charlevoix,” *Charlevoix*, 17 (novembre 1993): 5.

17. Gauthier situates the origins of the “folklorization” of Charlevoix in tourist brochures beginning with nineteenth century steamship and railway travel, and the establishment of hotels which brought American and Canadian vacationers. “Sept personnages du *Temps d’une paix* et l’histoire de Charlevoix,” 2.
18. Gauthier also credits the archival efforts of Mgr Félix-Antoine Savard at l’Université Laval for maintaining interest in local traditions. See “Sept personnages du *Temps d’une paix* et l’histoire de Charlevoix,” 2.
19. For an extensive biography of Marius Barbeau, see Laurence Nowry, *Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau* (Toronto: NC Press Limited), 1995.
20. Marius Barbeau, *Painters of Québec* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1945), 4-5.
21. Barbeau also deviates from Québec historians by largely ignoring Morrice. In his 1934 monograph on Krieghoff, he only gives Morrice a glancing nod: “our Laurentian school began with Krieghoff and, after a prolonged Barbizon pause resumed its course, at first tentatively, with J. W. Morrice and Maurice Cullen, then to the full with [...] A.Y. [...] Krieghoff was more than an aesthetic painter; he may also be considered a historian.” Barbeau’s anthropological interests, then, shaped his aesthetic criteria. These comments appear in the abridged version of Barbeau’s monograph in Douglas Fetherling ed., *Documents in Canadian Art* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1987), 27-28.
Although Barbeau refers to Jori Smith, Jean Palardy and Stanley Cosgrove – CAS members that he believes reflect the greatest “upheaval in pictorial art yet experienced in Eastern Canada” – John Lyman is notably absent from his list. See Barbeau, *Painters of Québec*, 48.
22. Barbeau, *Painters of Québec*, 48.
23. Marius Barbeau, *The Kingdom of the Saguenay* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd, 1936), 83.
24. Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84-254.
25. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 14. Huyssen believes that the “museal sensibility” that informed modernist art, museum practices, and critical theory during the twentieth century has “infiltrated all areas of everyday life,” (25).

26. I am borrowing from Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other, How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 17, 29, 144.
27. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, Vol.16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 26.
28. Kim Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," in *Antimodernism, and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 161. For a discussion of the relationship of modern technology and standardized time to modernity see James Carey's chapter, "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph" in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). For an examination of the impact of new technologies on politics beginning with the printing press, see Harold Adams Innis' chapters, "Minerva's Owl," and "The Plea for Time" in *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951). Kim Sawchuk draws upon these thinkers in her discussion of the relationship of "antimodernism" to the modernist abandonment of linear perspective in painting.
29. Jori Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," Unpublished Memoir in Jori Smith Papers, MG 30 Series D-249, Vol.12, 54-55, Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada (LAC was formerly the Public Archives of Canada and National Library of Canada).
30. Sawchuk, "Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," 155-164.
31. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 90-1.
32. Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, 173-174.
33. Barbeau became self-reflexive about the nationalistic implications of his projects over time. For a discussion of the evolution of his thought, see Sandra Dyck, "These things are our totems: Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1995). See also Lynda Jessup, "Canadian Artists, Railways, The State and *The Business of Becoming Nation*" (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1992), 69-70.
34. Barbeau tells the interviewer:
- I was sent to the stage to sing *À la Claire Fontaine*. I was very shy [...] So then I sang this song, and I was almost frightened when coming into the wings there, to see an Indian. Although he was a priest, he looked like an Indian. Indian face, red, aquiline nose and dark hair. Abbé Prosper Vincent was a Huron priest of Lorette near Québec. Not a parish priest, because he always remained a bohemian [...] So his function was to go from place to place, parish to parish and schools like this

and give entertainment: dance like an Indian. And there he was onto the stage (sic), and I was struck. I was impressed. That is all I remember. But that was my beginning: this opened the door for what would happen later.

Notably, Barbeau differentiates him from other “parish priests” by resorting to further racialized stereotypes: he names Vincent as a “bohemian.” Marius Barbeau, “I Was a Pioneer,” *Oracle Series, no. 44*, [Interview] William E. Taylor, Jr. Director Museum of Man (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1982), [second page] unpaginated. For the words to the song to which Barbeau refers see Marius Barbeau, *The Songs of Old Québec* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1964), 40-41.

Barbeau’s anecdote notwithstanding, in a more crucial sense Franz Boas was responsible for Barbeau’s research in Canada. While on a trip to Washington sponsored by the Geological Survey in 1914 he met the famous anthropologist who asked him:

“Barbeau, you are a French Canadian, you can tell me a thing we have been wondering about for many years here in the United States. The Indians as far as Mexico have folktales that can be only French in origin. How did they come to those Indians? Did they come through French Canada? And there are so many French-Canadian *coureurs de bois*. Could they not have transferred some of their stories to them?” I said, “Dr. Boas, yes I heard some stories at Lorette.” “Well,” he said, “go back young man, go back to Lorette. It’s most urgent that you should collect some of those things.” And I did! At Lorette and neighbourhood, and in Charlevoix County [...] I began with folktales at Indian Lorette, but these people told me, “Below here on the coast, Baie-Saint-Paul, at Éboulements, there are people that know plenty of folksongs. They sing whole nights and days.” So then this gave me an idea that perhaps I might go there. In 1916 I took my photographs and blank records and went to Charlevoix County.

Marius Barbeau, “I Was a Pioneer,” [fourth page] unpaginated.

35. This strategy appears, for example, in Barbeau’s frequent iteration of the European influence on the cultural forms of First Nations. Barbeau acknowledges the influence of Québec nuns on the birch-bark and quill work of Eastern Woodland Indians without examining the possibility that patterns either originated with the latter, or that they developed reciprocally. See Barbeau, “Abstracts of Papers: Backgrounds in Canadian Art,” *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series*, Vol. XXXV (Ottawa: The Royal Society of Canada, 1941), 31-32. See also his contribution to the exhibition catalogue *The Arts of French Canada: 1613-1870* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1946), 16.

36. Marius Barbeau, *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1923).
37. Jessup, "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and *The Business of Becoming Nation*," 93-99.
38. Barbeau, "I Was a Pioneer," [fifth page] unpaginated. The exhibition to which Barbeau referred, "Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern," brought together carvings and paintings of West Coast First Nations and works by "modern" artists. The catalogue for this exhibition represents the result of Barbeau's efforts of 1914 to preserve the historic houses and poles in the Tsimshian in the Skeena River area of British Columbia. During the 1920s, he arranged railway passes for urban artists through the Canadian Pacific (CPR) and the Canadian National (CNR) railways. The CPR promoted tourism in eastern Canada, while the CNR hoped that on-site restoration of historic houses and poles would promote tourism and railway travel in western Canada.
- In 1926, Jackson, Edwin Holgate, Anne Savage and Florence Wyle travelled to the Skeena. Pegi Nicol received a pass in 1928 to work on the Stoney Reserve at Morley, Alberta. "The Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern" exhibition also featured the work of Emily Carr and members of the Group of Seven. For a discussion of the exhibition and its participants, see Charles Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada), 1995, 190-193, 209, 300, 304, 327.
39. Barbeau, "I Was a Pioneer," [fifth page] unpaginated.
40. For a representative critique, see George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction," in *The Traffic in Art and Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 10-19.
41. George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, "The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction," 10-19.
42. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 222-226.
43. Marius Barbeau, "Backgrounds in Canadian Art," 36.
44. Barbeau, "I Was a Pioneer," [seventh page] unpaginated.
45. For example, in France depictions of rural Brittany became an important focus in the work of Paul Sérusier, Émile Bernard and Paul Gauguin. François-Marc Gagnon

believes that Charlevoix holds a similar place in the Canadian cultural memory, describing it as “le Pont-Aven des artistes canadiens.” Le Centre d’exposition de Baie-Saint-Paul, *Charlevoix, histoire d’art, 1900-1940* (Baie-Saint-Paul: le Centre d’art de Baie-Saint-Paul, 1995), 6, 9. Although Canadians, like their European counterparts, turned to non-industrial “others” for inspiration, they did not turn their gaze to colonies on other continents. Levi-Strauss, and Picasso and Gauguin, for example, turned to African and Oceanic peoples for scientific purposes and aesthetic inspiration. The primitivist impulse in Canada, then, remained within its own geopolitical boundaries.

46. Quoted in Sandra Dyck, “*These things are our totems: Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s*,” 121.

47. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, 100.

48. He stated that “the present colonial status of its culture [...] is more apparent than real. It is bound, after the world crisis, to subside markedly [...] We must, therefore, take stock of our basic resources.” Marius Barbeau, “Abstracts of Papers: Backgrounds in Canadian Art,” *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series*. Vol. XXXV, Ottawa: The Royal Society of Canada, 1941: 165.

49. The assumed opposition between the “primitive” and “modern” has been the subject of several decades of critique. Such thinkers as James Clifford and Marianne Torgovnick examine how the binary persists in art, anthropology and tourism. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988); Marianne Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). For a consideration of the antimodernism that informs Canadian and international modernist practices, see Lynda Jessup, ed., *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

50. In 1925, Jackson and Lismer received passes from the C. P. R. to accompany Barbeau on his research trip to l’Île d’Orléans, and further east into the Charlevoix region. As in the case of the B. C. excursions, the Québec trips generated a number of projects, including the fulfilment of Barbeau’s goal of an exhibition of modern and traditional arts. In May 1926, *Art in French Canada* coincided with the Group of Seven exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Lismer’s and Jackson’s Charlevoix town scenes established the bridge between the two shows; and the Québec exhibition featured paintings by senior and young Montréal artists, as well as textiles, wood carvings, and Assomption Sashes. Barbeau’s ambitions for contemporary art inspired by traditional art forms also led to two major festivals at the Château Frontenac in Québec City in May of 1927, and 1928. Once again, the events brought together traditional and contemporary forms, and consisted of

musical performances, craft demonstrations, and visual media. Notably, the music program of 1927, which included Francophone, Inuit, North Alaskan, Nootka, and Kootnay selections, brought together Barbeau's ethnological interests in both Québec and First Nations. See Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, 179-188. For Barbeau's description of the festivals, see "French and Indian Motifs in Our Music," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928-1929*, Bertram Brooker ed. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1929), 125-132.

51. Marius Barbeau, "Abstracts of Papers: Backgrounds in Canadian Art," 35.

52. Such terms as "self-taught" and "untutored" do not escape the imperialist history that differentiates Western from non-Western, and urban from non-urban art. Paradoxically, they are applied to artisans celebrated for their "skill" in traditional arts. The contradiction helps to explain why urbanites who promoted rural art and crafts disagreed on how to define "authentic" traditional forms. See the next chapter for an examination of the debate.

53. For a history of Charlevoix painters, see Richard Dubé and François Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires* (Ottawa: Éditions Broquet), 1989; and Victoria Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950: Scenes of Charlevoix 1784-1950* (Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal), 1981.

54. The virtual "Image Gallery" on the CHIN database provides an excellent sense of the eclecticism and capaciousness of Smith and Palardy's interests as collectors. See <http://www.vituumuseum.ca/>.

55. See Jean Palardy, *Les meubles anciens du Canada français* (Montréal: Cercle du livre de France, 1971). Palardy directed and produced both the French and English versions of the 1947 film, *Peintres populaires de Charlevoix* (Montréal: National Film Board, 1947).

56. During the seventeenth century Charlevoix' red pines provided an important source of tar for ship building. Wood mills and agricultural farming also contributed to the economic infrastructure of the region, although the rich soil has always failed to compensate for Charlevoix' mountainous terrain and short growing season. After 1759, the primary industries were forestry and fur. From 1840-1920, fishing, the manufacture of butter, sugar, wool, flannel and linen took on importance. From the 1920s, commercial farms became even more difficult to maintain as a result of poor environmental conditions, the cost of mechanization, competitive markets and the loss of human resources to the cities. During the Depression, these conditions worsened. With the arrival of steam ships and rail transportation, which extended travel routes between Montréal and Québec City as far south as New York in the nineteenth century, tourism

became a significant industry. For a history of the region's economic infrastructure, see Philippe Dubé, *Charlevoix: Two Centuries at Murray Bay* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

Modern tourism was not the only incursion on Québec's isolated rural communities. Early twentieth century long-distance power transmission created the conditions of possibility for the undertaking of large projects financed by American, British and Anglo-Canadian business interests. Dams and hydroelectric stations were built on the large rivers flowing from the Laurentians to the St. Lawrence, followed by pulp and paper mills and aluminum and chemical processing plants. As rural populations migrated to urban areas, Québec's manufactured goods went from approximately \$150 million in 1900, to more than \$1,050 million in 1920. See Wilfred Bovey, *The French Canadians To-Day: A People on the March* (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1938), 118; Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, and Jean-Claude Robert, *Québec: A History 1867-1929*, trans Robert Chodos (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983), 324.

57. Smith, "Preface," *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 7.

58. See Lorna Senechal Carney for a critical history of folklorist activity in rural Québec during the early twentieth century. Although they do not agree about how to define "traditional" cultural forms, the authors cited by Carney do agree, paradoxically, that "indigenous" traditions originate elsewhere. In an article which appeared in *Canadian Magazine* (August 1924), for example, the romantic representation of weavers and rug-hookers at home in their idyllic rural setting "might have been a little village of Normandy away back in the seventeenth century ... But no, for in Canada we found it." Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 106.

59. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), XIV.

60. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

61. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 13

62. Smith specifies the seasons and years in which they resided in different villages and concessions. See *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 14, 31, 32, 38, 39, 40, 58.

63. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Untimely Meditations [1873-74]," in *Complete Works*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). I am drawing on Michel Foucault's reading of Nietzsche, see Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 2*, ed.

James D. Faubian and trans. Robert Hurley *et.al.* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 139-164.

64. Feminist theorists who draw on Nietzsche to theorize the patriarchal assumptions that persist in women's histories are frequently weary of matrilineal versions of history that simply institute women into an alternative "Oedipal narrative." See Lee Quinby's chapter "Genealogical Feminism: A Political Way of Looking" in *Anti-Apocalypse* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31. Moira Gatens' discourse analysis is indebted to Foucault, but her discussion of Nietzsche's "non-personal will to power" draws upon a psychoanalytic conception of the body and desire that informs my discussion of Barbeau and Smith. See especially her sixth chapter, "Contracting Sex: Essence, Genealogy, Desire," in *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard and trans. Donald F. Bouchard, Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139-164.

65. A *Veillée* also refers to more formal gatherings which mark such rites of passage as Baptism, marriage, and death. The events generally took place in villagers, houses.

66. Smith, *Charlevoix, 1930*, 22.

67. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, c.1977).

68. Smith and Palardy were hosts to Alfred Pellan, Jean-Paul Lemieux and Stanley Cosgrove, among others.

69. Smith, *Charlevoix, 1930*, 25. Smith's temporal juxtaposition supports Foucault's contention that heterotopias "are most linked to slices of time" or "heterochronies." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 26.

70. Alzarius hoped that Smith could remove the only real impediment to marriage by advising him on how to purchase a bra for a sympathetic but, in his view, excessively voluptuous widow, Smith, *Charlevoix, 1930*, 89-90.

71. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," [tenth page] 8.

72. Smith comments wryly that when Aquilas Girard's second wife Maria (his first wife died in childbirth) became sterile after the birth of her first child Cécile, it "no doubt made her the envy of at least some of her neighbours," Smith, *Charlevoix, 1930*, 14, 19. More pointedly, she comments that women who remained fertile could at least look forward to "the sacred forty days" that followed childbirth, the period that temporarily

freed them “from endless, monotonous toil,” Jori Smith, “Souvenirs of Charlevoix County,” 107.

73. Smith’s observations about several families reveals not only the extent to which all members contributed to the household, but how gender and age had less to do with the assignation of tasks than necessity. For example, women worked alongside men in the fields, and tended to livestock. Eldest daughters in large and orphaned families became surrogate mothers to younger siblings. See Smith, “Souvenirs of Charlevoix County,” 90.

74. Throughout her memoir Smith reiterates the fact that doctors were rarely summoned for childbirth and illness. In fact, she believes that many deaths could be blamed on the unspoken policy of priests before doctors:

Tragically, a great many of these babies died from exposure, thanks to the curé’s insistence that baptism take place within a few hours of birth – whether in the wildest thunderstorm or the most frigid winter night, the newborns had to be taken to the church for christening. How many of them survived is beyond me. And that goes for the mothers, too. It was unthinkable, of course, to fetch a doctor for such a natural occurrence. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 19.

In Smith’s accounts religious beliefs were not the only reason for the apparent indifference of priests to the risks taken by parishioners. The Church granted the village *curés* a great deal of discretionary authority, and did little to police their actions. This lack of accountability created the conditions for egregious abuses of power, illustrated by Smith’s recounting of a horrific incident in *Charlevoix County, 1930*:

The parish priests were infallible parental figures, who could do no wrong [...] Wrapped in his cloak of divine authority, Monsieur le curé was practically invulnerable, almost to the point of being above the law in certain cases. I was once told of a parish priest from the concession of la Misère who, while returning home from a hunting trip, ran over and killed a child. The child’s mother saw the accident and ran out of the house, screaming and shouting in great distress. The curé, who was at that moment dressed in his hunting clothes, got out of the car and went over to the distraught woman. Stifling her cries with a gesture of his upturned hand, he said to the woman, “Attendez un moment, madame.” Calmly, he reached into the back seat of the car, pulled out his cassock and slipped it on. Then, turning once more to the dead child’s mother, he said, “Parlez-maintenant, si vous voulez.” At once, the poor woman threw herself at his feet and began praying. Monsieur le curé was, of course, never prosecuted. (26-27)

75. See Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism*; and Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, Corporeality*.
76. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3-4.
77. Mark Abley, "Painter Jori Smith's Passion for Art Still Glows," *The Gazette*, April 26, 1996, in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
78. Karen Hanson, "Dressing Down Dressing Up: The Philosophic Fear of Fashion," in *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 66-67.
79. Later published as *Charlevoix County, 1930*.
80. Jori Smith, "Prose Pieces," MG 30 series D-249, Vol. 19 file #24, Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada.
81. Smith, "Prose Pieces," 2 .
82. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 120-121. I have made some editorial decisions about Smith's intentions because of the numerous scratch-outs and additions in the draft manuscript.
83. Smith, Jori, "Interview by Charles Hill," 16 June 1974 (5), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993, "Artists Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada,
84. She elaborates in her published memoir that after her mother's death in March 1970, she returned to Senneville to resume "her life as a painter," *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 93.
85. "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 119-120. I had to make editorial decisions about Smith's intended choices because of numerous scratch-outs and additions on the draft manuscript. I have also corrected obviously unintentional punctuation and typing mistakes, but tried to respect Smith's evident enjoyment of, and efforts to capture speakers' playful disregard for prescriptive grammar.
86. Smith frequently does not distinguish between superstition and religious belief. On some occasions she might be referring to a belief in the paranormal; however, her failure to distinguish between the two speaks of her own atheism.
87. 30.5%, or 295 of the 966 inhabitants of Baie-Saint-Paul might have been affected. Although the statistic is supported by medical records it is impossible to know the actual

number because the doctor charged with reporting to authorities was paid by the head of the afflicted, and is known to have inflated the numbers. See *Revue d'histoire de Charlevoix*, "Baie-Saint-Paul: Histoire et patrimoine," Hors série 5 (Juillet 2002), 13-15.

88. *Revue d'histoire de Charlevoix*, "Baie-Saint-Paul: histoire et patrimoine," Hors série 5, (Juillet 2002), 13-15.

89. "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 122.

90. Marie-Anne was born in Petite-Rivière-Saint-François in 1920 (d.1952). In 1939 she met Smith and Palardy who had taken up summer residence close by. Smith lent her art and drawing books, and encouraged her to develop her talent. Within two years she contracted tuberculosis, and for the next twelve years painting would occupy much of the time that confined her. I discuss her work in the next chapter. See Richard Dubé and François Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires* (Laprairie, QC: Éditions Broquet, 1989); and Victoria Baker *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950: Scenes of Charlevoix 1784-1950* (Montréal: Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal), 1981.

91. If we take Smith at her word, her status as "pagan" – historically defined as country-dwellers who continued to practice earth-centred pre-Christian religions – suggests a return to pre-Enlightenment superstition. While Smith recognized that her lack of religious convictions marked her as different ("Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 1, 16) in the eyes of her neighbours, she did not recognize that the interchangeable use of paganism and atheism in lay-parlance effects an inversion of the urban/rural opposition the terms ostensibly maintain. Just as the "rationality" of Smith's atheism might have been lost on rural Catholics, Smith's modernist sensibility prevented her from fully comprehending how she was herself viewed as a naive.

92. Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001), 109.

93. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 129.

94. Smith, Jori, "Interview by Charles Hill," 5.

95. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 142-143.

96. Marius Barbeau, "I Was a Pioneer," 5.

97. *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 64.

Chapter Five:
The Modern Painter's Debt to History:
The Intertwining of Formalism and Historical Memory
in
Jori Smith and Charlevoix Artists

I: INTRODUCTION: THE ARTIST'S DEBT

In the previous chapter I described Jori Smith's differentiation of her visual production from her memoir. She claimed that the latter had "nothing to do with" her,¹ as a strategic distancing gesture intended to keep readers' attention on the inhabitants of Charlevoix. By implication, the comment raises the question of whether her paintings must then have everything to do with *her*. But what would it mean to interpret paintings by focusing exclusively on the artist? I explore this question by first examining the critical response to Smith's portraits. Even without Smith's encouragement, it seems that many critics feel compelled to read them through the biographical details of her life. Although I discuss the feminist implications of this critical focus – namely that her identity as a "woman artist" seems to invite "psycho-biographical" interpretations of her painting – I argue that the approach also marks the achievement of her aesthetic aims insofar as it represents the displaced collective desire to respond to the portraits as if they were the original sitters. Indeed, the artist's disavowal notwithstanding, the uncanniness of her portraits of children suggests that they, like the memoir, have a great deal to do with remembering Charlevoix. In this sense, Smith's portraits and memoir concretize what Paul Ricoeur described as the shared ground between historians and painters: the

desire to render “a debt of recognition to the past.”² This “debt of recognition” is the aesthetic principle that grounds Smith’s memoir as theory, and her painting as praxis.

Art criticism also serves as the starting point for a radical re-reading of Charlevoix artists’ *modernist* influence on Smith’s aesthetic. For example, Dennis Reid states that the paintings that are most suggestive of an “untrained naive” mark Smith’s success as a “modernist.”³ Surveys of both urban and rural artists generally assume the former influenced the latter, but Reid’s comment unintentionally raises the question of how rural artists might have influenced their urban contemporaries. The question challenges conventional assumptions in art history that leave the question of reciprocal influence unexplored. My examination of Smith’s critical response to Charlevoix artists expands on the previous chapter’s examination of the discourse of primitivism in Canadian and Québec visual modernism by focussing on elements in the production of rural artists that fulfilled modernist goals. More specifically, the integration of tradition and contemporary life, painting and handicraft, and the recognition of the affective power and memorializing function of art fulfil Lyman’s ambitions for a *living modern art*.⁴ This chapter also extends the previous chapter’s feminist argument – in the previous chapter I argued that Smith’s memoir recovers the “feminine” abjected from History – by focussing on rural women to argue that their art production is crucial to understanding the intertwining of formalism and historical memory in Québec visual modernism. Indeed, the efforts of governments and cultural institutions to safeguard traditional social values by controlling women’s creative production demonstrates the crucial place women artists

occupied as the preservers of Québec's cultural memory. This chapter, then, not only extends the previous chapters' feminist revisioning of the importance of history to modernist aesthetics, it serves as a foundation for the next chapter's examination of the relationship of formalism to gender and memory in Montréal painting.

II: MODERNISM'S CHALLENGE TO THE DISCIPLINED GAZE

The Critical Response to Smith: Affect and Portraiture

In contrast to her writing, Smith's painting rarely confronts death directly; nevertheless issues of mortality emerge symptomatically in some responses to her work. In general, the critical reception of Smith tends toward formal analysis that situates her visual production in relation to both international and Québec modernism. The notable exception is the response to her portraiture, which persistently struggles to define the elusive quality – in Jacqueline Sirois' words – of “her sensitive portraits of sad-faced children.”⁵ More specifically, for Jean-René Ostiguy the portraits of young girls “are characterized chiefly by a rare, psychological intensity”⁶; and for Rosalind Pepall they are defined by “introspective, even melancholy expression.”⁷ Several art historians link the sadness they perceive in sitters to Smith's family history. In Barbara Meadowcroft's “opinion, she is drawn to this subject partly because, like a child, she lives in the *now* and partly because she recalls vividly the loneliness and emotional deprivation of her own childhood.”⁸ Other critics focus less on the psychology of sitters and/or the artist, and more on the emotional impact of the portraits on viewers. For Esther Trépanier, as for

Dennis Reid, it is respectively, the children's "dureté du regard"⁹ and the "raw emotional directness"¹⁰ that captivates the spectator. For Dorota Kozinska, Smith's "compelling" portraits of children "seem to capture the *old soul*" of their sitters, although the critic is sometimes disturbed by this particular characteristic. For example, the tightly clasped hands of the "serious child with enormous dark eyes" in the portrait of one of the Simard boys of 1935, "[denotes] inner torment."¹¹ Her comment that the remarkable feature of *La Communiant*e, 1944 (fig. 19) is the girl's "sad eyes beseeching the viewer"¹² articulates a general tendency to figure Smith's portraits as anguished appeals to the spectator. Indeed, we discover little of the disciplined detachment we might expect from art critics who are instead drawn to the uncanniness of Smith's portraits.¹³

The Critical Response to Smith: Gender and Genre

At first glance, there is nothing unorthodox about critics bringing details of the artist's personal life to the interpretation of art. But even if Smith's past could "explain" her choice and treatment of subjects, it cannot explain the charismatic force of the portraits for the spectator/critic. Furthermore, Alfred Pellan's comparable treatment of the same children (see *Fillette à robe bleue*, 1941, fig. 21) does not invite a similar biographical focus. When art historians discuss whether to credit Pellan or Smith for originating a "style" or "sub-genre" of portraiture, none, to my knowledge, raises questions about the relation of Pellan's compositions to his childhood experiences. Christopher Varley's acknowledgment that Pellan's portraits of children "share a great

deal in common with Jori Smith” is fairly typical. Although he does not tackle the question of who executed the first portraits directly, his subsequent comment that Pellán is responsible for Smith’s shift from “the tight modelling and muted colour of *Rose*, 1936 to the strong colour and loose brushwork of *Sweet Gilberte*, 1940” is significant (we can find support for Varley’s assertion in the contrast between *Rose*, 1936 (fig. 22) and *Little Girl in Blue*, 1947 (fig. 23). Varley’s examples imply that Pellán not only influenced Smith’s palette – an influence Smith herself acknowledged – but that the shift from adult to child portrait subjects occurred because of Pellán’s visits in Charlevoix.¹⁴ Furthermore, analysis of his production in Charlevoix during the summer of 1941 frequently focuses on his claim that his portraits were an attempt to bridge a perceived gulf between the viewing public and abstract painters like himself.¹⁵ In other words, Pellán’s compositions serve a public function whereas Smith’s portraits are confined to the private realm of personal trauma. The contrast between the critical reception of Pellán and Smith signals the importance of being attentive to how the artist’s gender functions as a lense that orients the critical discussion of art objects.¹⁶

It should also be remembered that in the United States during the Depression, social reform movements bolstered interest in child development as part of a broader attempt to integrate art into everyday life. Similarly, in Europe, Melanie Klein’s theories had an impact on the curricula of such schools as the Malting House School of Cambridge, where fantasy and creativity were considered essential to the psychic development of children.¹⁷ In Québec, you will recall that Lyman viewed the cultivation

of children's creativity as essential to the integration of the arts into everyday life (see Chapter 2). Art historian and critic Maurice Gagnon published similar views,¹⁸ and in the pages of *Canadian Art* of the 1940s,¹⁹ the first national art publication, Canadian artists and critics argued for the importance of children's art to the amelioration of the social environment.²⁰ Since the most vocal proponents of art education were part of the art world, they, not surprisingly, shared Norah McCullough's conviction that children required artist-instructors rather than school teachers who lacked studio experience: the latter were "utterly dependent on a book of rules" that generated the "stultifying exercises" that "creep in to destroy creativeness."²¹ Art classes in Toronto, Montréal and Ottawa, and the establishment of art schools for children, such as the Children's Creative Art Centre organized by Norman Bethune, Fritz Brandtner and Marian Scott in Montréal formalized the belief that creativity should be nurtured at an early age. Scott summarized its aims: "Mainly, the centre was not so much a place for teaching, as a place where children could enjoy painting, where they could develop their imagination and creativeness."²² Art education also provided a source of income and inspiration for artists who admired the guilelessness of children's expressive works. For Paul-Émile Borduas – an art instructor and CAS member – children had more direct access to the intuitive and unconscious processes that "opened the doors of Surrealism and automatic writing. The painterly act in its most pristine state had at last been revealed."²³ But even artists who did not embrace Surrealism or psychoanalysis shared Lyman's conviction that children's "vivid spontaneity and naive directness,"²⁴ their "innate" ability to distinguish "technical

arty trimmings” from the “impulse to embody the material of vivid experience in visual signs” suggests that they had intuited the “rudiments of art.” It makes more sense to situate Smith’s unsentimental portraits of children in relation to modernist convictions about the importance of children to the development of “living art,”²⁵ than to speculate on their connection to the artist’s childhood trauma.

Portrait: Recognition and Remembrance

Biographical explanations of Smith’s paintings also obscure how more immediate factors framed the relationship between the artist and her subjects. Although Smith’s sensitivity to children’s moods might be related to her past experiences, the challenges of everyday life are the more direct cause for their arrestingly grave expressions. Given that the young sitters could hardly be shielded from the demands of rural life during the Depression – children became working members of the household as soon as they were physically capable – we should attribute their unusually solemn expressions to a precocity made compulsory by circumstance.²⁶ Furthermore, illness and death were constant presences in the children’s lives. Smith recalls a heart-rending, but not unusual scene in villages where doctors were rarely summoned for such a commonplace event as childbirth:

The death chamber was quite dark [...] There she lay – there *it* lay – the corpse of the former Anna Bouchard, wife of Alzarius Tremblay. Now only a lifeless shape under the white sheet, she lay on the bed where she had endured so many confinements [...] At my side, one of the boys put out his hand and touched a strand of his mothers [sic] hair, turning to look up at me with an angelic smile.

The reality of the death did not imprint on his childish mind. This was a game to him, or perhaps he believed that his mother was simply ill and would recover one day soon.²⁷

The passage demonstrates that Smith's attentiveness to the child's perceptions begins with her sensitivity to *his* specific situation. At the time of writing, Smith also knew that he and his siblings would have to confront not only the finality of his mother's death, but their father's a few years later. The sadness of these events is multiplied as her memoir recalls the suffering and deaths of several children, who had themselves witnessed the deaths of parents, siblings, and other relatives. Scenes like the one described above were so commonplace that they appear as a recurring theme in Charlevoix painters' depictions of everyday life. Both Yvonne Bolduc's *Le Saint-Viatique*, c.1940, and Robert Cauchon's *Le Viatique*, c.1960 depict the curé's journey to bring communion, and possibly last rites to the ill. In Marie-Anne Simard's *Le Viatique*, c.1940 (fig. 24) the iconic and verbal references to Catholicism and the ordinary setting, with its cheerful colours, and homely details, fail to diminish the palpable sadness of a family in mourning. Presumably children recognized their mortality in a way that would be inconceivable to most adult urbanites who had greater access to health services, even during the Depression.²⁸ Smith's encounter with the troubling events that defined everyday life in rural Québec, and her empathetic wonder over the endurance of the young, emerge as the most direct impetus for her choice of portrait subjects.

She speculated that the ubiquity of suffering and loss produced a general "philosophical acceptance of calamity."²⁹ In describing the death of one child to

tuberculosis, she explained “there was no mourning, no lamentations. Her mother said only, *Elle est ben mieux au ciel, elle ne souffre plus*” (25). Nevertheless, as Smith’s anecdotes demonstrate, religion and the frequency of death did little to shield families from grief. In the previous chapter, I noted that Smith’s annoyance over the separation of women from men at social gatherings signals the contrast between an urban self-regulating or “panoptic” relation to societal expectations, and a society where more direct institutional controls ensure conformity.³⁰ The different social orientations also account for the sharp contrast between the treatment of death as a religious ritual in rural artists’ representations of *le viatique*, and the interiority of Smith’s claustrophobic composition *Untitled*, c.1935-45 (fig. 25). Simard’s *Le Viatique* (fig. 24) is perhaps the most disturbing treatment of the death scenes because the intimate event is presented as if it were a public spectacle. Whereas the spectator must guess at the thoughts of Smith’s vigilant family, Simard’s composition presents the sickroom as a brightly lit stage where the performance of a familiar tragedy – with its scripted rituals and a family’s predictable grief – is entirely visible to the spectator. The contrasting ambiguity of Smith’s composition is no less upsetting. The sombre tones and absence of religious references in Smith’s tight composition invite viewers into the intensely constraining emotional space of the family; the child’s apparent consciousness of the space beyond the small group gathered around the bed disturbs spectatorial distance from the anxious question of whether s/he will survive. In this way, the painting establishes an emotional bridge between the present and once commonplace events. As in the case of Charlevoix painters,

we discover in Smith's portraits and group compositions, not an invitation to psychoanalyse the artist, but the occasion to consider how even the youngest inhabitants of rural Québec confronted mortality in complex ways. I suspect that the "psycho-biographical" gaze on Smith not only reflects how her gender informs the critical reception of her work, but an aversion to looking at (or *feeling*) a painful aspect of history. James Elkins' study of the contrast between the unguardedly emotional reactions to painting of some *lay-spectators* with the detached, or "disinterested" responses of some art historians suggests one reason for this aversion: art historical training can produce an institutionalized numbing to the affective dimension of painting.³¹ By continuing to survive the mortifying disinterested gaze of art criticism, Smith's portraits fulfill the modernist goal of Lyman and other CAS members: to produce "living art" forms. Smith's project, then, participates in modernist efforts to re-invest painting as a space for cathexis.³² Indeed, if the critical response to her portraits is any indication, her project was successful.

III: THE PORTRAITIST'S DEBT IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

The Portrait and Collective Memory

This still leaves open the question of how to situate Smith's visual production in relation to historical memory. Did it, like her memoir, represent a "settling of accounts" with the past?³³ Smith's differentiation of the memoir as a form of witnessing from her

perspective as a painter implies that her visual production serves no historical function. We should recall, however, that the ethnological impulse was responsible for Smith's presence in Charlevoix as an artist. Like other Québec modernists, she was interested in painting as a form of memory. Further, in a 1997 interview with Édith-Anne Pageot, she established a direct connection between the memoir and her painting: "I started writing right away and its funny how I was creating from the pictures in my mind, I could never write or paint from imagination, always have to rely on life."³⁴ In a joint interview with Jean Palardy sixty-seven years earlier, she had clarified the role of the creative process as a mediator between "life" and memory explaining that "modern" portraiture in particular, effects a synthesis of several visions: "de sorte que l'individu devient plus qu'une unité passagère, mais un être divers, sans toutefois devenir un *type* comme trop souvent dans l'art académique."³⁵ This comment prompted Pageot to ask how the genre liberates sitters from "personal contingencies" and "individual particularities"? When she put the question to Smith, the artist claimed to have been interested in child psychology, and to have been influenced by the writings of Jung.³⁶ Pageot also attributes Smith's interest in psychoanalysis to the fact that she was friends with Karl Stern and Miguel Prados, both psychoanalysts practicing in Montréal. Although she did not enter analysis, she would have been exposed to Freud's thought through these psychoanalysts. More importantly, Prados is known to have discussed psychoanalytic theory with her on social occasions.³⁷

Smith preferred Jung to Freud, however, because he too believed that the careful study of facial expressions could reveal universal truths.³⁸ Jung's theorization of the

“collective unconscious” finds its clearest articulation in Smith’s explanation for her attraction to children as portrait subjects: “It is a curious thing but children in moments of quite [sic] always have that kind of sadness in their eyes. I thought about it and I came to the conclusion that it is the mirror of sadness of millions of years of difficult moments.”³⁹ As Pageot notes, we do not have to embrace Jung’s theories to recognize a psychic element in the portraits that “exceeds individual consciousness.”⁴⁰ First, in a tangible sense, such portraits as *Sister of Vitaline*, 1952 invoke the children’s genealogies through titling, and presumably through family resemblances. Second, if we consider the critical reception of Smith’s portraits as a response to her search for historical continuity in the unconscious, we discover that the children’s expressive faces succeed in bridging the past as they not only uncannily mirror history, but appear to mourn it.

Modernism’s Uncanny Portraits: Formalism and Genre

In her examination of the critical response to Smith, Pageot attributes the fascination with her portraits to the works’ refusal to invite spectators into the space of the composition, and into the inner world of the sitters.⁴¹ In *La Communiant*e (fig. 19), for example, the child’s inward gaze presents a visual and psychological “repoussoir” which is further reinforced by the oval enclosure of the arms and hands (183). Indeed, Pageot’s argument can be applied to several other compositions, including *Sister of Vitaline*, 1952, and especially *Pauline Simard*, v.1940-2 (fig. 26), *Young Girl*, 1940 (fig. 27, another portrait of Simard), *L’Ennui*, 1937 (fig. 28) and *Thérèse aux Lilas*, 1940. Pageot’s

formalist explanation for the psychological impact of Smith's portraits goes some way in disrupting their mystification. For Pageot, the artist's treatment of her subjects is not linked to childhood trauma, but is an index of her *modernity* (180). Smith's project represents neither an exclusive attempt to emulate Matisse's achievement of "visual equilibrium" compositionally (178), nor the modernist "deconstruction of Euclidean space," but a focus on the human figure that is characteristic of Québec Modernism of the 1930s and 1940s.⁴² Although Pageot's views correspond to Esther Trépanier's argument about the figure's primacy in Québec visual modernism, she takes issue with the latter's "anachronistic" grouping of Smith's portraits with other figurative compositions that respond to the Depression. Pageot argues that because Smith's 1950s portraits retain the "austerity" of the earlier works, her body of portraits must be responding to factors other than economic and social crisis, namely Jungian psychology (182-184). This last point is unconvincing, not only because it fails to recognize the material evidence that some works are misdated,⁴³ and how thematics and approaches become constitutive of an artist's aesthetic over time,⁴⁴ but also because it fails to address the problematic of history in Jungian thought, and how Charlevoix as "heterotopia" is already constituted as an *anachronistic* space.⁴⁵

IV: THE PRIMITIVE AND THE MODERN

The Modern Artist as *Primitive*:

For Dennis Reid, Smith's mastery as a modern artist is most apparent when she

demonstrates a lack of proficiency as a painter. Her “brusque, forceful portrait studies” may “reveal the simplifications of a *modernist*,” but it is *La Communiant*e which “suggests the work of an untrained naive.”⁴⁶ Dennis Reid’s assessment of the portrait is not intended to be disparaging. Rather, his comment reveals a paradox inherent to the conception of the urban avant-garde as “outsider”⁴⁷ artists who must simultaneously draw upon and “forget” their training in Western traditions. It also marks the fulfilment of Barbeau’s nationalist aspirations for an indigenous modern art culled from “primitive” traditions. The category of the *primitive* is therefore constitutive of the *modern*; the two identity formations ensure that producers subsumed under the former provide the “raw materials” and a history for the latter,⁴⁸ while maintaining the hierarchy between the “trained” and “untrained” naive invoked by Reid.

Policing Tradition: Government Controls and Québec handicrafts

The “Primitive” is split by other contradictions that protectionist efforts other than Barbeau’s expose. In 1937, Lyman used the space of his *Montrealer* column to disparage the “monstrous rag pictures” that had displaced “French Canadian region[al]” patterns “which, if not remarkable, had at least a naïve charm.”⁴⁹ Lyman’s grudging endorsement of traditional forms seems merely an afterthought to his indictment of the *tapis murals* – hooked wall rugs depicting village scenes – displayed on fences and clotheslines along tourist routes between Montréal and Eastern Québec. Evidently, the souvenirs threatened the primitive/modern opposition by exposing how rural artisans were already responding

aesthetically to the incursions of modernity. In contrast to Smith, who believed that the traditional handicrafts produced in Charlevoix were only “eroded by modernity” in the subsequent “decade or two,”⁵⁰ Lyman believed that tradition had already been corrupted. His goal, then, was not preservationist, but the recovery of a lost art. During the 1930s, the Québec government responded to similar fears about the perceived decline in traditional technique and “artistic taste” by expanding WWI training programs that promoted the production of handicrafts.⁵¹ Each year, hundreds of women learned the vegetable dyeing, design, and fabrication techniques that they were then charged to teach to thousands more in regional household science schools.⁵² Lora Carney’s research on the institutionalization of Québec homespun textiles demonstrates that, although both Lyman and the government decried the use of commercial patterns for hooked rugs, the latter approved the “characteristic” houses and village scenes targeted by Lyman’s criticism.⁵³ For this reason, Lyman was most emphatic in his condemnation of the Québec government’s incentive programs which served to “poison the naïve sources of our folk arts.”⁵⁴ Notably, both conceptions of the authentic ignore that even the earliest designs consisted of local re-workings from a variety of sources, including imported rugs and tapestries, and that commercial designs were widely distributed by the late nineteenth century throughout the northeastern United States and Canada.⁵⁵ As Carney points out, the traditional forms celebrated by Lyman in 1937 could only have dated to the early to mid-nineteenth century and they would not have been produced in any significant number until several decades later after the introduction of commercial burlap from British

factories in India (111). Even at the time, Barbeau's research would have called into question the historical premise of Lyman's position.⁵⁶

Policing The Modern: John Lyman on Charlevoix Painters

The conflict between Lyman and the government's competing notions of the authentic, then, reflects their different agendas. The latter's conservationist efforts were part of a larger Depression era project: to stem the exodus from rural communities to Canadian and American cities by bringing additional income to farming families.⁵⁷ However imperialist, it becomes apparent that Lyman's primarily aesthetic concerns contrast with the government's more explicit political and economic aims when he criticizes such artisan/painters as Yvonne Bolduc for being "far from simple-minded candour" when "making hooked rugs in imitation of pictures by Mr. Coburn and Mr. Clarence Gagnon."⁵⁸ Evidently, Lyman not only condemned artisans who blurred the boundary between painting and rug-making, but who borrowed from art history. Indeed, the policing of disciplinary boundaries extended to rural artists who entered the urban gallery system. Of the Charlevoix artists featured in the New York exhibition organized by Maud and Patrick Morgan in 1937,⁵⁹ Lyman complained that "the absence of conventional proficiency is not equivalent to the unified force of primitive tradition. In reality the primitives are not primitive at all; they could be more correctly called elementary. They are on the margin of a self-conscious society."⁶⁰ He tempered his views a few years later in his review of the travelling exhibition *Aspects of Contemporary*

Painting in Canada (1942), conceding that although the representation of Charlevoix contributors might have been “a little overdone” it could be accepted “as a wholesome corrective, for the light-fingered imagery of these untaught artists, though uneven, has far more of the creative spark than plenty more knowing work that is often seen in our exhibitions.”⁶¹ Lyman’s comments suggest that his protectionist attitudes about homespun textiles are driven by a more profound concern with policing the boundary between “untaught” rural artists and contemporary urban painters. Notably, Barbeau, the government, and Lyman became key representatives in a critical discussion that took place in ethnology, the visual arts, education, and the mass media over how to define “tradition,” demonstrating that by the 1930s, aesthetics had become an important site for institutional struggles over the history and future of visual culture.

Tourism and the Modern Subject

Clearly, Lyman viewed Québec traditions in even less dynamic terms than Barbeau and Smith; but this still begs the question of how the artist/critic who promulgated a *living art* could dismiss as “inauthentic” artists who focussed on the everyday. If Barbeau’s ethnological research did not support Lyman’s hermetic conception of the history of handicrafts in Québec, why was the latter so critical of contemporary artisans who turned their gaze inward? Were the *tapis murals*, which integrated tradition, contemporary life, and art history, not exemplary of Lyman’s *living art*? The contradictions in Lyman are instructive because they point to a more widespread

ambivalence about the activity that Dean MacCannell theorizes as the deep structure of modernism. His argument that tourism makes urbanites most conscious of their modernity by making a spectacle of the other,⁶² suggests that tourism serves as the epistemic and material base for the *modern/primitive* opposition. Although the overlap between *tapis murals* and painting would seem to conform to Lyman's definition of a modern *living art* by bridging tradition, contemporary life, and art history, their production and dissemination threaten the integrity of *the modern* as an urban phenomenon. The souvenirs that hailed tourists from the roadside challenged the urban fantasy of rural life untouched by modernity simply by focussing on the everyday. Modernists like Lyman were troubled to discover their *own* reflections in the mirrors rural artists turned on themselves.

V: MODERN ARTIST AS *PRIMITIVE*

Conflicting Definitions of Tradition: Smith, Palardy, and Barbeau

In contrast to Lyman, Smith appreciated the work of such artists as Mary Simone Bouchard precisely because "they were the pure mirror of life as she experienced it around her every day."⁶³ She elaborated that Bouchard's paintings and carvings were "full of colour, life, and warmth, Mary's paintings recorded in loving detail the events, sights, and experiences of the world around her – the waterfall, a picnic in the apple-orchard, the postman arriving by sleigh on a snowy day, or the entire family sitting around the table on a festive occasion."⁶⁴ In Bouchard's paintings, Smith appears to discover the fulfilment

of Lyman's modernist ambitions for a *living art*. Smith was better able to recognize Bouchard's achievement as a painter because she did not police the boundaries between folk and modern, and between handicrafts and painting as strictly as Lyman. In fact, Bouchard came to the attention of Barbeau, Smith, and Palardy as a painter because of her handicrafts;⁶⁵ and when Smith praised other artists and artisans of Bouchard's generation in her memoir she did not distinguish between the paintings and carvings that were "surprising in their quality and charm."⁶⁶ Smith, Morgan and others also recognized the originality of Bouchard's aesthetic in the clothes she designed for herself, and in objects that served to mark important religious and family events.⁶⁷ Admittedly, Smith's admiration for the bolts of linen, homespun, runners, woolen blankets, bedspreads of "catalogue," and "ceinture fléchée" (41-42) woven by Madame Louisa⁶⁸ stems from assumptions about authenticity that are similar to Lyman's: the "designs were a blend of tradition and individual inventiveness; that is, the motifs used would follow the traditional patterns" even if "the choice of colours and their arrangement would be of Louisa's own design"(40). Although Smith ranked household objects of the 1930s high on the list of "ancient cultural traditions, in all their beauty and simplicity," she shared Lyman's concerns about the impact of "contact with the *modern world*" (18). In the 1970s, she criticized the postwar generation of artists who had "shrewdly" capitalized "on the region's burgeoning tourist trade" by "turning out hideous paintings and carvings, to the delight of hordes of ignorant tourists" (30). Smith, like Lyman, blamed tourism for a perceived decline in the quality of handicrafts, although she situated the most damaging

incursions of modernity a decade or two later. Her “delayed” response to external influences on Charlevoix’ artisans allowed for a more expansive understanding of tradition where Lyman perceived only crude commercialism.

In fact, although Smith was confounded by Charlevoix inhabitants’ failure to appreciate the beauty of their natural environment,⁶⁹ she delighted in the creativity of their living spaces:

I well recall the jolt of pleasure I felt the first time we entered one of these interiors. That such unsophisticated, untutored people could have such pure and perfect taste in their decorative objects was a revelation to me, all the more surprising considering their drastically limited resources. (18)

If we detect a certain urban condescension in Smith’s admiration, her subsequent comments undercut the alleged opposition between urban *sophistication* and the *untutored*: “objects of beauty for the household were also objects of necessity, which they were obliged to create with their own hands and their own ingenuity, following traditional designs and patterns handed down from one generation to another” (18). The conception of rural artisans as both untutored and skilled in centuries-old traditions inadvertently deconstructs itself. The contradiction signals the opposition between the modern artist as an outsider who must absorb and then *forget* art historical precedents to develop an “individual style,” and the anonymous folk artist who must *remember* tradition to be constitutive of it. Notably, in the differences and contradictions that characterise Barbeau, Lyman, and Smith’s conceptions of rural art and handicraft we discover that disciplinary boundaries became an important site for exploring the problematic of history in modernist

aesthetics, and that artisans had become important keepers of Québec's historical memory. I will return to the importance of this issue for women below.

VI: TRADITION AND CREATIVE FREEDOM: *LIVING ART*

The *Undisciplined gaze*: Charlevoix Artists

Nancy Rankin began her 1945 magazine article on Simone Mary Bouchard's family with the assertion that artisans of Charlevoix were "unconcerned whether art galleries" classified their "paintings as *Folk Art, Habitant Art, or Canadian Primitives*" (38). Indeed, Bouchard's account of her exhibition history supports Rankin's contention that the lines of demarcation among modern, folk, art, craft, and souvenir did not vex rural artists:

Je fis d'autres peintures pour les expositions de Montreal et de Québec et la plus par de mes tableaux fur vendu à New York par M. Morgan. En dix-neuf-cent trente-six Japportait pour les tapis crocheter le premier prix à Montréal, l'année suivante à Québec et dans la suite pour la peinture. A l'exposition provinciale de Québec dix-neuf-cent-trente neuf, le troisième prix pour la peinture l'année suivante le deuxième et en quarante un le premier pour la peinture. Je vis par mes succès que ma nature artistiques grandissait.⁷⁰

It is not surprising that Bouchard did not experience disciplinary orthodoxies as a restriction on her creativity when we consider that her urban supporters resisted directing rural artists. For example, Bouchard's activities as a painter began when she was first exposed to oil and canvas during Clarence Gagnon's painting trips to Baie-Saint-Paul. Although Marius Barbeau was the first to encourage her painting,⁷¹ it was Patrick and

Maud Morgan who played the most decisive role in bringing Charlevoix painters to the attention of North Americans during the 1930s.⁷² The inclusion of handicrafts and paintings of permanent residents in local exhibitions organized by the Morgans eventually led to exhibitions in the United States and Canada. The Morgans also provided an important forum for dialogue without interfering with the artistic vision of the participants. Similarly, Smith and Palardy resisted “influencing” the “vision”⁷³ of such painters as Simone Mary, Marie-Cécile and Édith Bouchard, and Marie-Anne and Berthe Simard. Smith claimed that even when Simone Mary Bouchard asked for instruction “our only help in that direction was to make a list of colours she could send for,”⁷⁴ and that her encouragement of Marie-Anne Simard consisted of lending her art books.⁷⁵ Untutored in Western art historical traditions, the Bouchards and the Simards did not conceive of their aesthetic production in anatomized terms, nor did they concern themselves with the boundary between *living* and *art*. It is because of their “non-urban” relationship to creative production, that they fulfil the ambitions of urban modernists for a *living art*.

Modernism and the *Disciplined Gaze*: Montréal Artists

The fact that rural artists did not feel constrained by tradition contrasts significantly with the experiences of Montréal modernists. Smith and Palardy’s policy of non-interference with rural painters, for example, deviated from their own art education; and even as they fretted over the possible disappearance of rural traditions, the urban

members of the CAS with whom Bouchard co-exhibited in 1941 and 1945 railed against the tyranny of their own traditions. In spite of the awards Smith received, and the support of the school's Director, Charles Maillard, she was critical of the strict training she received at the Montréal École des Beaux Arts. She described the school's academicism, modelled after the French tradition, as artistically numbing – “years and years in Rip Van Winckle sleep at the Ecole des Beaux Arts”⁷⁶ – a numbing she struggled to overcome: “How hard it was to get over that dreadful academic training, how it bound us and shut us down, compressed us, put us in chains really, from which we had to tear ourselves in order to find some way of expressing ourselves freely.”⁷⁷ Palardy and Lemieux also felt they had to work against the Western art traditions they learned at the school, and during the 1940s former students Pellán and Borduas became embroiled in arguments between Maillard and his students about the exclusion of controversial works in a student show.⁷⁸ Indeed, with the exception of Bouchard, the aforementioned members and co-exhibitors of the CAS remind us of why the association first came into existence. Unlike rural artists who belonged to a community that shared their interests,⁷⁹ the CAS provided one of the few alternatives to conservative art institutions in Québec. Ironically, their status as artisans and “primitive painters” untutored in “high art” traditions freed such artists as Bouchard from the oppressiveness of Western academicism to pursue the goals that their urban contemporaries defined as modernist.

Tradition and the Gendering of Visual Culture in Québec: Urban and Rural Women Artists

When the *École des Beaux-Arts* opened in 1923, it welcomed both female and male students, an unprecedented experience for Montréal women who wished to pursue a career in the visual arts.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the Director's classification of students into three categories suggests that women confronted a hurdle their male contemporaries did not. On the surface, the first two groups – those who would become professional artists, and artisans – seem gender neutral; however, the third group of “young girls completing their cultural education,” who would later “exercise a positive influence within the family circle and over the community”⁸¹ undercuts the universality of the first two classifications of students. Smith discovered that this unofficial gender-streaming cost her a scholarship two years in a row because it was assumed that women necessarily abandoned painting after marriage.⁸² In a bitter-sweet irony, history vindicated Smith; she continued to paint into the new millennium, while her husband Jean Palardy gave it up around 1938.⁸³

In contrast to urban women artists of Smith's generation, many rural women did not perceive their gender as an impediment, but as an asset to gaining the training, financial assistance, and recognition that supported their artistic production. The Québec Department of Agriculture's establishment of the *Écoles ménagères* and *Cercles des fermières* across the province to “give instruction in household science in general and in the homespun industry in particular”⁸⁴ responded to politicians, clerics and nationalists who feared that the changing role of women in urbanized and industrialized social

environments posed a threat to social stability. They hoped that the revival of domestic industries would safeguard the Québec family by promoting rural women's role as the protectors of traditional values and by limiting migration into the cities. Many of the women who participated in the training programs and in the administration of local chapters of Cercles des fermières shared the attitudes of the Church and government.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the training programs provided institutional support for what were predominantly women's activities during the Depression. As I discussed earlier, government programs did not discourage artists from producing the objects for the tourist trade that Lyman detested. Institutionalized paternalism and sexism, then, produced the infrastructure for rural women's art production at a time that was especially challenging for such urban artists as Smith (I discuss this issue more fully in the next chapter). In a Foucauldian sense, power had produced the conditions for rural women's knowledge of the mechanisms that provided material support for their creativity.⁸⁶ *La Prostituée*, c.1940 (fig. 30), a high-relief sculpture belonging to Smith, provides a compelling reason why rural artisans would have welcomed the government incentives; the programs offered an alternative to the city where the sex trade provided the only source of income for many women during the Depression. Together with *L'Ivrogne*, c. 1900-1985 (fig. 31), a mixed media sculpture also owned by Smith,⁸⁷ they suggest that the naiveté assigned to rural artists is an urbanite fantasy that blinds us both to their technical proficiency in diverse media and to their sophistication in reconciling the prosaic and the aesthetic in social commentary. Moreover, they do not resort to the empty moralizing that Herbert Marcuse

discerned in much of the “message-oriented” art of the twentieth century.⁸⁸ The fact that Smith owned these pieces signals how she must have, in some sense, admired them for successfully bringing social commentary into aesthetic expression, a reconciliation she sometimes felt she had failed to achieve. I discuss the feminist and Leftist implications of these issues more fully in the next chapter.

Collective Memory as Feminine Duty: Rural Women Artists and Visual Culture

With the institutionalization of handicraft traditions women’s duty to Québec’s collective memory became official. Still, the gendering of visual artists’ responsibility to history manifested itself more subtly in art history and criticism. In his 1947 article on Charlevoix artists, Patrick Morgan’s examples assert a clear distinction between female and male painters. He contrasts the paintings of Marie-Cecile and Simone Mary Bouchard who “express a purely folk charm that reflects the remote life of a talented family, their old mill home, and its surrounding fields and forests,” with those of Alfred Deschênes who “can no longer be considered a purely folk painter” because “he reaches beyond his local scene, and penetrates beyond a mere story telling to build, in paint, in emotion.”⁸⁹ As folk artists, the Bouchard sisters provide “charming” records of rural life, but Deschênes’ treatment of the same themes transcends historical and cultural specificity. In other words, Deschênes escapes the status of folk artist because his local scenes somehow reflect universal themes. In fact, the affective power Morgan perceives in Deschênes suggests the painter’s achievement of a central modernist goal. Like the art critics who

contrast Pellan's political and modernist aspirations with Smith's expression of personal issues in child portraits of remarkable stylistic similarity, Morgan does not address the issue of gender explicitly. Nevertheless, in the absence of visual evidence, readers might be led to expect that they will discover the greatest affinities among artists of the same sex, regardless of social background. Oddly enough, although his article does include three reproductions of the Bouchards' paintings, Morgan's comparison is not supported with descriptions or reproductions of Deschênes' work. Indeed, the fact that the citation above is the only reference to specific artists makes it impossible for the reader to assess Morgan's assertions. When I compared the ten reproductions of Deschênes with the twenty or so of the Bouchard sisters that appear in Dubé and Tremblay, I could not find support for Morgan's conclusions.⁹⁰ If Dubé and Tremblay's selection is representative, it is difficult to account for Morgan's statements except as a response to the artists' gender. My point is that the critical reception of both urban and rural painters was over-determined by the same gendered assumptions that inform the constitution of nostalgia as the *feminine other* to History. And while art historians associated rural women with the feminized sphere of communal memory, governments made them responsible for safeguarding it.

VII: FOLK ART AS MODERNIST RESPONSE TO MODERNITY

Modern Vision: Charlevoix Painters and Modern Technologies

The contradictions and intersections we discover in Smith, Barbeau, Lyman, and

Morgan contribute to an understanding of the fascination of rural artists to an urban generation who attempted to develop forms that reflected a *modern* relationship to the phenomenological world. Morgan and Smith were more expansive than Barbeau and Lyman in their support of rural art forms that showed the incursion of modernity because they saw in them the potential to radicalize urban “ways of seeing.” Dubé believes that Morgan’s interest in Charlevoix painters stemmed from an avant-garde belief in the regenerative potential of the folk arts for modern painting,⁹¹ suggesting that like Barbeau, his primary goal in promoting rural art was to ensure the development of modernist art. On the other hand, Morgan’s concern that “folk art at its highest is unintellectual, purely intuitive, and consequently most vulnerable to outside influence”⁹² was premised on the conviction that modernism had forced a re-evaluation of traditional aesthetic hierarchies. He cautioned against mistaking “the technical proficiency of the academician as *great*” and the dismissal of folk artists as “quaint” and joined in:

the contemporary efforts of schooled artists to re-discover in form and colour a means of expression. This newer aesthetic has accustomed our eyes to non-photographic proportions, has caused us to re-evaluate the art of the past, and leads us to accept the quaintness of folk art as its essence rather than its weakness. (152)

The alleged opposition between the sophisticated urban avant-garde and “quaint” folk artists is undercut by Morgan’s recognition that new technologies force a reconsideration of the opposition. In the wake of photography, historical and folk art served to critique the art historical discourses schooled urbanites found so restrictive. Morgan’s description of folk art’s particular achievement in commemorating “daily life” (152) might easily be

confused with the *living art* of urban modernists:

These people are a part of an industrialized world whose traffic and whose influence penetrate their homes, lead them to new tradition [sic], and keep the painters from dreaming of a past prolonged. The daily papers, books, the radio, all hammer at their senses.” (154-155)

Morgan’s admiration for rural artists’ culturally specific responses to modernity demonstrates how new imaging and mass media technologies challenged the distinction between urban and rural as hermetically distinct spatio-temporal orders to which the *modern* and the *folk* arts responded. The so-called “primitives” offered an alternative, but no less modern vision of modernity.

Formalism as a Response to Modernity’s Spatial and Temporal Dislocations

Similarly, the recognition of the formalist achievements of rural artists implies their success as modern painters. Morgan emphasized that the absence of linear perspective in compositions by rural artists reflected a culturally specific conception of vision. His sense that Charlevoix painters were not responding to “optical conditions,” and that they were using outline and colour contrasts to produce “a strength of balance,” rather than sacrificing colour “to blended tonalities” (154) could easily be confused with descriptions of Matisse’s paintings. Morgan’s assessment that the use of proportion, scale, and colour reflected the “sense of what they saw,” rather than “conscientious realism” (154) goes beyond superficial questions of style to establish a conceptual affinity between the projects of Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Matisse and those of rural painters.

Similarly, Palardy's claim that painters were unsure of how colours would look until they applied them⁹³ corresponds to Europeans' abandonment of naturalistic colour to experiment with colour relationships. Even his observation that rural painters had no "theory of art"⁹⁴ echoes Matisse's assertion that the expressiveness of colour could not be planned according to "theories," but had to be discovered through "observation" and "feeling."⁹⁵ As Kim Sawchuk points out, the "spatial dispositions" achieved by Cézanne's colour variations, and the Cubist fracturing of space "signal changes in space-time apprehension," demonstrating that "modernism, as an artistic ideology and practice, and modernity, as a social condition, cross-paths."⁹⁶ For Sawchuk, European visual modernism responds to the *antimodernist* nostalgia for the rhythms of life not governed by standardized time, "the clock," and the "factory whistle," technologies that effectively detached time from a "material connection to a natural order."⁹⁷ If Morgan, Palardy, and Smith were blind to the achievement of their own modernist goals in the paintings of rural artists, it is because they failed to recognize a paradox in conceiving of the works as both ingenuous expressions of the "pre-modern," and as aesthetically coherent responses to a way of life that already showed the effects of modern technology and tourism. The contradiction underscores how the modernist attempt to articulate the relationship of the past to new ways of seeing was more of a challenge for urbanites than it was for rural painters not schooled in the orthodoxies they "subverted."

Memory and Modern Painting:

Urbanites persisted in believing that visual modernism was the progeny of a European tradition, a tradition distinct from the “indigenous” art of rural Québec. Although Québec modernism’s connection to international movements was assumed, urban art critics of the 1940s could not fully account for “an artistic expression only now beginning to be understood”⁹⁸ because rural painters were thought to have little connection to urban centres. Even more recent art histories tend to ignore international influences on Charlevoix artists. It is unlikely, for example, to find comparisons between Simone Mary Bouchard *Nature morte*, c.1940 (fig.33) and Matisse’s *Still-Life with Blue Tablecloth*, c.1909 (fig. 34) and his open window compositions (see *Interior with Phonograph*, 1924, fig. 35), or between Alfred Deschênes’ *Les Jeunes beigneurs à la chute*, c.1938 (fig. 36) and Thomas Eakins’ *Swimming*, 1885, Edgar Degas’ *Young Spartans Exercising*, c.1860, Frédéric Bazille’s *Bathers (Summer Scene)*, 1869 (fig. 37), and Paul Cézanne’s *Bathers at Rest*, 1875-76. Although Dubé and Tremblay recognize similarities between Deschênes and Douanier Rousseau, they downplay them: “Il s’apparente, *sans le savoir*, à plusieurs grands artistes modernes,” [emphasis mine].⁹⁹ Although it is not unreasonable to situate the production of rural painters in relation to their own handicraft traditions, it is equally reasonable to assume that rural painters absorbed nineteenth and twentieth century European and American influences through the numerous urban painters who visited the region during the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, it is significant that Smith’s encouragement of the artistic development of Marie-

Anne Simard consisted of lending her art books.¹⁰¹ The failure to fully *see* the possibility of historical and modernist influences in Charlevoix painters – an insight with which Smith, Morgan and others struggled – makes the work appear “quaint” to some, and uncanny to others: “These works have a *disturbing* quality which tends to make the observer wonder not only about the picture, but about the artist,” [emphasis mine].¹⁰² As in the case of Smith’s portraits, critics turn to biography to account for the disquieting element in Bouchard and others, with a notable difference. In contrast to urban artists, the biographies of Charlevoix painters seem less like iterations of individual achievement, than microcosms of communal life. The *folk* painter designation, then, encourages an interpretive focus that further undermines the possibility of placing rural painters within a modernist tradition.

Charlevoix Painters and Modernism: Colour and Sensation

But what would it mean to fully recognize the “modernism” of paintings by rural artists? The question returns me to the problematic of history in modernist aesthetics, and the relationship of memory to formalism more specifically. First, modernist excitement over the expressive potential of colour centred on painting’s ability to produce affective sensations. Matisse explained that his choice of colour was based not simply on “observation,” but “on feeling, on the very nature of experience.” The problem for him was to combine colours and forms that “fit” his “sensation.”¹⁰³ According to Morgan, Charlevoix painters’ colour choices reflected a particular orientation to the

phenomenological world: “They do not see their world in light and shade. To them, a barn is red, the grass is green, the sky is blue, regardless of the optical conditions under which they are seen.”¹⁰⁴ Morgan’s sense that Charlevoix painters shared a form of *colour blindness* to fluctuations in light not only suggests a coherent collective aesthetic vision, but aligns it with the post-Impressionism of Matisse and other Fauvists.

Charlevoix Painters and Modernism: Space, Genre, and Memory

Like Matisse, Charlevoix painters exploited the emotional and sensorial capacities of colour and form. The “disturbing” quality Rankin finds in Simone Mary Bouchard is associated with compositions that re-produce the emotional impact of the artist’s memory. She describes Bouchard’s horses as “high-stepping harbingers of festivity. Their tails waving banners of celebration. They could be going to nothing less than a wedding, and they knew it.”¹⁰⁵ If we follow the critic in not mistaking the scene for a naive anthropomorphism, we find Matisse’s concern for reproducing the sensations associated with the original event. Morgan believed that Charlevoix painters consciously re-arranged scenes and exploited colour to capture the “details that their memory holds vivid.”¹⁰⁶ Dubé and Tremblay’s assertion that Charlevoix painters worked from memory and photographs, and that they rarely painted landscapes outdoors corroborates Morgan’s view that the painters were more concerned with capturing their memory of a scene or an event, than verisimilitude.¹⁰⁷ The focus on memory rather than optical conditions accounts for the elimination of, or conversely, the careful attention to detail, and the

simplification of form and colour. Memory has its own logic and sense of proportion; when it replaces the vanishing point as an ordering system objects look distorted, exaggerated, or diminished in scale. In short, memory does not conform to a Euclidian spatial economy where the background plays a recessive role to the foreground; nor does it respect generic categories that determine which objects will occupy a place of centrality. Memory can also bring *every* object into focus. As Dubé and Tremblay point out, Marie-Anne Simard's *Le Repas de famille*, c.1945 (fig. 38) is really a synthesis of individual portraits and a still-life composition in which the table takes on as much importance as the figures.¹⁰⁸ When we compare the exterior scene to Simard's *La Prière en famille*, c.1949 (fig. 39) we discover the same attention to detail and colour relations. The remarkably similar treatment of stairs, walls, grass and floor in the two paintings also demonstrates the painter's indifference to the generic integrity of landscape and domestic scene.¹⁰⁹ We find the same disregard for genre in Simone Mary Bouchard's *La famille à l'ouvrage*, c.1940 (fig. 32), *L'Autoportrait aux oiseaux*, c.1936 (fig. 41), and *Nature morte*, c.1940 (fig. 33), compositions that combine self-portraits with genre painting, landscape and still-life, respectively.¹¹⁰ To the eye conditioned by Western art traditions, familiar spatial, colour and generic conventions are rendered uncanny, both strange and familiar, by Bouchard's refusal to observe the distinctions among self-portrait, group portrait, landscape, and still-life. Perhaps this is why some critics are "disturbed" by even joyous wedding scenes.¹¹¹ If we share Morgan's view that artists' individual choices reflected a collective visual orientation to the phenomenological world, we discover a

coherent aesthetic vision that is decidedly modernist in its irreverent play with convention and its ambition to capture the emotional force of memory.

VIII: QUESTIONS OF DEBT

Re-tracing Genealogies of Influence

The recognition of Smith's importance as a mentor to the Bouchards and the Simards,¹¹² and the fraught question of whether Pellán influenced Smith, or vice versa, ignores a more obvious question: how were Smith and other urban artists affected by their contact with Charlevoix painters? My examination of the affinities between international modernism and the art of rural Québec has focussed on the impact of urban painters on the latter; and I want to conclude by turning my attention to the question of how Charlevoix artists might have influenced their Montréal contemporaries. I begin by acknowledging that it *is* easy to trace a chain of aesthetic influence from Europeans to Montréal modernists, leading to Charlevoix painters. Smith, for example, was exposed to European modernism through travel, art books, exhibitions, her friendships with several CAS members,¹¹³ and most notably through Pellán who liberated her colour.¹¹⁴ Ostensibly, Smith passed on her knowledge as a colourist to Mary-Simone Bouchard sometime between 1935-1945¹¹⁵ when she provided her with a list of colours. It was after receiving the information from Smith that "she began painting those bright *luminous* still-lives of flowers and interiors for which she became so well-known," [emphasis mine].¹¹⁶ Dubé's reasonable claim that Marie-Anne Simard's sensitive treatment of figures and

group scenes reflects Smith's influence¹¹⁷ is based on the fact that Smith produced portraits primarily in the decade prior to her move from Saint-Urbain to her house in Petite-Rivière-Saint-François in 1940,¹¹⁸ where she met Simard.

Influence, Appropriation, and Borrowing

Tracing the genealogy of Québec modernism back to Europe also makes sense when we recall that Matisse and other European modernists before him experimented with colour in the nineteenth century,¹¹⁹ long before the Montréal and Charlevoix artists I consider were even born. But, locating the origins of the modernist conception of space and colour is complicated by the fact that Picasso and Matisse¹²⁰ turned to non-Western sources for inspiration. Matisse's interest in the emotional force of colour harmonies, for example, derived from his exposure to Japanese prints, and to "primitive art" through Gauguin.¹²¹ These examples show that visual modernism does not belong fully to the history of Western art movements; instead it is in conversation with different traditions that are themselves complex responses to European history and to modernity. Indeed, while the issue has produced a rich debate in art history about the imperialist *borrowing*, or *appropriation* of non-Western forms by modernists – a form of cultural theft – it is difficult to speak of the *influence* of non-Western and non-urban artists on modernists because the latter frequently remain anonymous under the collective identity of naive, primitive, and/or folk.¹²² In the 1980s such feminist art historians as Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock demonstrated how generic and media hierarchies also obscure the

contributions of women,¹²³ the same hierarchies that haunt the contemporary reception of Smith's portraits. These examples show how identity continues to over-determine art history's understanding of aesthetic *influence*.

Influence and the Creative Process

If we disregard the traditional art historical model, we can more readily see the direct influence of Charlevoix artisans on Smith's *Wall Hanging: Petite Rivière St-François*, 1949, and in her decoration of such household objects as *Jewelry Box*, 1949, *Chest*, 1970, *Wardrobe*, 1970, and *Cigarette Case*, c. 1940-45 (fig. 1, produced in collaboration with Lyman). In a less direct sense, we might wonder if Charlevoix is not responsible for Pellán's liberation of Smith's palette. Would she have been as receptive to Pellán's adventurous colour arrangements if she had not already spent a significant portion of the previous ten years in a region she found remarkable for its geographical beauty¹²⁴ and colourful handicrafts¹²⁵? Years of exposure to the striking patterns and imagery of rural artisans and painters must certainly be partly responsible for the appearance of vibrant patterns in *Little Girl in Blue*, 1947 (fig. 23), and the vivid colours of *Still Life*, 1950-55 (fig. 40). Notably, even Varley's discernment of Pellán's influence in the contrast between such works as *Rose*, 1936 (fig. 22), and *Sweet Gilberte*, 1940 is contradicted by his own dating of Pellán's portraits to 1941, years after Smith exchanged the diffuse softness of *Rose*, *Veillée chez Eloi Tremblay*, *St. Urbain*, 1934, *Untitled (Mme Louisa Tremblay and her daughter)*, c.1933-1934,¹²⁶ for the forceful intensity of *Rose*

Fortin, 1935 (fig. 29). Again, Smith's growing intimacy and identification with her sitters and their families must have contributed to the sharper focus on their personalities and moods, a focus she achieved by embracing a rural "modernist" disregard for Euclidian space.

Conversely, Smith's attention to individual facial expressions, bodies, and postures does not find its equivalent in Charlevoix painters who are more concerned with communicating the shared experience of an event or activity. Although such compositions as Simone Mary Bouchard's *Les Fiançailles*, c.1939, *La Fabrication du savon*, c.1935, *La Famille à l'ouvrage*, c.1940 (fig. 32), *Les Rois-Mages*, c.1940, Adéla Harvey's *La Vielle au métier*, c.1938, *Voici votre pêche, voilà ma chasse*, c.1940, Alfred Deschênes' *La Mère et les enfants*, c.1938, and Robert Cauchon's *La Mi-carême*, c.1940 feature the artists' families and neighbours, given and family names rarely appear in the titles. Indeed, as in the death-bed scenes, the focus is not on individual reactions but the general mood, or emotion that binds participants in the situation. The contrast between the communally-oriented subjects of the previous paintings and the emphatically individual personalities of Smith's portraits reflect the different orientations of rural inhabitants and urbanites to rural life in Québec. Nevertheless, both approaches represent an exploration of subjectivity in relation to community. In Bouchard's *La Famille à l'ouvrage*, c. 1940 (fig. 32), for example, the artist addresses how her gaze as an artist (and that of her sister) is imbricated in the family's performance of daily tasks by depicting them in the act of painting. Similarly, Smith's Jungian explanation for her

choice of young sitters suggests an alternative approach to exploring the subject's relationship to community.

We can also see the “influence” of Charlevoix painters in the liberties Smith takes with genre. In her *luminous* - to use Smith's word for Bouchard – still-lives of the 1970s and 1980s, apples and oranges are honoured as portrait subjects. In *Le Calme*, 1975 (fig. 42) the title signals that the still-life genre is incidental to exploring the capacity of painting to communicate mood. Pageot would probably take issue with my “anachronistic” linking of Smith's experiences of the 1930s and 1940s with her later still-life compositions,¹²⁷ but if a Jungian concern with memory is constitutive of her portraits, then anachronism – the projection of a fantasmic identification with an archaic past – defines a key body of works. Furthermore, Smith's return to her memories of Charlevoix to work out a painter's block during the 1960s suggests that reflections on the past are fundamental to her aesthetic production in general.¹²⁸

Memory, and nostalgia more specifically, could be considered an important “aesthetic influence” exerted by rural artists on Montréal painters. Rural painters were not immune to the modern condition which brought their urban contemporaries to the region. Smith described the effects of the “growing exodus” to the cities from the villages and concessions of rural Québec during the Depression:

They did not embrace city life unreservedly; their hearts were still in Charlevoix County, so much so that most would return there each year during the winter months [...] young men invariably married Charlevoix girls. And now decades later, the grandchildren of these expatriates are returning nostalgically to the region to build summer chalets in the birthplace of their ancestors.¹²⁹

The migrations, exiles, and nostalgic returns described by Smith touched the families of many artists described in this chapter. During the Depression young women became school teachers, entered religious orders, or like their brothers, moved to the city in search of work out of financial necessity. For example, in 1939, at age twenty-three, Berthe Simard left Petite-Rivière-Saint-François to become a novice at the convent Antoinnes de Marie in Chicoutimi.¹³⁰ Alfred Deschênes left Charlevoix in 1929 at age sixteen to work as a cabin boy for the Canada Steamship Lines, returning to the Charlevoix region over the years for different employment opportunities.¹³¹ Indeed, Smith claims the east-end area of Hochelaga in Montréal attracted so many Charlevoix “expatriates” that it became known as “Little Charlevoix.”¹³² Nostalgia in these artists does not originate with an urban *antimodernist* fantasy of village life untouched by modernity, but with the recognition of how modernity already structures the departures and returns that characterise village life. Although painters rarely refer to their nostalgic feelings as explicitly as does Georges Édouard Tremblay in the titling of *Souvenir d'enfance*, c.1940 and *L'avenir*, c.1981 we have seen how, for some critics, the paintings themselves “disturb” the painfully pleasurable sensations associated with nostalgia.¹³³ In fact, the uncanny ability of the paintings to evoke memories in the spectator that are not her own threatens urban fantasies about rural *otherness*.

The concern with painting’s ability to “transmit memory” can also be understood as an important aesthetic influence exerted by Charlevoix on all the Montréal painters who looked nostalgically to the region for artistic inspiration. In a literal sense, Philip

Surrey showed his affinity to regional painters when he drew on his memories of Charlevoix for *Sunday Afternoon, Veillée at St. Hilarion*, 1939.¹³⁴ The composition synthesizes his recollections of the gathering, and of his encounter with a young hydrocephalic boy on the road to Saint-Hilarion. As Victoria Baker notes, the painting is striking for the contrast between “the gaiety that normally accompanied such an event” and the “somewhat depressed atmosphere.”¹³⁵ The physical separation of the child from the other figures, who appear to be lost in the privacy of their own thoughts and memories emphasizes their isolation. In a more profound sense, memory is the guiding principle in the aesthetic of several other Québec modernists. Jean-Paul Lemieux’s struggle to “convey a remembrance, the feeling of generations” with his paintings¹³⁶ approaches Smith’s Jungian search. The past that concerned him, however, was primarily his own: “En peignant, je remonte inévitablement dans mes souvenirs, jusqu’à l’enfance souvent.”¹³⁷ We can see the process of memory at work in the changes to the landscape study *Charlevoix, Quebec*, 1937 (fig. 43). The larger painting *Les Beaux Jours*, c. 1937 (fig. 44) transforms Port-au-Persil into a meditation on the beautiful days conjured in memory by a day of sketching. The elimination of detail, and the introduction of the artist’s wife, painter Madeleine Des Rosiers, spatializes the new temporality signalled by the title. The change from horizontal to vertical axis marks the transformation of landscape into portrait, a portrait of an artist whose own gaze regularly transformed landscapes into memory. The honorific connotations of oil, not to mention the permanency and larger dimensions of the support,¹³⁸ also help to concretize the

memorializing function of *Les Beaux Jours*. Lemieux's explanation that painting provided an escape from urban life – “je me retranche de la vie moderne lorsque je peint. Je me retourne alors sur le passé”¹³⁹ – elides the distinction between memory and painting altogether. Memory, for Lemieux was an inescapable necessity: “le passé est en effet très important pour moi, je vous l'ai souvent redit. D'ailleurs, on ne peut jamais l'oublier complètement. Il est là, lui, il ne vous oublie pas, il existe, qu'on le veuille ou non, il nous suit, comme un boulet.”¹⁴⁰ Crucially, Lemieux does not conceive of the past in teleological, but ontological terms.

Conclusion

Although Smith gave no indication that she shared Lemieux' interest in recovering childhood experiences through her painting – in fact, I have argued that biography obscures the image in the case of her portraits – the concept of social remembrance is equally significant to her aesthetic. For this reason, the ethological impulse which originated her desire to commemorate a regional “past” did not become ossified in romanticized depictions of rural otherness. Similarly, as I elaborate in the next chapter, her Jungian desire to capture the history of human suffering she perceived in the youngest faces of Charlevoix inhabitants was balanced by an ironically “feminist” recognition of the historical specificity of the challenges they, and their mothers faced daily. Smith's insights, and her blind-spots, about rural artists' relationship to mortality, history, modernity, and aesthetics contributes to the historicization of rural women artists'

contributions as archivists of Québec's cultural memory. As it turns out, the nostalgic desire for continuity with the past was not the exclusive province of *urban* modernists. The undisciplined "iconoclasm" of rural artists suggests their awareness that history, like all memory, is subject to the contingencies of collective and individual desires. If Smith returned frequently to the Charlevoix of her memories it is because she too recognized that the relationship of space to time is not static in memory, but motivated by the subject's changing affective relationship to it. The critical response to her portraits, the fact that interviewers frequently asked her to return to her memories of the 1930s and 1940s, the debates about origins and influences in visual modernism, and the question of cultural imperialism and appropriation is art history's inheritance, and its debt to history. Part genealogical critique, part gift, and part memorial, Smith's art invites us to remember the lives forgotten by History.

1. Smith, Jori, "Interview by Charles Hill," 16 June 1974 (15), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993, "Artists Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
2. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 142-143.
3. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 214.
4. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 212.
5. Jacqueline Sirois, "Jori Smith: She is Most at Home in French Canada," *The Standard*, undated in "Artist's Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
6. Jean-René Ostiguy, *Modernism in Quebec Art, 1916-1946* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1982), 98.
7. Rosalind Pepall, "Jori Smith: A Painter of Instinct and Passion," *Jori Smith: A Celebration*, curator Karen Antaki (Montréal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 1997), 11.
8. Barbara Meadowcroft, "Rediscovering Jori Smith" (Montréal: Gallerie Dominion 1993), unpaginated.
9. Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 1998), 234.
10. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 214.
11. Dorota Kozinska, "A Life in Art: Jori Smith Began Painting in the 1920s – She's Still at it," *The Gazette*, 25 January, 1997, in "Artist's Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
12. Ibid.
13. See James Elkins investigation of the contrast between how "lay-spectators" and art historians respond to art in *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
14. Similarly, Ostiguy implies the influence of other painters on Smith when he describes her portraits of girls as "reminiscent of works" by Goodridge Roberts and Pellan. Pepall refers to, but offers no comment on Smith's claim that Pellan may have "clarified" her colour, but that it was she who influenced his depiction of children. Other

art historians who refer to the contact between Pellán and Smith in Charlevoix do not address the question of influence. Dennis Reid, for example, does not explicitly credit either artist with originating a style of child portraiture, although he does refer to Smith's *La Petite Communiant* (1940) and dates Pellán's portraits to his visit to Charlevoix during the summer of 1941. Reid would presumably notice that Smith's portraits predate Pellán's second stay with Smith and Palardy. Esther Trépanier cites Reesa Greenberg's study of Pellán to support her view that Smith was responsible for Pellán's brief interest as a painter in the children of Charlevoix. See Jean-René Ostiguy, *Modernism in Quebec Art, 1916-1946*, 98; Rosalind M. Pepall, "Jori Smith: A Painter of Instinct and Passion," 17; Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society, Montréal: 1939-1948* (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), 21. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 214, 221-222. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 234; Reesa Greenberg, *Les Dessins d'Alfred Pellán*, (Ottawa: Galerie Nationale du Canada, 1980), 42-3.

15. Pellán explained: "À l'époque, ma production courante était plutôt moderne, mais je m'étais rendu compte du fossé qui nous séparait, mes collègues et moi, du public, et je voulais, en montrant aux gens qu'il m'était également possible de faire de la peinture réaliste, opérer une sorte de rapprochement." Quoted in Greenberg, *Les Dessins d'Alfred Pellán*, 43. While Greenberg takes Pellán's comments at face value, François-Marc Gagnon is skeptical of the artist's stated aims since his work was well received in the early 1940s. François-Marc Gagnon, *Charlevoix histoire d'art 1900-1940* (Baie-Saint-Paul: Le Centre d'exposition de Baie-Saint-Paul, 1995), 23-24. It is also worth noting that both Greenberg and Gagnon take the quote above from Germain Lefebvre's books on Pellán. Greenberg quotes from *Pellán* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1973), 58, and Gagnon from *Pellán, sa vie, son art, son temps* (Montréal, Marcel Broquet, 1986), 95. Whether art historians find Pellán's explanation convincing is less significant than the fact that they do not turn to his personal life to explain his interest in children as portrait subjects; instead, a single comment by Pellán about the democratizing aims of his return to "realism" becomes a persistent point of critique.

16. I do not believe that critics discriminated against Smith. Indeed, the critical response to her work, even during her student years, was generally favourable. My point is that, as with other female modernists, there is a tendency to bring biography to interpretations of her imagery. My discussions later in this chapter, and in Chapters One, Two and Six situate the critical response to Smith's work in relation to her identity as a modern "woman artist," an identity that reflects the opportunities for, and attitudes about, urban women in Montréal during the interwar years.

17. Édith-Anne Pageot makes this point. See "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon" (Ph.D diss., Université de Montréal, 2004), 34-35.

18. See Maurice Gagnon, *Sur un état actuel de la peinture canadienne* (Montréal: Société des Éditions Pascal, 1945), 56; and "L'Éducation artistique de l'enfant," *La Revue populaire* 30 no.7 (juillet 1937): 8, 66. For a brief discussion of Gagnon's thought on modernism that touches on these issues, see Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec, 1919-1939*, 99-106.
19. For representative articles see Norah McCullough, "Child Art – The Losing of a Chapter," (155) and Kathleen H. Moss "Art Schools in Canada," (156, 178-182) both in Vol. IV, no.4 (Summer 1947) of *Canadian Art*; and, Robert Ayre, "Pictures in Schools," *Canadian Art*, Vol. II, no. 1 (October-November 1944): 29-31; and Norah McCullough, "Child Art in Canada,"(173-177), and Arthur Lismer, "What is Child Art," (178-181) both in *Canadian Art*, Vol. V no. 4 (Spring-Summer 1948).
20. Contributors generally focus on the importance of children's art classes.
21. Norah McCullough, "Child Art – The Losing of a Chapter," 155.
22. See Charles Hill, Louis Muhlstock, Marian Scott, Leo Kennedy, "*They could split rock ...*": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," in *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy, son époque et son message*, ed. David A. Shephard and Andrée Lévesque for The Bethune Foundation (Ottawa: The Canadian Health Association, 1982), 119. The centre was established in 1936. For a discussion of Brandtner's involvement in such organisations as The Negro Community Center, the Children's Memorial Hospital and his work with handicapped children, see Helen Duffy and Frances K. Smith, *The Brave New World of Fritz Brandtner* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University), 1982.
23. Quoted in Ray Ellenwood, *Egregore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement* (Montréal: Exile Editions, 1992), 5.
24. Quoted in Louise Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique québécois de 1936 à 1942" (mémoire de maîtrise, Université Laval, 1982), 156.
25. I explored these issues in a chapter devoted to portraits of children and adolescents in my M.A. Thesis. For a discussion of the importance of child education to social reform movements in the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983). For a brief history of the Children's Creative Art Centre in Montréal see Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000), 102-103, 117.
- Possibly, some art historians are lured into biographical explanations of Smith's production because she spoke frequently of the childhood trauma of losing the younger

sister to whom she was close. I suppose an argument can also be made that her identity as (an adult) child drives her aesthetic expression, since she claims that her mother's final illness produced the painter's block that motivated her to write the memoir. See Jori Smith, "Interview by Charles Hill," 16 June 1974 (5), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993, "Artists Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada. But, as I argue, this approach reduces the work of art to a "symptom" of individual neuroses, and pathologizes creativity more generally. Although psychoanalysis, starting with Freud's homophobic reading of da Vinci, has been used to mythologize the artist as a "genius/madman," it is nevertheless useful to the theorization of the individual and collective desires that orient spectatorial identification. See Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo de Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957).

I should note that my focus on the affective reactions of critics is indirectly informed by the theories of Melanie Klein and her analysts and Adrian Stokes. The latter, an art historian, critic, painter and poet applied Klein's theorization of symbolization in child development in his art production and criticism. He was particularly interested in symbolization as a vehicle for the constructive channelling of violent impulses that the child first directs to the mother, and later toward the world. In contrast to psychoanalytically informed art criticism that promotes the stereotype of artist as child, Stokes not only assumes that an economy of violence informs creative expression, but that it also grounds spectatorial desire. This insight, and his focus on the sadistic impulses at the basis of much art criticism is, perhaps not surprisingly, under-theorized. Klein and Stokes offer an alternative to the pathologization of both artist and critic by advancing the notion of creativity in art and criticism as gift, a positive form of exchange necessary to the channelling of violent impulses. See Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt, Reparation, and Other Works*, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London: Hogarth Press, 1948). For a useful analysis of the contributions of Klein and Stokes to aesthetics see Nicola Glover, "Chapter Two: Essentials of Kleinian Theory" (1-28) and "Chapter Three: The Development of Kleinian Aesthetics (1-28) in "Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: The British School," *Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and the Public Sphere Free*, <http://www.human-nature.com/free-associations/glover/chap1.html> (June 6, 2006).

The Kleinian conception of creative expression also lends support to the arguments of Montréal artists about the political value of aesthetics; art emerges as a field for the constructive re-channelling of the violent and envious affects that ground imperialism and global conflict. I explore these issues through the thought of Herbert Marcuse in Chapter Six. Significantly, Marcuse's politicization of aesthetics was informed not only by his Marxist convictions, but also Freudian theory. See Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

26. This was not only true for the sons of farming families. Mary-Simone Bouchard, for example, was forced to drop out of school at an early age to assist her mother with

household duties. See Nancy Rankin, "La Famille Bouchard," *Mayfair* December 1945: 38, in "Artist's Files: Simone Mary Bouchard," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

27. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930* (Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 1980), 80.

28. See The Clio Collective, *Québec Women a History*, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Woman's Press, 1987).

29. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 24.

30. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

31. See Chapters One and Six for examples of art historians and critical and political theorists who are attentive to the subjective, irrational and affective in aesthetic experience.

32. Smith and other CAS members believed that, regardless of genre, the political potential of painting was located in the affective capacities of the medium itself. I expand on the modernist notion of painting as a site for cathexis in the next chapter.

33. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985). For an elaboration of Ricoeur's theorization of the historian's debt to the past, see the previous chapter.

34. Smith made the comment in an interview with Pageot, "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon," 43.

35. Quoted in Léon Jalder, "Les jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy," *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, 17 mai 1930, in "Artist's Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

36. Pageot speculates that Smith's interest in children's health and psychology stemmed not only from the illness and disease she observed in Charlevoix, but from her father-in-law's activities as a doctor. Joseph-Hector Palardy not only practiced medicine, but published a document on hygiene for use in schools during the 1920s. Smith's memoir records several occasions when she and Palardy attempted to inform their Charlevoix neighbours about hygienic practices that could limit the spread of such contagious diseases as diphtheria and Tuberculosis. Édith-Anne Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise. Étude d'un cas: le portrait d'enfant," *Globe: Revue internationale d'études québécoises*, Vol. 3 no. 2 (2000): 183-4.

37. "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon" (Ph.D diss., Université de Montréal, 2004), 79, 82.
38. As Pageot notes, Smith might also have identified with Jung because of his 1920s research expeditions to study the non-industrialised communities of the Sahara, Tunis, and New Mexico. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 82, 185.
39. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 185.
40. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 186.
41. Pageot's literature review intersects with mine. Notably, in spite of the divergences between our lists of critics, the responses to the portraits remain consistent. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 181-182.
42. Pageot points out that even Borduas' abstractions are figurative insofar as his concern with the relationship between foreground and background does not escape the structural economy of figure/ground. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 174-175.
43. In the next chapter, I suggest that the presence of the Oxfam tin in Smith's *Still Life, 1930* (fig. 52) calls the date into question. The organization was not established until the 1940s. I also question the dates assigned to *Pauline Simard*, c. 1940-2 (fig. 26) and the portrait of the same child, *Young Girl, 1940* (fig. 27). In the latter composition, the girl looks at least two years older, which would imply that at least one of the works is misdated by several years.
44. Griselda Pollock argues that "art history's passion for linear trajectories" obscures important thematics in Van Gogh. In contrast to art historians who believe Van Gogh's oeuvre is characterised by "discontinuities" and "radical ruptures," Pollock discovers "an unconscious pattern of core interests and ideas." She does this by linking the real spaces of Van Gogh's youth, and his reading material and letters to the fantasmic spaces of his paintings. Pollock finds coherence in Van Gogh's aesthetic vision by recognizing how the artist's memory determines his formal choices, arguing that his collection of landscapes maps his "migratory movements" through memory. Later in this chapter, and in Chapter Six, I argue that painting represented a similar process for both urban and rural artists. Further, my linking of Smith's memoir and personal journals to the articulation of her aesthetic as a painter in the previous chapter suggests that for her, like Van Gogh, memory and creative expression were interdependent. Art history's "passion for linear trajectories," then, not only obscures a key thematic in the work of a key European modernist, but also limits the recognition of this thematic in Québec artists. See Griselda

Pollock, "The Homeland of Pictures, Reflections on Van Gogh's Place memories," *LAND2: texts* (June 2004): 1-13, <http://www.land2.uwe.ca.uk/essay9.htm>.

45. See my previous chapter for a discussion of Charlevoix as exemplar of Foucault's "heterotopia." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, 16, no.1 (Spring 1986): 22-27.

46. Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 214.

47. For an examination of the artist as "outsider" from different disciplinary perspectives (including art history, ethnology and psychiatry), see Michael Hall and Eugene W. Metcalf Jr. ed., *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994). Although the term "outsider" is used expansively in articles that discuss the modern avant-garde, folk artists, *l'Art Brut*, artists who perform outdoors, and the art of the "untrained mentally ill," several authors argue that the term assumes an opposition to the *folk*. The term outsider, then, opposes individuals worthy of recognition in mainstream of art history to "folk artists" who are relegated to generic anonymity.

48. See the previous chapter for a discussion of Barbeau's involvement of contemporary artists in his ethnological activities as a manifestation of his nationalist aspirations.

49. Lora Senechal Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 104.

50. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 30.

51. The provincial government's promotion of handicrafts was assisted by the federal government's efforts to create a tourist market for the "French-Canadian homespun industry" in the 1920s. Both projects stemmed from anxieties about the impact of urbanization on rural traditions. See Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 137.

52. Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 110.

53. According to Carney the "commodification of the locally *authentic* rug" began just after WWI when the Québec government promoted local crafts, and when the rugs

became popular with American dealers, collectors, tourists and cottagers. See Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence," 109-111; and Richard Dubé and François Tremblay, *Peindre un pays* (Laprairie, QC: Éditions Broquet, 1989), 64. For a discussion of the role of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in the promotion of Québec homespun textiles see Ellen Easton MacLeod, *In Good Hands: the Women of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild* (Montréal: Published for Carleton University by McGill-Queens Press, 1999).

54. Ironically, the Québec government's initiatives responded to the same concern for the preservation of traditional crafts. As part of a pre-election agricultural improvement program the Québec government had ordered an investigation into provincial handicrafts in 1929, and concluded that there was both a decline in traditional technique and "artistic taste." The Québec Department of Agriculture's Rural Economy Service opened the École provinciale des arts domestiques in Québec City, held exhibitions, and expanded the number of local branches of Cercles des fermières. The rural women's association had been established during WWI to promote aspects of rural life, including the production of crafts. Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 105, 110. Each year, hundreds of women learned the vegetable dyeing, design, and fabrication techniques which they taught to thousands more in regional household science schools. I discuss the implications for women below.

55. The stamping of designs on burlap first appeared in Maine around 1870. By the 1890s, the prepared foundations for rugs, and design catalogues were widely distributed in the north east. Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 111.

56. See the previous chapter for a review of Barbeau's research findings.

57. Farm product incomes and land values fell by as much as half during the Depression. Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 110.

58. Clarence Gagnon was even more involved than Lyman in efforts to protect Québec handicrafts. Gagnon worked to improve weaving techniques and designs in the Baie-Saint-Paul region. He also collected crafts and made them available to such groups as the Canadian Guild of Handicrafts in Montréal and the Women's Art Association in Toronto. Gagnon's aims departed from those of Lyman insofar as the former believed that the crafts revival was not about "going back to the old traditions." Instead, the "old crafts" should adapt to "present trends and requirements." Gagnon believed that the needs of villagers, "the tourist, and wealthy classes" deserved equal attention. See Victoria Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950: Scenes of Charlevoix 1784-1950* (Montréal: Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1981), 34-36.

59. The Morgans organized the exhibition *French Canadian Primitives* in December 1937 at the East River Gallery, New York. For an overview of the Morgans' collecting and curatorial activities in the Charlevoix region see Richard Dubé and François Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires* (Laprairie, QC: Éditions Broquet, 1989), 24-34.
60. John Lyman, "Hunting the Primitive in Canada," *Montrealer*, January 1, 1938: 19.
61. John Lyman, "Canadian Art Show in U.S. is Best Yet Sent Abroad," *The Standard*, Montréal, October 24, 1942.
62. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 13-16, 29-3, 77-84, 91-94.
63. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," MG 30, D-249, Vol. 19, File 23 (25-26), Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada.
64. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 28.
65. Along with her mother and sisters, she had been producing rural scenes on rugs for tourists at a shop in Point-au-Pic. In 1936, the same year she repaired textiles for Barbeau and made rugs for Palardy, and after they saw her paintings at her family's house, Barbeau introduced Bouchard to the Morgans. The introduction led to her entry into the urban gallery system the following year, when she participated in *French Canadian Primitives*, the exhibition organized by the Morgans in December 1937 at the East River Gallery, New York. For more information on Bouchard, see Rankin, "La Famille Bouchard"; Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 112-113; Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 59-81; and Musée régional Laure-Conan, "Patrick Morgan et les peintres populaires," Musée régional Laure-Conan, Murray Bay Québec, 1979.
66. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 28.
67. For a description of Bouchard's clothes see Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 28-29. Nancy Rankin describes a gilded glass replica of Notre Dame Church that Bouchard designed at age fifteen. Rankin, "La Famille Bouchard," 106.
68. Smith refers to Eloi Tremblay's wife as Madame Louisa, or simply Louisa. Smith and Palardy rented winter lodgings in the concession of Décharge from the Tremblays when their house in Saint-Urbain became too difficult to heat. See *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 39-41.

69. In the previous chapter I discussed Smith's bewilderment over her neighbours' apparent indifference to beauty. What she dismisses as "superstition" emerges as a different understanding of the relationship of aesthetics to mortality.

70. The passage is cited verbatim. Carney, "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art," 113.

71. Rankin, "La Famille Bouchard," 39.

72. Public and private collectors established Charlevoix artisans in national art and ethnological collections and inventories. Marius Barbeau collected for L'École des Beaux-Arts de Québec and for the Musée national d'Ottawa (his prodigious archive is now housed in several national and provincial collections). William Hugh Coverdale, President of The Canada Steamship Lines, oversaw the collection for l'Hôtel Tadoussac and the Manoir Richelieu. Gérard Morisset, curator for the Musée Québec started an inventory of art works, and Jean-Marie Gauvreau finished an ambitious research project on the popular arts in 1940, while Félix-Antoine Savard and Luc Lacourcière recorded the oral tradition found in legends, folktales, and songs. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 23.

These projects did a great deal to stimulate interest in the handicrafts of Québec, but painting had to wait for the arrival of Patrick and Maud Morgan to enter the North American urban consciousness. In 1930, the New York artist and his wife (née Maud Cabot) began spending summers close to the Cabot family manor house near Cap-à-l'Aigle. In 1934, the Morgans took over and changed the direction of the regular floral and art exhibitions that featured summer visitors, to include the handicrafts and paintings of local residents. What became a yearly exhibition (1934-1939) helped to promote more than fifteen artists including Yvonne Bolduc (b.1905), Robert Cauchon (1916-1969), Adéla Harvey (1895-1960), Simone-Mary (1912-1945) and Marie-Cécile Bouchard (1920-1973), Alfred Deschênes (1913-1975), Philippe-Édouard Maltais (1910-1988), and Georges-Édouard Tremblay (b.1907). In 1937, Morgan featured seven artists in an exhibition of works from his private collection at the East River Gallery in New York. Ultimately the attention of American collectors and media drew a larger North American audience. See Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 24-34; Musée régional Laure-Conan, "Patrick Morgan et les peintres populaires," Musée régional Laure-Conan, "Patrick Morgan et les peintres populaires"; and Victoria Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 90-92.

73. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 28. Morgan also believed that urban artists should encourage, but not interfere with how painters approached their subjects. Victoria Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950: Scenes of Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 91.

74. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," 26.

75. The intimate bond Smith formed with Marie-Anne Simard (1920-1952) began in 1939 when Smith and Palardy moved to Petite-Rivière-Saint-François for the summer. Richard Dubé et François Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses Peintres Populaires*, 122. The exchange between Smith and Simard about the latter's impending death and crisis of faith that I discussed in the previous chapter reveals the importance of the friendship to both artists.
76. Graham McInnes, "Contemporary Canadian Artists," *The Canadian Forum* (July 1937): 130.
77. Charles Hill, *Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 2.
78. Pellan and Charles Maillard, the Director of the École des Beaux-Arts disagreed over the inclusion of several controversial exhibits in the annual student show. Student demonstrations forced Maillard's resignation. In Chapter Six, I discuss his regionalist aspirations for Québec art.
79. Rankin suggests that the Bouchards did not seek the approval of instructors to determine whether an idea was "original [...] when one of them has an idea he carries it out." See "La Famille Bouchard," 105.
80. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 174.
81. Maillard's remarks, quoted by Esther Trépanier, were made to the Women's Branch of the Antiquarian Society at the Château Ramezay and reported in *La Patrie*, March 11, 1930. See Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 56-57.
82. In the next chapter, I consider the incident described by Marian Scott in more depth. Scott is quoted in Cathy Hobart, "Art Transformed." *Branching Out*, Vol. XII no.1 (1980): 13, in "Artists' Files: Marian Scott," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
83. Palardy gave up painting for filmmaking around 1938. See Rosalind Pepall, "Jori Smith: A Painter of Instinct and Passion," 15.
84. The excerpt quoted in Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery," 138, is taken from *The French Canadian Homespun Industry*, a Department of Trade and Commerce publication of 1928.
85. Histories of Cercles de Fermières make it clear that women were active participants and supporters of the government's objectives. For a history of Cercles de Fermières that situates the association's activities in relation to the Church and State, and

to the perceived threat of urbanization and feminism to the traditional family see Yolande Cohen, *Femmes de Parole: L'histoire des Cercles de Fermières du Québec 1915-1990* (Montréal: *Le Jour*, 1990).

My attempts to discover whether any of the families of the artisans with whom Smith came in contact were involved with the Cercles de Fermières were fruitless. I did discover that Federation 19, and its later subdivision, Federation 25 encompassed most of the Charlevoix region. The books I consulted only list the presidents of chapters, who I do not believe were directly related to the families Smith refers to in her memoir. For a list of the province's federations, which includes the biographies of women who served as their presidents up to 1990, see *Les Cercles de Fermières du Québec, Des femmes se racontent* (Québec: Éditions Les Cercles de Fermières du Québec, 1990).

It is entirely possible that Georges-Édouard Tremblay, an artisan and painter who was born in Baie-Saint-Paul and moved to Pointe-au-Pic in 1932 with his wife Mariette (née Fortin) met Smith. He was one of the artists promoted by Morgan, and Smith's memoir contains numerous references to members of the Tremblay and Fortin families who were sometimes the subjects of her paintings. Following an apprenticeship at l'École des Arts domestiques de Québec between 1930-1931, Tremblay taught female assistants he hired to do the basic weaving and knitting for his rugs. See Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays*, 128-148.

86. Michel Foucault, *Power-Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1980).

87. Both sculptures by unknown artists were donated by Smith to the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec in Montréal. The first haut-relief sculpture consists of wood, paint and varnish. The second is an animated sculpture made of wood, paint, fibre, metal, paper, and adhesive. Photographs of the objects appear on the "VMC Image Gallery" of the CHIN website, and can be accessed by entering Smith's name. See VMC Image Gallery, <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>.

88. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

89. Patrick Morgan's article responds to Palardy film. See Morgan, "Folk Painters of Charlevoix," *Canadian Art*, Vol. 4 no.4 (Summer 1947): 155; and Jean Palardy, *Peintres Populaires de Charlevoix*, film available on videocassette (Office national du film du Canada, 1947).

90. Deschênes did execute a few more allegorical subjects; however the allegorization of everyday scenes finds its equivalent in Bouchard's overlapping of religious and village scenes. Furthermore, the assertion that allegorical and religious subjects are universal cannot withstand feminist and postcolonial pressure. More crucially, Morgan makes his

case on formalist grounds, rather than invoking issues of content.

91. In Morgan we discover yet another bridge between European and Canadian *Primitivism*. Dubé argues that Morgan's ambitions for Charlevoix painters originated with his exposure to German folk artists during his 1931 trip to Munich to study with the influential modern painter and art teacher Hans Hoffman. Furthermore, Hoffman was influenced by both Matisse and Picasso, who incorporated non-Western influences in their work.
92. Morgan, "Folk Painters of Charlevoix," 152.
93. Palardy, *Peintres populaires de Charlevoix*.
94. Palardy, *Peintres populaires de Charlevoix*.
95. Quoted in Philip Ball, *Bright Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 303.
96. Kim Sawchuk, "Introduction: Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 160.
97. Sawchuk, "Introduction: Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Standardization of Time," 160-161. For a discussion of the impact of new technologies – including the telegraph, railway and mass media – on the modern apprehension of space and time see James Carey's chapter "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). Carey, like Harold Innis before him, is concerned with the political impact of communications technologies. Innis' critique of technological determinism begins with a historical overview of the relationship of the printing press to European imperialism, in an argument that anticipates Foucault's theorization of the relationship of power to knowledge. See Harold Adams Innis, "A Plea for Time," and "Minerva's Owl" in *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1951). Michel Foucault, *Power-Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*.
98. Rankin, "La Famille Bouchard," 38.
99. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 99-100.
100. Is it not reasonable to assume that Mary-Simone Bouchard internalized Impressionist and post-Impressionist influences when she adopted Clarence Gagnon's

medium? Similarly, the presence of A. Y. Jackson, Philip Surrey, Jean-Paul Lemieux, and Alfred Pellan – to name just a few painters who visited the region – exposed Charlevoix artists to different modernist influences.

101. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 122.

102. Rankin, “La famille Bouchard,” 38.

103. Quoted in Philip Ball, *Bright Earth*, 303.

104. Morgan, “Folk Painters of Charlevoix,” 154.

105. Rankin, “La Famille Bouchard,” 38.

106. Morgan, “Folk Painters of Charlevoix,” 154.

107. Although Palardy’s film frequently shows Charlevoix painters outdoors, it was an unusual occurrence. This staging reflects the limitations of 1947 cinematography, which demanded full daylight. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 100, 124.

108. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 123-124.

109. Dubé and Tremblay point out that nature is “barely present” in *Le repas en famille*, and that the exterior scene bears a remarkable similarity to Simard’s treatment of figures, walls, and stairs in the interior scene *La prière en famille*. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 123.

110. For example, the teapot in the last composition in the group includes Bouchard’s self-portrait.

111. Rankin, “La famille Bouchard,” 38.

112. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 121-124.

113. See Chapter Two and Six for influences on Smith.

114. Smith, “Interview by Charles Hill,” 7.

115. Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 45.

116. Smith, "Souvenirs of Charlevoix County," Jori Smith MG 30 (D249), Vol. 12 (26), Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada.
117. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 123.
118. Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 60.
119. In 1897, even before Fauvism, Matisse abandoned his sombre palette for the bright hues of newly invented pigments. See Ball, *Bright Earth*, 302.
120. See the previous chapter for a longer list of European modernists who turned to communities other than their own for aesthetic inspiration.
121. Ball, *Bright Earth*, 304-305.
122. The terms rural artist and artisan do not escape the imperialist logic of Primitivism; and, the list of terms assigned to artists who are "outside" the mainstream of Western art is, of course, much longer.
123. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, Ideology* (London: Pandora Press, 1989).
124. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 9-10.
125. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 17-18.
126. I am relying on Pepall's title and date. The same work appears under the title *Rose and her Mother, Madame Louisa, wife of Eloi Tremblay*, and is dated a little later (1934-1935) in Smith's memoir.
127. Pageot, "Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise," 182-184.
128. See the previous chapter for a discussion of the importance of Smith's memoir to her painting during her mother's final illness. It is also significant that she went back to the Charlevoix region until her house was expropriated in 1970, and that in subsequent years she continued to make occasional weekend trips. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 93-94. Her repeated return to the region in both memory and reality trouble a chronological understanding of her work.
129. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 73.
130. For health reasons she returned to her family in 1940. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 122.

131. Dubé and Tremblay, *Peindre un pays: Charlevoix et ses peintres populaires*, 95-101.
132. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 73.
133. The first composition is an interior scene depicting a family seated in front of a cast iron stove. The second represents a couple in a springtime landscape.
134. The title used by Baker is shortened to *Sunday Afternoon* in Charles Hill. Both claim that Surrey painted the composition from his memory of a *veillée* he attended with Smith and Palardy at Saint-Hilarion. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 128. Victoria Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 51-2, 81 n.68.
135. Baker, *Images de Charlevoix 1784-1950*, 81 n.68, 51-2.
136. Quoted in Patrick Nagle, "Timeless Painter from Québec: Jean-Paul Lemieux," *Weekend Magazine, Ottawa Citizen*, March 9, no.10, 1963:19, in "Artist's Files: Jean-Paul Lemieux," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
137. Quoted in *Le Maclean*, "Le peintre du silence: Guy Robert rencontre Jean Paul Lemieux," juillet 1975: 36. Lemieux seems to blur the distinction between personal recollection and a Jungian conception of collective memory: "J'essaie de traduire une souvenance, de faire sentir la présence de plusieurs générations. J'aime évoquer les étés de ma lointaine enfance, ranimer des émotions reliées aux anciennes photographies, aux vieux films d'actualités, qui vous donnent l'impression de vous fondre dans le passé." Quoted in Guy Robert, *Lemieux*, Stanké: Montréal, 122.
138. *Les Beaux Jours* (63.6 x 53.5 cm, oil on plywood) is close to double the size of *Charlevoix, Québec* (27.3 x 37 cm, black ink and watercolour sketch on wove paper).
139. Jacques Thériault, "Un monde étrange mais fascinant: J.-P. Lemieux s'explique sur la nostalgie," *Le Devoir*, 18 Septembre 1971: 11-12.
140. Guy Robert, *Lemieux*, 154.

Chapter Six: Formalism, Affect and Urban Memory

If the liberation of man is the chief aim of action, the function of the creator is as essential as that of the politician or the economist. The creator liberates with the instrument of the word, the plastic organization, the rhythmic composition. His revolution aims at a complete metamorphosis of the world.¹

– Marian Scott, 1936

The joy of life ... That's all I can think of. That's the only reason. The wonderful colours I see. See, this is what I love, colour. I have no motives, no reason why I should paint. I don't want to express ideas or theories. I never think of those things. I just want to seize that light that I see.²

– Jori Smith, 1994

I: INTRODUCTION

Formalism, Affect and Urban Memory

Scott spoke forcefully about the revolutionary potential of painting, elaborating her belief in the necessity of liberating formal elements from academic conventions so that they might speak more directly to the spectator. In contrast, Smith never explained her work, and only rarely articulated its theoretical underpinnings. Nevertheless, when we consider her political activism and her comment in the epigraph above, we discover that she shared Scott's formalist faith in the affective capacities of painting. To explore this potential, Smith and others moved away from a mimetic conception of painting for an aesthetics that could speak directly, in Matisse's terms, to the "soul" or body. Aesthetics, then, could undermine the *anaesthetizing* effects of modern life by exchanging

conventionalized language for the language of the sensory and neurological body. It is in this sense that Smith and other Montréal artists believed art to be “meaninglessness.” While they recognized abstraction as the logical outcome of these aspirations – anticipating the generation of artists who followed them – few of her contemporaries broke free of figurative genres. Indeed, Smith viewed her inability to abandon figuration as a *political* failure. This “failure” speaks to a principle central to Québec visual modernism that I discussed in the previous chapters: the concern with memory. As artists in Montréal abandoned naturalistic forms and colour, they also concentrated on the expanding urban environment. Not only do non-idealized representations of Montréal’s inhabitants record the effects of global events and modernization on a specific geopolitical site, but the expressive visual vocabularies of Smith, Scott and others capture, in a Lefebvrian sense, the urban rhythms that exceed representation. Aesthetic objects, then, provide occasions for forging embodied connections to the past by recovering what Teresa Brennan described as the repressed knowledge of our capacity for transmitting affect. This chapter examines the intersection of modernist aesthetics and leftist politics in the work of Montréal artists who made the urban environment the subject of their art during the 1930s and 1940s.

Regionalism, Modernism and Political Activism

In previous chapters, I emphasized the importance of regionalism to both Canadian and Québec modernism to argue that self-taught rural artists were influential as

modernists. This assertion is not as counter-intuitive as it might first appear when one considers the importance of “primitive” art on international modernists. This chapter extends the discussion of the previous two chapters by examining regionalism as a key polemic in urban modernism. More specifically, I situate Smith’s production in relation to members of the CAS who believed that regionalism was antithetical to modernist aesthetics and leftism. On the surface, Smith might appear the target of the anti-regionalist critiques of Paul-Émile Borduas and John Lyman. Indeed, her support of Marius Barbeau in his efforts to archive the traditions of Charlevoix betrays preservationist urban fantasies, fantasies that intersect with those of conservative nationalists. On the other hand, Smith’s outward-looking, formalist and politicized aesthetic intersected with those of both Lyman and Borduas in important ways. The ostensible contradiction in Smith supports Esther Trépanier’s contention that understanding Quebec “regionalisms” of the thirties and forties requires emphasis on the use of the plural and scare quotes.³ Smith’s production should be situated in relation to what Ghitta Caiserman-Roth termed “city art,” an urban aesthetic that emerged from concerns “about the poor and the state of the world.”⁴ Significantly, artists who produced “city art” formed a common “front” against the reactionary conservatism of the art establishment that promoted a xenophobic regionalism. The humanitarian efforts that united diverse constituencies from divergent social and political backgrounds were founded on a common belief in the necessity of political action, and an avant-garde faith in art’s revolutionary potential. Modernism in Québec, then, consists of a two pronged assault on conservatism. For various reasons, reconciling these dual

commitments proved challenging. For example, Smith believed that her work failed on political grounds because she did not commit fully to abstraction; on the other hand, Marxists levelled the charge of “bourgeois aestheticism” at Caiserman-Roth for her formalist goals. Significantly, the Marxist demand for celebrations of the labouring class and other forms of explicit social commentary inadvertently brought them in line with reactionary nationalists who promoted romanticized representations of rural labour and everyday life. Even if Smith did not fully recognize it herself, her commitment to modernist aesthetics – and her exploration of the affective potential of painting in particular – was, in and of itself, a radical refutation of the different orthodoxies that would subordinate formalist concerns to specific political ends. Smith’s aesthetic represents one, geopolitically situated, modernist response to global and local events, where formalism and political consciousness became interdependent.

II: REGIONALISM(S): A MODERNIST POLEMIC

Regionalism is an urban phenomenon. In Québec, the term took on pejorative significance as early as 1918, when Fernand Préfontaine, the art critic for *Le Nigog*, denounced rural themes.⁵ He remained in the minority until the 1930s, when the debate about the relationship of regionalism/nationalism to modernism moved to the forefront. At this time, urban artists and critics who advanced modernism not only associated the themes with a parochialism antithetical to modernism, but also with fascism. One of the legacies of this association is that during the postwar period, abstraction would

simultaneously claim a radical politics and escape into the apoliticality of liberalism. For example, Serge Guilbaut has shown that right-wing anxieties and leftist confusion during the Cold War were responsible for the conscription of art and culture as “propaganda weapons” by both the right and the left.⁶ In this atmosphere, Abstract Expressionists became silent representatives in a discourse of liberal individualism to counter Soviet totalitarianism.⁷ This “third way” alternative to both the right and left effectively depoliticized the American avant-garde (2). For Europeans and Americans, the association of abstraction with anti-authoritarianism is also partly rooted in the Nazi hostility to the avant-garde of earlier decades; and in Canada there is a specific historical connection. Although, Laura Brandon argues that such institutions as the National Gallery did not view the collecting of modernist art as “fighting fascism,”⁸ for artists like Borduas, who was suspended from teaching at the *École du meuble* after the publication of the avant-grade manifesto *Refus global* in 1948, the imbrication of modernism and anti-fascism, in Québec at least, was inescapable. Significantly, his call to social revolution begins with an indicting history of the Church and political tyranny since British rule. For Borduas and other signatories of the manifesto, modernism was predicated on a political consciousness that repudiated romanticized representations of rural life in Québec.⁹

The association of regionalism with fascism in Québec originates in the decades prior to these events. Just as the landscapes of the Group served the pan-nationalist ambitions of Anglophone Canada, conservatives such as Charles Maillard and Clarence Gagnon believed that “indigenous” regional subjects would serve Québec nationalism.¹⁰ In

this respect, the attitudes of the conservative Québec art establishment resembled those of Anglophone supporters of the Group of Seven that I discussed in Chapter Three, even if, as I argued in Chapter Four, there is an important distinction between regionalism as it was conceived in Francophone Québec – as the articulation of the nationalist aspirations of the province – and Anglophone Canada’s conception of region in a larger national unity. But if Québec rural themes of the 1920s and 1930s fit comfortably into both conceptions of region, by the late 1930s, the influence of American regionalism had altered the approach and meaning attached to Canadian painting.¹¹ There is also a significant difference between the regionalism of Anglophone Canada during the twenties and early thirties and that of Québec of the same period, insofar as Anglophone critics suggested that modernist aesthetics, and French post-Impressionism in particular, and German imperialism shared a common politics.¹² Québec nationalists inverted this formulation; their regionalism stemmed from a similar suspicion of French modernism, but it also supported anti-Semitism. Maillard argued that the spread of international modernism to Québec from France presented a grave danger to the traditions of both nations; artists who embraced “internationalism” rather than nationalism, acted on the misguided assumption that “tous les peuples étaient devenus tout à coup en formation et en pensée. Voyez l’exemple des peuples nomades, sans patrie, qui n’ont laissé aucun grand nom dans les arts plastiques.” Maillard leaves no doubt about the particular community of “nomads” that pose the greatest threat to the cultural traditions of Québec, stating that the “mouvement artistique déplorable [...] est déclenché par les Juifs.”¹³ CAS members understood that their

engagement with international modernism was profoundly political.

III: HUMANITARIANISM AND MODERNISM

International Modernism and Anti-Fascism: The CAS and Its Supporters

Some CAS members countered xenophobia publically. In addition to the polemic he directed against conservatives hostile to contemporary French painting, Lyman used the space of his monthly articles in *The Montrealer* during the 1930s and 1940s to argue that the preoccupation with local subjects perpetuated the colonialist sensibility it aimed to challenge.¹⁴ Borduas, who read Lyman,¹⁵ was his colleague at the *École du meuble* and was elected as vice-president (Lyman was elected president) at the first meeting of the CAS, shared his friend's views.¹⁶ But the most decisive factors in the development of Borduas politics were his own experiences; his personal frustration with the limitations imposed upon him as a student at *Beaux-arts de Montréal*, and later as an instructor at the *École du meuble*, and finally his unhappy summer of 1938 in the Gaspé participating as a research photographer in the type of project criticized by Lyman,¹⁷ planted the seeds for what Gilles Lapointe describes as Borduas' dissatisfaction with "l'état d'indigence et de repliement de sa propre culture sur elle-même, de la fermeture de ses frontières aux courants d'idées nouveaux, de son attachement craintif au passé."¹⁸ Ten years later, Borduas published his refusal of this fearful inward gaze in his infamous manifesto.

The CAS also had an unlikely advocate in père Marie-Alain Couturier, the French Dominican priest and painter who came to Montréal in 1940 after being stuck in New

York at the beginning of WWII.¹⁹ His ultimate goal was to encourage modernist painters to undertake Church decoration. He supported the CAS by praising their “living modern art,”²⁰ lecturing at their meetings and organizing the spring of 1941 exhibition “Première Expositions des Indépendants” in Québec City, renamed “Peinture Moderne” when it travelled to Montréal. The exhibition featured Smith and ten other CAS members. His advocacy for international modernism and the CAS brought him into direct conflict with Maillard and other conservatives.²¹ The foreword to the brochure that accompanied the two exhibitions explains why: the priest asserts that France had become a major centre for modern art because it supported artistic freedom, and that artists must be “Free not only from realist dictates or academic conformity, but also from any political or ideological programme.”²² In later years, Smith echoed the words of her supporter,²³ stressing the impact of the “total freedom”²⁴ of the “French school [...] Matisse, the Impressionists, and Post-Impressionists” on her Depression period production.²⁵ Père Couturier’s capacious views on modern art targeted not only the inward looking nationalism of the Québec teaching establishment, but the Catholic Church. In the chapter “Picasso et les catholiques” in *Art et Catholicisme*, he declares that modern art in: “l’opinion catholique, la pensée catholique, elles, n’en ont pas eu vent ou, quand elles en ont su quelque chose, n’ont vu que snobisme, farces ou coups de bourses montés par des marchands et des critiques juifs.”²⁶ Anti-Semitic paranoia about the modernist threat to Québec traditions not only brought reactionaries in line with Hitler’s Germany, but also with European Catholics whose antipathy toward “degenerate art” was similarly grounded in anti-

Semitism.²⁷ Père Couturier's indictment of the Church shows that the geopolitically specific anti-Semitic nationalism of Québec institutions participated in an international reactionary, and racialized, attack on modernism.

The Human Figure in Painting as Critique: Smith, Palardy and Lemieux

Regionalism throughout the twenties, thirties and forties, then, was an unavoidable formative experience for urban artists like Smith; it was the subject of public debate, a source of income for those like Borduas and Palardy who participated in government sponsored research projects, and it was part of their formal education. In the decade before Lyman's opinions appeared in print, and over two decades before *Refus global*, Smith and Palardy drew conclusions similar to Lyman and Borduas about Maillard's regionalist views. The latter was principal of the École des beaux-arts de Montréal from 1923 to 1944,²⁸ where Smith attended between 1923 and 1928 and Palardy from 1920 to 1928.²⁹ In 1934, Maillard explained that "J'ai en effet demandé aux élèves de s'inspirer de la nature canadienne, et d'aborder des sujets de l'histoire du Canada. Il y a de grandes scènes propres à alimenter l'imagination."³⁰ The regionalism which Smith and others were expected to espouse required an inward focus on the natural environment and history of Québec; presumably, even the former showed the imprint of the latter. But Smith's comments, quoted in Chapter Five, about how students had to break free of the "chains" of their "dreadful academic training,"³¹ and the 1930 comments of Smith and Palardy that opened Chapter Two and Three show unequivocally that their interest in Charlevoix did

not derive from Maillard's regionalist ethos, but instead represented a reaction against it. Whereas for Maillard, "l'art doit être national avant d'être humain"³² you will recall that in the joint interview with Smith, Palardy asserted that artists should turn their attention to the everyday and "introduire l'humanité [...], dans la peinture."³³ Collectively Maillard and other conservative art critics figured modernism as "a threatening enterprise directed by *foreigners* or, even worse, *Jews* or *bolsheviks*" that compromised traditional, classically inspired, and "indigenous" art forms, as well as the social environment.³⁴ They were correct, insofar as artists like Smith believed that modernism and leftism were allied against national and international fascism.

Esther Trépanier's assertion that the relationship of form to content in Québec art of the period suggests a hybridization of French post-Impressionism's formal characteristics, and American and Mexican politicized content³⁵ finds support in many Montréal artists. By the thirties, Canadians had become interested in American and Mexican mural painting,³⁶ and by the forties this interest was announced in print.³⁷ As Trépanier suggests, we discover in such "regionalist" compositions as *La Récolte des pommes de terre*, 1936 (fig. 45) by Palardy affinities to the politicized regionalism of Mexican and American murals of the same period. Similarly, the subjects and treatment of *Lazare*, 1941 (fig. 46), *Notre-Dame protégeant Québec*, 1942 and *La Fête-Dieu*, 1944 by Jean-Paul Lemieux remind us of compositions by self-taught Charlevoix artists who combined the religious and the prosaic, the modern and the traditional, and the urban and rural in compositions that played with the laws of Euclidean space. As Trépanier suggests,

if Lemieux's compositions were enlarged they would not differ greatly from the American and Mexican mural paintings that the American government commissioned for public buildings.³⁸ Lemieux, a CAS co-exhibitor who visited Smith and Palardy in Charlevoix, and who also attended the École and operated the short-lived commercial art studio JANS with them,³⁹ shared their views on Maillard's regionalism. In fact, he was so dissatisfied with the education he received under Maillard's directorship of the school that he attended sporadically from 1926 until his graduation in 1934.⁴⁰ Smith's mural commission for the games room at Mont Tremblant Lodge in the Laurentians provides the best illustration of Trépanier's argument; the panorama of typical games played in the villages of Québec – croquet, horse shoes and *jeu de poches* – combines a post-Impressionist vocabulary with the monumentality of Diego Rivera's murals.⁴¹ The mural, now destroyed, exemplifies Trépanier's hybridized aesthetic, a politically-motivated art which drew inspiration from the self-taught artists of Charlevoix and French modernists of the early twentieth-century. Notably, there are important distinctions between the humanism and socialism of the art of Mexico and the United States, and that of Montréal artists. First, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal mural projects of the 1930s were intended not only to support American artists during the Depression, but also to commemorate historical and contemporary events that occurred either on American soil, or during transatlantic crossings from the "old countries" to "the new."⁴² In Mexico, post-revolutionary government sponsored murals of the politically violent mid-twenties focussed on the injustice of European domination and the repositioning of Mexican pre-Columbian culture in compositions that not only

combined “socialist, communist, and Catholic themes,” but also, “popular sovereignty and material progress.”⁴³ In spite of these differences, the regional scenes of both countries were associated with a nationalist suspicion of the “hermeticism” of “foreign” modernism. In contrast, the rural themes of Smith, Palardy and Lemieux bridged local and international aesthetics and politics.⁴⁴ Their focus on everyday human activity, rather than the landscape in which it takes place, refused to subordinate humanist (and humanitarian) concerns to nationalism.

IV: THE DEPRESSION AND MONTRÉAL MODERNISM: A CITY ART

Charlevoix in the City

Smith’s rejection of a reactionary regionalism recognized the permeability of the borders between rural and urban during the Depression. Rural Quebeckers, whose local industries were hit hard by the economic crisis moved to the cities in search of work, establishing neighbourhood communities in different parts of the city. In her memoir, Smith describes how Hochelaga became known as “little Charlevoix,” as it drew so many from the region.⁴⁵ Most members of the CAS either felt the impact of the economic Depression directly, or witnessed its effects on Montréal’s unemployed. The Canadian industrial economy faltered as a direct result of the collapse of the New York stock exchange in October 1929; and by 1931 the unemployed had become a highly visible presence on the streets of Montréal. By 1932, industrial production dropped to a third, and by 1933, when the country’s unemployment rate was at twenty percent, one third of

Montréal's labour force was unemployed. During the winter of 1933-1934, the worst period of the Depression, 28% of the population (250,000) were dependent on municipal relief programs.⁴⁶ Montréal's disenfranchised were more highly visible than in Ottawa, where the civil service offered steady employment, and in Toronto, where there were developed relief programs.⁴⁷

Many artists, horrified by the suffering and hopelessness they witnessed, felt compelled to bring their art and humanitarianism in conversation. This impulse found indirect expression in the depiction of their own urban surroundings, although the artists interviewed by Trépanier "evoked primarily artistic reasons" for their choice of urban themes.⁴⁸ If Canada did not produce "proletarian artists," "overt political or social content,"⁴⁹ or become the centre of a "socialist realist" movement, Montréal's political climate did unite a large number of left-thinking artists around the idea of a "socially committed art."⁵⁰ In Alfred Pinsky's words, "even non-political artists had some feelings for a social art"⁵¹ and several chose urban themes to communicate their humanitarian, liberal, and/or socialist concerns. Caiserman-Roth believed that for members of the Jewish community especially "sentiment about the poor and the state of the world" produced what she deemed a "city art."⁵² At the time of Charles Hill's retrospective exhibition on painting of the thirties, Louis Muhlstock commented: "Like everyone else in the thirties we were drawn together in adversity, most of us represented on these walls were more concerned about people than were the social realists of New York."⁵³ The comparison between Montréal and American artists is significant. Further, Muhlstock denied the existence of

national or ethnic art forms, insisting that there could be “no question of Jewish painting, or for that matter French painting or English painting before or during the war. Each one went his own way. One was either a painter or one was not.”⁵⁴ Again, the opposition between modernists and nationalists in Québec represented a geopolitically specific engagement with a polemic in international modernism.

Jewish Artists in Montréal

Muhlstock leaves open the question of why Montréal artists, and Jewish artists in particular, bridged their aesthetic and political convictions in urban themes. Still, we can situate his comment in relation to reactionary attitudes about modernism which reflected racist anxieties about modernization and globalization, more generally. Québec’s Jewish population increased from 7,607 in 1901 to 60,087 in 1931.⁵⁵ Not only were many of the city’s immigrant inhabitants connected to nations devastated by oppressive governments and war, but Duplessis’ Padlock Law, and Adrien Arcand’s fascist party threatened the liberty of Québec’s citizenry during the 1930s.⁵⁶ Anti-Semitism was so overt in the province that clubs in Montréal barred Jewish members and resort hotels in the Laurentians openly displayed anti-Semitic slogans. As Gary Caldwell suggests, although Francophones hardly had the monopoly on anti-Semitism, there is an absence of overtly anti-Semitic publications in English-Canada.⁵⁷ In any event, Jewish members of the Montréal arts community were unlikely to identify with the rural traditions that Maillard and others believed were threatened by “nomadic” cultures. Not surprisingly, the Jewish

artists, especially those who either came of age, or were just trying to establish themselves during the Depression, were the most politicized and the most likely to make the city's unemployed and disenfranchised the subject of their art.⁵⁸ In interviews with Trépanier during the 1980s, this generation of Jewish artists claimed to have been especially involved in “left-wing artists’ groups”⁵⁹ that would debate the “social function of art” and discuss “the difficulty of reconciling social practice with political commitment.”⁶⁰ While this group, which included Caiserman-Roth, did not become members of the CAS, they co-exhibited with them at the Art Association of Montréal and in other venues. Some like Caiserman-Roth were trained by CAS member Alexander Bercovitch.⁶¹ Given the economic and political situation, there is little question as to why Montréal artists, and Jewish artists in particular, more than elsewhere in Canada bridged their aesthetic and political convictions in urban themes.

Jewish Artists and The Urban Disenfranchised

Portraits and group compositions by Ernst Neumann, Sylvia Ary, Harry Mayerovich and Louis Muhlstock record the individual and collective impact of the Depression without reducing Montréal's inhabitants to stereotypes.⁶² Works that deal with trade unionism by Alfred Pinsky and Ghitta Caiserman-Roth (for example, *Halifax Workers*, c. 1946 reflect the marriage partners' socialist convictions, but refuse to glorify the plight of workers. Similarly, Caiserman-Roth's series of portraits of *Mademoiselle Coutu*, 1947 (fig. 47) a sex-trade worker, avoids moralizing about her subject. Trépanier

claims that Caiserman-Roth's aim was to understand "the working-class environments, different from hers and very much at variance with her own lifestyle."⁶³ The goal suggests that the artist viewed her aesthetic production as a form of anthropology that could bring her to a better understanding of poverty. Nevertheless, in these intimate colour sketches we do not discover the objectifying gaze of the detached scientific observer, but an empathetic connection between artist and sitter. A demand is placed upon the spectator to abandon the image of the rapacious "whore" who populates much modernist art and literature. In fact, *Mademoiselle Coutu*, 1947 troubles the misogynist fantasy that serves to disavow fetishistically the social and economic conditions that force many women into the sex-trade.⁶⁴ This feminist insight coheres to the image with the eruption of the energetic excesses that Julia Kristeva theorized could be triggered by colour.⁶⁵ In this case, the image's *affective effect* cannot be located solely in colour relations, but in their shifting roles as space, form, and figure. On the one hand, the muted burnt sienna of the inelegant hat and purse, and the rose-coloured blouse and stockings give form to the modesty of the sitter's attire. On the other, unbounded colour in the form of a threatening green jack-knife above Mlle Coutu's head melts to stroke her back and to cradle her chair. On the left-hand side, this same green transforms into a blue shadow that both caresses her face, and emphasizes her morose mood. The painter's sensitive touches of colour draw attention to the sitter's forlorn expression and to her gently cupped hands. These gestures of colour to *Mlle Coutu* speak to her vulnerability. Indeed, it is difficult not to feel protective of the woman who sits unselfconsciously offering her body to our gaze.

The sensitivity with which Muhlstock approaches his subjects stems from a similar intimacy with his sitters; however, his memories of growing up poor place him in a different relation to them. Since he could rarely afford professionals, his “models were the homeless people of Fletcher’s Field – the ones who had nowhere to sleep” and the “rows of waiting people” in hospital clinics,⁶⁶ as well as the refugees he encountered in shelters.⁶⁷ Sometimes he would simply sketch his subjects, who were either unaware, or did not care that they were being observed. On other occasions, he paid people to model, frequently returning to his favourites, as he did with the subjects for *William O’Brien Unemployed*, 1935 (fig. 48), and *Jos Lavallée (avec un bol de soupe)*, c.1931-1932 (fig. 49). Although Muhlstock’s approach to hiring models was not uncommon during the Depression, his attitude differed from some of his contemporaries. Decades later, he could still recall first meetings and the substance of his exchanges with his models.⁶⁸ One anecdote in particular, suggests that the circumstances of his models were constitutive of his aesthetic: “I saw a bronze by Suzor-Coté at the Museum. It was a bishop. Under the mitre, I recognized the features of Jos Lavallée.”⁶⁹ When Muhlstock used such allegorical titles as the *Last Supper*, his intention was not to reduce his sitters to types, but to “sacralize the misery of soup lines and shelters for the homeless.”⁷⁰

La Communiantte: Choices for Catholic Women During the Depression

In Chapter Five, I considered how Smith’s portraits of Charlevoix children contribute to an understanding of the importance of memory to modernist aesthetics. I

return now to one portrait in particular because it suggests how in spite of their combined efforts, the Church and State (see Chapter Five) failed to maintain the border between urban and rural, a failure that had specific consequences for women during the Depression. *La Communiant*e (fig. 19) exemplifies Henri Lefebvre's theorization of the city as a living organism whose rhythms can only be grasped when "you yourself have been grabbed by it, given or abandoned yourself inwardly to the time that it rhythmmed." This introjection does not, however, provide a perspective on the city because urban rhythms cannot be grasped "when they are lived." Rhythmanalysis requires a certain "exteriority;" that is, "you have to be out of" the object of analysis.⁷¹ Charlevoix provided just such an outside for meditating on Montréal, and vice versa. As an urban non-Catholic Smith is more likely to see in the rural child's first communion the embodiment of Foucault's theorization of the modern subject as a body imprinted by a web of discourses.⁷² Indeed, it is one of the few portraits where the title effaces the sitter's personal identity to define her exclusively as a member of the French-speaking Catholic community. *La Communiant*e, then, stands iconically for an important rite of passage for urban and rural Québec Catholics into a realm of greater moral responsibility. If we consider Smith's declaration that "I painted children because their mothers were too busy to sit for me,"⁷³ the portrait becomes a metonymic representation of a specifically feminine identity. *La Communiant*e's emerging sense of place in the community is tied to her future role as a wife and mother who, in turn, will be too busy to sit for portraits. The first communion clothes suggest the only other socially acceptable alternative open to girls: marriage to the Church.⁷⁴ By collapsing

a defining moment for many into the one, the portrait recalls the trajectory of scores of lives in both rural and urban Québec. The sitter's first communion dress reminds us of how the lives of the majority of Catholic girls were circumscribed at an early age. *La Communiant* does not refer to the specific child who sat for the portrait, but to the practices that constituted her as a religious, linguistic and gendered subject.

Nevertheless, just as Muhlstock's compositions "sacralize" his subjects, *La Communiant* refuses to reduce its subject to a symbol. In contrast to honorific portraits, which commemorate individual public achievements, Smith's painting is more memorial site than monument.⁷⁵ In Barthesian terms, the portrait includes a *punctum*, an ideologically indigestible kernel that resists symbolization.⁷⁶ Might not this puncture, or "wound" be attributable to the child's expression? As the artist explained in an interview of 1964:

Somehow I can't paint people over 25, that is why I've never been a success as a portrait painter except with children [...] Sometimes I find that, while children do not, like adults, mirror all life's experiences in their faces, they do have a latent sadness in their faces when in repose. My paintings must show this.⁷⁷

You might recognize the comment as an earlier version of the one I quoted from Édith-Anne Pageot's 1997 discussion about the importance of Jungian thought to Smith's portraits (see Chapter Five).⁷⁸ In the earlier interview I have cited here, Smith emphasizes that adults are of little interest to her aesthetically because their faces mask, rather than express emotion. Smith's portraits of children can be viewed as a form of ideological critique that undermines the discursive practices that constitute the child as "other."⁷⁹

Susan Stewart's examination of nostalgia implies that the modern child embodies innocence to provide the Western (adult) individual with an idealized past free of sexuality and power. The "latent sadness" Smith finds in the faces of her young sitters, however, implies a certain knowingness. When Smith remarked to one of her sitters on the large number of children in the family, the child replied: "oui et ce n'est pas fini,"⁸⁰ signalling her/his basic awareness that the family is an economy structured by power, gender and sexuality. By contrasting children's emotionally expressive faces to those of adults – the faces upon which longer individual histories are inscribed – Smith suggests that affect, associated with the ephemeral body, is the "subject" of her portraits. For this reason, her unsentimental treatment of *La Communiant*e exposes the opposition between adult and child as a discursive fantasy⁸¹ that obscures how children's lives are already circumscribed by the forced choices that await them. The portrait exposes the boundary between rural and urban as a myth aimed at discouraging women from migrating to the city;⁸² it exposes patriotic regionalism as a politically-motivated fantasy that denies the harsh reality for Catholic girls and women during the Depression.⁸³ As Danielle Juteau has shown, in French Canada during the first half of the century, "mothers and nuns were united and interrelated within the same sex-gender system," their "bodies and labour power were controlled and appropriated through the Church" for nationalist purposes. "Mothers ensured the biological reproduction of the nation and the reproduction of the nationality in the name of a nationalist-conservative ideology of *survivance*."⁸⁴ In this economy, nuns were the "surplus" children produced by laywomen working in the home as wives and

mothers. We might add that regionalism was an important dimension of this mythology, as both the means and goal of *survivance*. Smith's ironic observations recognize how a web of institutions left Catholic women with few choices. I do not know if Smith read F.R. Scott's condemnation of the "provincial trinity" – the Roman Catholic Church, the ruling Liberal Party, and Montréal's business class – that opposed social reform during the Depression (published anonymously as "The Fascist Province" in *The Canadian Forum* in 1934),⁸⁵ but she did talk politics with him, and his wife Marian Scott at numerous social gatherings. As an inhabitant of Montréal, she also could not have been unaware of the more than three hundred brothels in the "Red Light district."⁸⁶ When placed alongside *Mademoiselle Coutu* (and we might add *La Prostituée*, c. 1940, fig. 30, to this gallery),⁸⁷ *La Communiant*e becomes a sadly ironic indictment of the Church whose policies on birth control and unpaid nun's dowries effectively forced some women into the sex trade by imposing poverty on their families during the Depression.

V: ART AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Social Consciousness in Painting: Political Conviction, Genre, Medium, or Style?

Painters used diverse genres to explore the social landscape. Louis Muhlstock's *Two Rooms Apartment, Ruelle Gruelle*, 1940-1,⁸⁸ and *Basement Room, Condemned Building, St-Norbert Street*, c.1938-40 (fig. 50), *Open Door of Third House, Grubert Lane Montreal*, c.1939 (fig. 51) for example, map the interior spaces of the city.⁸⁹ While Jennifer Couëlle, Monique Nadeau-Saumier, and Esther Trépanier believe that it was in

the Depression era portraits (see fig. 48, *William O'Brien Unemployed*, c. 1935), and “in his graphic production that Muhlstock expressed his social positions most clearly,”⁹⁰ he explained that the sensation in his interior scenes that “people have just left and will soon be back” represented a form of social commentary.⁹¹ Indeed, his empty rooms are haunting indices of the absent occupants. This uncanny quality calls into question the respective claims of Trépanier, Couëlle and Monique Nadeau-Saumier that the immediacy of drawing produces more compelling social commentary.⁹² Further, Trépanier, Couëlle and Nadeau-Saumier do not reconcile their views with the goals of Montréal painters; Muhlstock located the political potential of painting in its affective capacities. He, like Smith and Scott, conceived of modernism as a two pronged assault on conservatism; both formalism and humanitarian themes were essential to their politically motivated iconoclasm. Keeping both aspects of their aesthetic goals in focus leads to a different orientation to the paintings; one can still feel a proximity to Muhlstock’s absent tenants in the form of melancholic empathy. The human likenesses we find in drawings, which Trépanier and others find more moving, do not necessarily have the same affective power for me as Muhlstock’s empty interiors; the effect of the latter is an unlocalizable loneliness that persists in memory. In this emotional sense, there is a greater affinity between Muhlstock’s paintings of empty dwellings and the portrait of *Jos Lavalée (avec un bol de soupe)*, 1931-32 (fig. 49) than between the latter and portraits rendered in graphic materials.

But how might I account for our different responses? In the epigraph that

introduces this chapter, Scott described art in liberationist terms, perceiving in painting the “plastic organization” and “rhythmic composition” the instruments for revolution.⁹³ She elaborated that the political power of painting⁹⁴ stemmed from its capacity to give form to inchoate forces: “Out of this world of disorder the modern artist of creation is trying to establish a new world order – the artist of today must give expression to the new era the world is entering upon. He feels the dynamic inherent in life.”⁹⁵ Scott’s artist is Lefebvre’s “rhythmanalyst,” an “enigmatic personage wandering the streets [...] with his thoughts and emotions, his impressions and his wonder.”⁹⁶ In Muhlstock’s interiors, I perceive the presence of Lefebvre’s rhythmanalyst, who knows how to “keep his ear open” not only to human “words, speeches, noises and sounds,” but “is able to listen to a house, a street, a city as one listens to a symphony or an opera”(228). The rhythmanalyst does not “typify” a city by a “single trait” as some writers might characterize “New York by the howling of police sirens or London by the murmur of voices and the cries of children in the squares.” Instead the rhythmanalyst remains attentive to “time (tempo),” to “rhythms and their associations,” in much the same way “as the physician (analyst) who examines functional troubles in terms of rhythms or arhythmia (sic).”⁹⁷ In *Open Door of Third House, Grubert Lane Montreal*, c.1939 (fig. 51) the respective dark vertical and diagonal lines of the doorway and wainscoting, and the *repoussoir* of the gloomy staircase invite us to make the ascent into the interior space of the apartment, which in all likelihood, is as cheerless as the rooms of *Basement Room, Condemned Building, St-Norbert Street* c.1938-40 (fig. 50). In the latter works, the dullness and opacity of the medium capture the deadening

effect of the shabby floral wallpaper and bare plant, objects that remind us that life here is never very far from “still-life.” In contrast to the aforementioned art historians, for me, the paintings of ill-maintained tenements are more evocative of the mood, rhythms, or “tempo” of Depression era Montréal than the sketches of Muhlstock’s unfortunate sitters; the abandoned dwellings are haunted by missed encounters with people who departed the scenes long ago.⁹⁸

Still-Life as Depression *Portrait*

In a different form, we find a compelling illustration of “the times” in Smith’s *Still life, 1930* (fig. 52). Given the scarcity of imported fruit and vegetables, and how hunger became a constitutive part of daily life for a growing number of Montréalers, still-life compositions took on special significance during the Depression.⁹⁹ Smith underscores how the struggle to make ends meet altered the perception of prosaic objects:

Oh we were very poor [...] Then we got a pupil, so we had two dollars a week and we managed to live on that. But we were all poor. Ernst Neumann, I remember, he was a friend of ours. He would come to us and say, “Hey, you don’t look too bad. How are you eating to achieve that modicum of health?” So I said, “Well, we live on \$2.00 a week. I’ll tell you exactly how we do it” because I was the one who was budgeting. One orange in two, divided in two for the two of us a day, and a quarter of a pound of chopped beef. You can do wonders with that you know [...] You have no idea how cheap beef was in those days. You could get a pound for twenty cents.¹⁰⁰

If the haphazard arrangement of homely objects, which includes a chair, matches, and the artist’s tools – a tube of paint, and a note or sketch book – do not point to the scarcity of fruit and flowers we generally find in still-life arrangements, then the *Oxfam* tin certainly

does.¹⁰¹ In a manner similar to Muhlstock's empty rooms, Smith's somewhat colourless, forlorn objects are indexical reminders of the Depression era artist for whom the model must also serve as meal.¹⁰²

VI: ARTISTS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Artists on the Left

Many CAS members shared a commitment to left-wing movements. Even when they did not clearly articulate ideological positions (they frequently did not make the distinction among socialism, communism and humanism) Smith and others expressed disillusionment with capitalism, finding hope on the left: "My husband and I were always passed off for socialists and communists even. We were considered beyond the pale because of our political ideas; I am still politically minded. I'm still very much to the left."¹⁰³ Indeed, Smith elaborates that she had always been very "politically-minded" and could not "see how one cannot be interested in politics," even expressing regret that "damn it all, I have never done anything with it. I should have been in politics."¹⁰⁴

Although she does not position her views in relation to specific institutionalized parties or doctrines, referring to herself alternatively as a "socialist," "communist," and "liberal,"¹⁰⁵ her organizational affiliations are more revealing. She joined the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), which she felt "wasn't left enough for me at all, but it was better than nothing. We went to all the meetings."¹⁰⁶ The latter formed in 1932 to define and promote the aims of the Canadian socialist movement. Important early meetings took place

at the Scott's house, and several participants later went to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in Ottawa. Both the LSR and the CCF exerted pressure on the government to create employment during the Depression.¹⁰⁷ Clearly, Smith was far left of liberal.

Artists and the Spanish Civil War

Artists were not only preoccupied by the Depression, but also by the rise of fascism, and an imminent second global conflict. The Spanish Civil War, in particular, convinced many artists to become involved in politics.¹⁰⁸ The conflict between the right-wing nationalist forces, led by General Francisco Franco, and Republicans (the elected popular front which united various left-wing movements) came to a head in July 1936. The war in Spain pushed some members of Smith's social circle into action overseas. Norman Bethune not only raised awareness and helped to organize members of the CAS, but also contributed more directly to the cause by providing his medical services in Spain between 1936 and 1937.¹⁰⁹

More generally, the war in Spain unified artists of different political leanings with intellectuals and writers who were critical of the governments in power. This approach generated a common front against fascism and reactionary forces.¹¹⁰ Marian Scott stated that several artists worked to collect funds for the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, later the League for Peace and Freedom.¹¹¹ Smith worked for the "defence of

Stalingrad;” and she described how the events of that summer galvanized members of her social circle:

Oh, we were terribly upset. We lived on the radio. We read the newspapers. For years we kept boxes and boxes of cuttings from newspapers. It was the most moving experience of our lives. It was so terrible, so awful. The history of it today when you read it is heartbreaking. But to have lived through it was more heartbreaking.¹¹²

A sense of helplessness exacerbated their horror. Smith explained that the artists she knew “weren’t involved. What could we do? I mean intellectually, that is all we thought of that year 1935-36. Horrible.”¹¹³ Louis Muhlstock attributed artists’ lack of involvement to the absence of an official “meeting place,” or forum for collective action: “So there was no such thing as politicization – though some of us were politically aware and would attend political meetings, often radical in purpose. We certainly became involved and lived in that kind of atmosphere, but we were not really organized.”¹¹⁴ Those who did not participate directly in the struggle against Franco contributed in other ways. Smith raised funds for the Committee for Spanish Democracy and the Spanish Children’s Relief Campaign by donating work to exhibitions and auctions.¹¹⁵

Art and Political Activism: Fundraising Exhibitions

While Canadians were aware of the Works Progress Administration (W. P. A.) in the United States – a government initiative that employed unionized artists in public projects during the Depression – geographical isolation, and the lack of government support in Canada did not encourage cooperative activity among artists nationally until the

Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) was established in 1941.¹¹⁶ Indeed, during the Depression many Canadian politicians responded with hostility to proposals for arts funding based on the American model. The American Federal Art Project (a division of the WPA), for example, made Mackenzie King “shudder” because it stemmed from “a mad desire to bring state control and interference beyond all bounds.”¹¹⁷ In the meantime, cooperative ventures remained local. In Toronto, the Picture Loan Society provided artists with traveling exhibition venues, and income from the rental of their pictures.¹¹⁸ Although there were no cooperative galleries in Montréal, a group of artists, architects, and their supporters established the Seven Arts Club in 1940. To “promote understanding of the arts” and their “interdependence in human experience,” and “to bridge the gap between the artist and the public,” as well as “promoting more effective art education,” the Club sponsored talks on the arts, modern theatre, and contemporary architecture, and held an auction of donated objects to raise money for Canadian Aid to Russia.¹¹⁹ It survived only a little over one year.

Since there was a paucity of formal meeting places for artists to organize politically, they used the homes of other CAS members. At informal gatherings at Smith and Palardy,¹²⁰ as well as their friends John and Corinne Lyman,¹²¹ and F.R. and Marian Scott,¹²² artists discussed ways to express their dual commitment to art and politics.¹²³ According to Muhlstock, there was “one combined effort of Montréal artists: the *Exhibition of Soviet Art*, sponsored by the Friends of the Soviet Union.”¹²⁴ While Marian Scott found the works themselves “boring and academic,” the event held at the Henry

Morgan & Company department store from May 15th to June 1st 1935, in Esther Trépanier's words, "offers clear proof that during the 1930s there existed a genuine unity among the still small group of artists and art critics who were open to modernity."¹²⁵ Indeed, the committee brought together an eclectic group of Francophone and Anglophone artists and critics who represented a spectrum of "liberal" and "militantly socialist" convictions, including architect Ernest Cormier, painter Adrien Hébert, sculptor Henri Hébert, art critics Henri Girard, E.-R. Bertrand, and Robert Ayre, painters who had been associated with the Beaver Hall Hill Group during the 1930s including Liliás Torrance Newton, Prudence Heward, Mabel May and Edwin Holgate, and artists from the Jewish community, Alexander Bercovitch, Louis Muhlstock, and Ernst Neumann.¹²⁶ The fact that committee members from divergent social and political backgrounds shared a common animus toward the reactionary conservatism of the art establishment demonstrates how political consciousness and a receptivity to visual modernism became interdependent in Montréal of the 1930s.

VII: POLITICIZING THE AESTHETIC

Art and Politics: Bridging Political and Art Communities

The political convictions of the CAS found little direct expression in overtly propagandistic themes.¹²⁷ But the aversion to explicit political commentary in art was not exclusive to Montréal artists; it aligned them with modernists internationally who viewed formalist experimentation as inherently political (see Chapter Two and Three). Bethune

went so far as to say that “most great artists of the world have been -- thank heaven -- “stupid” in the worldly sense. They didn’t think too much, they simply painted [...] The function of the artist is to disturb. His duty is to arouse the sleeper, to shake the complacent pillars of the world.”¹²⁸ Although, Lyman, Scott, and Borduas were more prepared than Smith to articulate the aesthetic principles that informed their production, they, like Smith, believed that art was the ultimate aim of theory. In this light, Smith’s refusal to “express ideas or theories” signals a modernist refusal to use art as a vehicle for political commentary, and a formalist belief in the capacity of painting to provoke the complacent and apathetic.

If artists refused to use their painting as a vehicle for explicit social commentary, Smith and others did produce posters and donate works to raise funds for the Committee to aid Spanish democracy. Since there was no money for printing the posters they were produced by hand. Scott described them as “probably pretty awful;” they were executed “on very cheap paper, and were very immediate. A lot of them were notices for meetings.” Still, they were important “since there was no television or radio, this was a time of so many meetings and of coming together. I think that people growing up today don’t realize the difference; then if there was anything that bothered you, there would be a meeting. Whereas now you try to get on the CBC.”¹²⁹ Scott’s desire to produce “a propaganda book” and “to be a proletarian painter,” only led to several large paintings of workers between 1935 and 1936.¹³⁰ John Lyman is thought to have produced only one visual comment on the Depression.¹³¹ As Scott explained, “I found that I could not (or should

not) *use* my painting directly, but I could use some of myself, some of my time,”¹³² and that “most of us felt that we couldn’t use paintings for political purposes.”¹³³ For artists like Ghitta Caiserman-Roth who was more directly involved with the Marxist Party, leftist commitments sometimes conflicted with aesthetic convictions. During the late 1940s, Caiserman-Roth¹³⁴ felt that although she “could heartily take on general political ideas,” she found it difficult to reconcile her political concerns with her aesthetic production: “I used to go to meetings and they used to pull me apart and call me a bourgeois artist and I used to come home crying.”¹³⁵ Caiserman-Roth’s experience contrasted with the experiences of artists who joined the CAS. CAS members who believed in the revolutionary potential of European modernism experienced little difficulty in reconciling their art production with a leftist politics. Indeed, artists who refused to romanticize the lives of rural labourers for nationalistic ends were not likely to produce Marxist celebrations of the working class.¹³⁶

The Political in Modernist Aestheticism

The Marxist disdain for the ostensible apolitical aestheticism of Montréal artists signals a fundamental disagreement over the relationship of political consciousness to ontology. Unlike their Marxist critics, CAS members believed that the political was located in the subject’s relation to the art object, rather than in the image itself. As I argued in Chapter Three, Stein and Picasso perceived a symmetry between the destruction of Euclidean space (formalist iconoclasm) and the violent socio-political events of the early

twentieth-century because they believed that modernism and social revolution stemmed from the same politicized vision. Similarly, members of the CAS believed art was political when it was not only *meaningless* – art that defied conventional modes of thinking and representation – but also connected to socio-political contingencies.¹³⁷ Lyman might well have been addressing both conservatives and the Marxists critical of Caiserman-Roth when he argued for the necessity of challenging the “still widely held triple superstition” that the “enjoyment of art is a luxury and superfluity only to be indulged in when all material demands have been satisfied”; second, that “photographic resemblance or what has been called the representational side of art” should be privileged over “esthetic trimmings - design, “pure” art”; and third, “that art in the school is a polite accomplishment of no practical value beyond the convenience of draughtsmanship.”¹³⁸ Clearly, instrumental goals ran counter to Lyman’s concept of modern “living art.” He elaborated that children demonstrated an intuitive grasp of the fundamentals of aesthetic experience: “They will have felt what art is. They will know, from having exercised their imagination, that it is not a sort of handmade representation of things with a few technical arty trimmings but an impulse to embody the material of vivid experience in visual signs.”¹³⁹ Modernism, then, must simultaneously reject apolitical aestheticism and preserve the integrity of the art object as the embodiment of energetic impulses to subvert the political inertia produced by processes of socialization. For Lyman, Smith and Scott, modernist aesthetics was not concerned with providing visual “correctives” to the “false consciousness” of classic Marxist thought, but with addressing a more fundamental

ontological problem. They were *rhythm analysts* who recognized the alienated individual as a disciplined subject estranged from its own energetic relation to the world of objects. The political value of art objects could only be determined by their ability to produce aesthetic experiences, experiences that Smith and Lyman believed were more likely to surface on the faces and drawings of children than their more benumbed, disciplined elders.

Québec Hybrids: The Politicized Aesthetic of Smith and Scott

In an interview with Charles Hill, Jori Smith stated that global events only exerted an indirect influence on her artistic consciousness,¹⁴⁰ but stressed the impact of the “total freedom” (10) of the “French school [...] Matisse, the Impressionists, and Post-Impressionists” (7) on her Depression period production. The equation of artistic and political freedom might seem dangerously naive in the current neo-liberal climate; however, given the intersection between and among fascism, anti-Semitism and the conservative backlash against modernism in Québec of the thirties and forties, Smith’s stance was profoundly political. She spoke indirectly of her aesthetic goals in relation to world events: “That’s why we work, isn’t it? It isn’t shutting ourselves away from the world entirely, it is just exploring our own world” (3-4). Smith equated abstraction with a leftist politics, and appeared to regret her failure to abandon figurative genres. She explained that even as she was moving “more and more to the left” her “painting has not followed the same wildly liberal tendencies” (3-4). Scott appears to have been more

confident about the reconciliation of her art, most of which is in some sense figurative, and her politics. In the epigraph that opens this chapter, she provides a clear articulation of how modernist forms and leftist politics were imbricated. Her belief in the revolutionary power of “the plastic organization” and the “rhythmic composition”¹⁴¹ echoes Theodor Adorno’s assertion that visual modernism only succeeded in its opposition to “the antagonistic condition Marx called alienation” when it refused the “replica or reproduction of that condition” and “denounced it in no uncertain terms, transposing it into an *imago*. In so doing modern art became the opposite other of an alienated condition. The former was as free as the latter was unfree.”¹⁴² Smith’s concern that her largely figurative corpus was somehow inherently conservative was complicated by her commitment to “living art” forms generated by what Lyman described as the “impulse to embody the material of vivid experience in visual signs.”¹⁴³

The fact that Montréal artists shared a modernist wariness of visual forms that “replicate or reproduce” modern alienation raises a crucial question: if most members of the CAS sought to liberate art from the tyranny of mimesis, how do we make sense of the figurative works discussed in this chapter?¹⁴⁴ The answer to this question begins with the recognition that it belongs to the long history of debate about the political value of aesthetic expression, a discussion which centres on the political relevance of traditional genres and media in an increasingly technologized global economy. The persistence of this debate into the twenty-first century underscores the unlikelihood of consensus among the first generation of Canadian artists who attempted to define the terms of modernism. Carol

Becker's concretization of the dilemma helps to account for the conflicts among Montréal artists who otherwise formed a common front against restrictive orthodoxies; first, art that "appears to address social concerns is often conspicuously one-dimensional," second, "art that is considered *political* by the art world often has little to do with the larger political arena," and third, art that is "complex, dealing with subjective and psychological concerns, is often considered obscure and inaccessible" outside the art world, "and such work is especially suspect when it appears in a traditional medium like painting."¹⁴⁵ We discover the first problem – the threat of producing "one-dimensional" social messages – in the Montréal regionalists and Marxists who demanded celebrations of the labouring class. The American Abstract Expressionists I touched upon earlier exemplify the second problem: the art world can only consider their formal iconoclasm political by overlooking the apolitical discourse which secured their place as the ideological weapons of American Cold War institutions.¹⁴⁶ The CAS membership did not fall into either of the first two traps. It is the third problematic, a common commitment to exploring the complex ontological issues raised in and by modernism, that ultimately proved divisive for them. Becker's third problematic also helps to explain the institutionalized brutality directed at the Automatistes who integrated non-representational forms and traditional media.

Becker's schema might seem to support arguments for the status of the CAS as a representative of a fallow period in Canadian art. Although the membership refused to reduce painting to "one-dimensional" political messages, it failed to engage fully with the "complex subjective and psychological" issues introduced by the previous generation of

European abstractionists, effectively forcing out members who did commit to them. This conclusion fails to recognize the complexity of the third problematic defined by Becker: how to experiment with a traditional medium like painting in “complex” new ways without rendering it “obscure and inaccessible”? She explores this issue through the thought of Herbert Marcuse. In his last book, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, he refutes Marxist utilitarian notions about the function of art in society to theorize its value as an imaginative space whose subversive value – “its indictment of the established reality” – only emerges when it is “grounded precisely in the dimensions where art *transcends* its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse.”¹⁴⁷ One might immediately raise the objection that art cannot transcend that which it indicts. But for Marcuse, the “transcendent” is not that which is beyond materiality, but that which escapes discourse; the transcendent is moored to the unconscious – the sensorial body – that escapes the deadening effects of social strictures. Art as an imaginative space provides a material and psychic location for the creation of emancipatory “fictional worlds” (66). To this end, Marcuse nominated art forms that could not be readily digested by existing discourses.

But is it fair to align the goals of the CAS with the political agenda of Marcuse (or, for that matter, with that of Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt School)? As a self-proclaimed leftist, Smith opens the door to such a comparison. One can counter that Smith’s preference for traditional genres is antithetical to Marcuse’s conception of an aesthetics resistant to discursive assimilation, but this objection falls into another

discursive trap of which the theorist was equally weary. The “anti-art” of the postwar decades – art that rejects traditional artistic conventions and practices (49) – might be effective weapons against the hermeticism of art institutions; however, “the political potential of art lies only in its aesthetic dimensions” (xii-xiii). Marcuse targets the vast collection of diverse objects produced over the past fifty years that sacrifice form to political ideas. For him, any form that appeals to reason rather than emotion is “self-defeating from the outset (49);” and art that holds the most promise politically is not necessarily that which moves “the intellect to a direct perception of injustice,” but that which works indirectly toward social change by moving the “spirit.”¹⁴⁸ It is significant that Marcuse believed that “there may be more subversive potential in the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht” (xii-xiii). As Becker suggests, his perspective flies in the face of the art world’s denial of “the possibility that work too easily designated as *bourgeois* might actually serve a significant purpose” (44). Indeed, his privileging of Baudelaire and Rimbaud over Brecht is still likely to encounter resistance in leftist and avant-garde circles. But it is precisely this approach to the problem of form that moves us toward an understanding of how representational works might resist colonizing the image according to the emergent formalist orthodoxies that assumed a symmetry between conservative politics and traditional media and genres. Figurative works are perhaps most likely to draw attention to what Marcuse described as “the paradoxical relation of art to time – paradoxical because what is experienced though the medium of sensibility is present” but “what has become form in the work of art has happened: it is

recalled, re-presented.” Crucially, “mimesis translates reality into memory”; and “in this remembrance, art has recognized what is, and what could be, within and beyond social conditions. Art has rescued this knowledge from the sphere of abstract concept and embedded it in the realm of sensuousness” (67). If all painting as “remembrance” is a form of mimesis that effects a “translation of reality” into memory, then the political value of the work must be determined by considerations other than its (non)figurative elements.

Marcuse’s refusal to heed the Marxist call for an aesthetics directed to the “proletariat,” rather than the “bourgeoisie”¹⁴⁹ also complicates assessments of the political value of some art forms over others. Arguments about how to radicalize aesthetic expression are usually predicated on assumptions about the “classes” of audience who will initiate political transformations.¹⁵⁰ Marcuse’s defense of the subversive potential in Baudelaire and Rimbaud suggests that political reform is not exclusively dependent on rallying the subjugated, but also on producing enemies *within* the dominant classes. Indeed, the canonization of the two French poets in a history of bourgeois aestheticism must overlook how their art and lifestyles shocked bourgeois respectability during the nineteenth century. This idea opens up the discussion about the subversive potential of Smith’s largely figurative corpus: first, who is the audience that might be touched by her work? And, second, will they be moved to perceive social injustice? The second question is undecidable because it implies a causality antithetical to Marcuse’s politicization of aesthetic experience beyond the reach of discourse. Indeed, how would we measure the political effects of spectatorial identification with depictions of the victims of Depression

era poverty? But the first question returns me to my earlier discussion of the response to her portraits: does the critical fascination with Smith's portraits not signal the *transcendent* "emancipatory power" Marcuse located in the "sensuousness" of art? (66).

Modern Painting and the Recovery of Affect

These questions bring me to the importance of sensation in the aesthetics of several CAS members. Lyman's comment that "so-called Modern painting," starting with "Cezanne, Renoir, Gauguin, and Van Gogh," is more concerned with "telling what the artist thinks and feels about the world than on representing it, and on the intrinsic quality of his expression than on interest associated with its objective material."¹⁵¹ He elaborates on the distinction between the artist's perception and the object depicted:

Every painting has two subjects, the nominal and the real. The former is always to some extent a pretext imposed by the circumstances of experience or even a commission. The real subject is somewhere behind it. In this sense it has been said that every artist has but one subject. It can only become apparent in the way he paints. The *emotion* can only manifest itself in the technique - in the broadest sense. (...) A painter is seldom conscious, or at least fully conscious, of his meaning. The only thing of which he can be fully conscious is his artistic problem, [emphasis mine].¹⁵²

Lyman was not alone in his view that the "real subject" of any painting was in the mode of expression, which is fundamentally an expression of emotion. Scott shared a similar belief in art's ability to "assimilate the meanings that science merely formulates, reclaim them in terms of feeling and sentiment."¹⁵³ In Chapter Two, I discussed the universalism of Smith's thought in relation to her position as a woman artist. You will recall that, quoting

Proust, Smith believed that regardless of cultural differences humanity was essentially “alike” because we share “The same impulses, the same desires. The same pain, the same joys.” The function of the artist was “to discover yourself. Because that’s what art is really, isn’t it?”¹⁵⁴ Smith believed that the discovery of universal principles depended upon the examination of subjective feelings; and more specifically, that aesthetic expression was concerned with the field of emotions, a field that represents the fundamental ontological ground among humans.

Art and the Transference of Affect

In her final book, Teresa Brennan characterized this shared ontological ground as a system of exchange from which the modern subject is estranged: “people in the Western world were once aware of the transmission of affect” but the knowledge that “was once conscious [...] is now repressed,” because we “have sealed against this knowledge by the deadening, passifying affects of modern times [...]”¹⁵⁵ This knowledge, like all unconscious knowledge is located in the body. To use Brennan’s example, we have all had the experience of walking into a room and feeling “the atmosphere”(9).¹⁵⁶ Our sensorial responses to transitory states are not only fantasmic, they produce measurable physiological changes in the subject (1). Neurological research shows that chemical and electrical processes can be exchanged in two forms of “entrainment.” The first involves taking up “opposing positions in relation to a common affective thread (the angry and the depressed; the loved and the lover)” (9). The second aligns the nervous and hormonal

systems of individuals and groups. Entrainment primarily depends upon smell or “unconscious olfaction”(9). Even if we do not consciously detect such airborne molecules as pheromones which communicate the chemical information that signal and produce reactions (9), we are nevertheless not “self-contained in terms of our energies”(6). Affect, then, is an event that simultaneously belongs to the subject, and operates in an economy of exchange where the visual register and other senses help to establish material connections among subjects. Indeed, for Brennan, the challenge is not how to imagine an unbounded subject; the “mystery really is how a person maintains a distinct identity.”¹⁵⁷ Smith and her contemporaries recognized that emotions are not self-contained insofar as they can be transmitted via the artist’s medium to reawaken modern subjects to their somatic connections to others.

Colour and the Energetic Body

Artists explored the potential of painting to transmit affect by focussing on what Lyman referred to as “technique”¹⁵⁸ and what Scott called “plastic elements.”¹⁵⁹ For Smith, this involved abandoning “ideas” and “seizing” what she loved most: “colour and light.”¹⁶⁰ Philip Surrey also believed that “La peinture [...] c’est la lumière, le mouvement, la couleur.”¹⁶¹ In granting primacy to colour and light over “ideas,” Smith and Surrey take up a significant trajectory in modernism. Klee and Kandinsky, for example, experimented with combinations of primary, secondary, and tertiary colours in the belief that they held particular emotional significance.¹⁶² Although she claims not to have been directly

influenced by many of her colleagues, it is possible that Smith read Kandinsky, or received his ideas through her association with Scott who is known to have read him. Smith felt that although Lyman diluted his colours too much – it was like having “sunglasses on”¹⁶³ – Brandtner diluted his too little. He failed to “invent colour” because “he squeezed it out of a tube.”¹⁶⁴ Pellán was an important exception:

Pellán was very good for me because he clarified my power. I had always wanted to paint in bright vivid colours. But you know with my training it is very hard to break away from the muted tones of Maillard [...]. So I felt much happier breaking away and being encouraged by Pellán to paint this way [...] He burst onto the scene and changed everybody’s eyesight really about what they were looking at.¹⁶⁵

Although her travels in England, France and Spain during the mid-thirties had exposed her to modernist colour experiments (she took in an exhibition of the former Fauvist Maurice de Vlaminck in 1935, for example)¹⁶⁶ it was through her friendship with Pellán, who had lived in Paris from 1926 to 1940, that Smith appears to have absorbed Matisse’s conviction that colours could enter the “soul” and affect “blood pressure.”¹⁶⁷ Like Matisse, Smith eliminates depth to allow colour to construct space. The differences between *Rose* of 1936 (fig. 22) and both *La Communiant*e of 1944 (fig. 19) and *Little Girl in Blue* of 1947 (fig. 23) show that vibrant colours and strong tonal contrasts rather than verisimilitude became the subject of her painting after her contact with Pellán. Although she does not explicitly link colour to emotion, in most interviews Smith emphasizes the significance of both to her project.

It is important to note that the projects of Kandinsky and Matisse deviate significantly from each other, insofar as the former is best remembered for his

abstractions, while the latter always remained, in some sense, figurative. Kandinsky also tried to discover the symbolic significance of specific colours through “scientific” experiments. This goal was antithetical to Matisse’s more radical attempt to develop colour arrangements that would produce emotional responses independent of symbolic meaning.¹⁶⁸ In this respect, Smith’s aims are in sympathy with those of Matisse. The comparison is significant because although Matisse’s achievement as a colourist is recognized, the emphasis on spatial issues in the historicization of visual modernism diminishes the importance of colour as a key problematic in Western art, and more specifically, how experiments with compositional space explore colour relations.¹⁶⁹ In a history where Matisse is considered influential, but somewhat of an “eccentric modernist,” a term Svetlana Boym applies to modernists who do not fit neatly into teleological histories, it is not surprising that the iconoclasm of the CAS is under-theorized.¹⁷⁰

In her examination of Giotto’s paintings, Kristeva nominates colour – which belongs to the domain of “instinctual drives”¹⁷¹ – as the primary agent for effecting the semiotic eruptions that exceed the limits of language. As a psychoanalyst, Kristeva’s interest in aesthetics is primarily in the subject’s response to the art object, and not with re-writing art history. But this goal brings insight to the relative absence, until recently, on the place of affect in visual art. For Kristeva, the art work produces sensory pleasure because it is a meeting point for the semiotic, maternal zone – the time in the subject’s history prior to language – and the symbolic, paternal zone of language and social strictures. Even when colour is “pulled from the unconscious into a symbolic order,” that is, when it is

framed by a composition's narrative economy, it "escapes censorship."¹⁷² Kristeva recognizes that figurative compositions operate on two registers: the representational image and abstract colour.

Jill Bennett explores the political possibilities inherent in the two registers, arguing that when forms are "unfettered by narrative framing, the affective devices they deploy are not subordinated to prescribed or didactic ends, but work to stimulate in a different way."¹⁷³ This does not mean, however, that mimetic forms necessarily reproduce the conservative orthodoxies that Smith sometimes feared. The deadening effects described by Bennett refer to narrative in cinema, not painting.¹⁷⁴ The difficulty stems from the fact that even when artists experiment with colour to produce semiotic events, the focus on biography, formalist lineages, and issues of representation in art history emphasize the rational rather than the "feminine irrational" in aesthetic choices. Although Smith did not fully recognize it herself, her commitment to modernist aesthetics – and her exploration of the affective potential of painting in particular – was, in and of itself, a radical refutation of the masculinist, nationalist and Marxist orthodoxies that would subordinate a formalist concern with the relations among aesthetic experience, ontology and political consciousness for specific didactic ends.

Politicizing Memory: An Affective engagement with the Art Object

It might be tempting to conclude that representational painting helps to make sense of affect by converting it into emotion. Brennan, however, warned against the

anatomization of sensory experience into categories of affects and emotions. In the “classic” definition, affects are understood as transitory “surges of emotion or passion,”¹⁷⁵ whereas feelings and emotions interpret these sensory states (5, 116). Emotions “as sensory states produced by thought” enjoy a harmonious relationship to reason, whereas affects which produce “interruptive thoughts” are opposed to it (116). Affect is “thoughtless” and feelings are “thoughtful (116); the latter is thought to provide “information about whether a state is pleasurable or painful” leading “to action.” But as Brennan herself points out “if feelings distinguish between pleasant and unpleasant sensations they must trace a logic in the flesh simultaneously with a logic in history”(116). We discover moral judgements, that is, the same thought and interpretation that converts affect into feelings, in the naming of *negative* affects. The seven deadly sins – pride, sloth, envy, lust, anger, gluttony, avarice – do not, after all, refer to acts, but to affects (21-22). The differentiation of affects as the pathologized other to feelings is not only a difficult, but politically untenable boundary to maintain. Brennan’s recovery of affect is useful to the theorization of modern painting as an assault on conventional, moralizing and hierarchical conceptions of affect, emotion and reason, an assault that promises a greater sensorial openness to the world of objects.

Admittedly, it is much easier to analyze the elements of design in *La Communiante* and *Little Girl in Blue* as the result of artistic training leading to reasoned decisions about balance and harmony than it is to theorize the semiotic events that might be produced by Smith’s intuitive choices. Jill Bennett ventures into these murky interpretive waters in her

examination of affect in international contemporary art dealing with political conflict and trauma. She argues that “although words can clearly serve sense memory” visual art can speak more directly of emotional events because vision itself “has a very different relationship to affective experience – especially to experience that cannot be spoken as it is felt.”¹⁷⁶ She elaborates that “the eye can function as a mute witness by means of which events register as eidetic memory images imprinted as sensation” (35); and she advances an aesthetics that considers how art “can produce a form of empathy that is more complex and considered than a purely emotional or sentimental reaction (24).” Drawing upon the work of Gilles Deleuze (following Proust, one of Smith’s favourite writers), she argues “that critical inquiry is not” motivated by a “love” of wisdom and disinterested judgements but “set in train when the jealous man is forced by the violence of his emotions to scrutinize the impression or sign, which itself produces affects” (37). For Bennett, Deleuze and Proust, intellectual detachment is a disavowal of envious affects, a disavowal that for bell hooks is politically motivated.¹⁷⁷ In the case of Jean-Michel Basquiat, she argues that critics who prefer to criticize the artist for his relationship to the art market than to respond emotionally to his canvases betray resistance to the political issues raised by his imagery. Similarly, the critics who use Basquiat’s intertextual references to Picasso as a sign of his endorsement of Primitivism disavow how the former’s ethnicity positions him in relation to the history of imperialism, slavery and colonization. As hooks points out, this strategy simultaneously implies Basquiat was racist, while subsuming him into a White canon (341-345). hooks’ argument is a caution against intellectually detached critiques that claim

to be political, while refusing to admit that interpretation is a politically situated practice that begins with affective responses. It is not insignificant that the failure of some critics to respond affectively to Basquiat signals a determination not to “see” the relationship of the past to the contemporary political situation in America (341-345). As I argued in previous chapters, a preoccupation with history is a key problematic in Lyman’s conception of “living modern art” and in Smith’s discovery of the Jungian collective unconscious (an affective bridge between the past and present) in the faces of children. The tendency in art criticism to focus on Smith’s personal life betrays an aversion to confronting that which is troubling in Canadian and Québec history. What is needed in art history is more theorization of the “seeing-feeling” that Jill Bennett and others have shown defines our relationship to visual culture.¹⁷⁸

Expanding the Emotional Field

I have not yet tackled the question of how affective colour and the representational image cohere in Smith. In a joint interview with Smith (1930), Jean Palardy elaborated the association of an aesthetic sensibility with emotional capacities as a historically situated activity:

La beauté se trouve partout; il s’agit de la voir. Un fruit, une fleur, une feuille, une branche, un brin d’herbe sont des objets de beauté. Elargissons le champ de nos émotions esthétiques, en sachant voir cette beauté et la comprendre. Aimons aussi notre époque, puisque c’est celle où nous vivons.¹⁷⁹

Palardy’s comment suggests that the function of painting is not to *depict* emotions, but to

produce the conditions for new emotions to emerge. This goal explains why the affective capacity of painting is not necessarily “colonized” by the representational image, as Smith sometimes worried; regardless of whether the composition is figurative or non-figurative it is the formal elements that create mood. The incitement to expand the field of emotions suggests that the problem of modern alienation stems from the inability to discern and cathect to beauty in the natural and human environment. The “beauty” invoked by Palardy and Smith is not found in the benignly pleasing banality of commodity culture, but in that which escapes it to provoke the eruption of sublimated sensations. For them, like Marcuse, the Marxist indictment of “the beautiful” as emblematic of “bourgeois aesthetics” is wrong-headed. Although Marcuse admits that “it seems irresponsible, snobbish to speak of the Beautiful in the face of the necessities of the political struggle,” he argues for the “radical potential” of the “erotic quality of the Beautiful.” Marcuse’s conception of the erotic does not refer to explicitly sexual imagery (although it does not exclude it since he condemns the “petty bourgeois’ hatred of sex”),¹⁸⁰ but to aesthetic objects which encourage sensual and emotional responses. His argument that this quality “represents the pleasure principle” which “rebels against the prevailing reality principle of domination” (62) elucidates the sense in which I believe Palardy and Smith understood the radical potential of the beautiful as a field of emotion.

CAS member Fritz Brandtner similarly urged artists to search for the “emotional content” in nature.¹⁸¹ For Surrey, the principal concern of painting was to address modern alienation by capturing the urban subject’s solitude: “Car, dans les grandes villes, on est

toujours seul. Ce n'est pas comme dans les villages." He elaborated that painting "est la poésie d'une certaine ambiance de la ville. Et autrefois, dans la ville, il y avait des animaux; aujourd'hui, les seuls être vivants dans la ville sont les hommes."¹⁸² Surrey's discovery of the longing for a rural past and lost animal plenitude in "urban moods" helps to explain why some modernists turned to regional themes to explore the affective potential of painting. Again, nostalgia does not necessarily signal a reactionary regionalism, but can provide an antidote to "the deadening, passifying affects of modern times" described by Brennan.¹⁸³ Members of the CAS strived for what Jill Bennett describes as a "poetics of sense memory," as a process of "continuous negotiation of a present with interminable links to the past." A poetics of sense memory, unlike History, does not involve "*speaking of* but *speaking out of* a particular memory or experience – in other words, speaking from the body sustaining sensation."¹⁸⁴

Surrey and Brandtner's focus on mood differs from Lyman and Palardy who locate the emotional exclusively in the artist. For them, a formalist exploration of their own sensations leads to the discernment of the beauty intrinsic to nature, whereas for Brandtner, as for Heidegger, nature itself can make claims to having "moods." Nevertheless, the two perspectives are not a fixed opposition but two poles in one more of the modernist dialectics I discussed in Chapter Two. Brennan's discussion of affectively charged "atmospheres" proves that affect and emotions represent a somatic exchange with no single point of origin. The painter as *rhythmanalyst* is a medium that transmits both her own sensations and those emitted by her objects of study. Smith's exploration of the

Jungian unconscious in the faces of children, and her titling of the portrait *L'Ennui*, 1937 (fig. 28) suggest that her perspective intersects with those of Surrey and Brandtner.

One might raise the objection that Smith chose human subjects because she distinguished between the expressive capacities of humans and inanimate objects; however, her still-life, *Le Calme*, 1975 (fig. 42) leaves open the question of whether Smith differentiated between the human and non-human. The title signals that “mood” is the subject of the painting, but it is unclear where this mood originates for the artist. Although the horizontal composition, absence of outline, and subdued tonal contrasts speak a silent tranquility, do these formalist choices reflect the artist’s response to the objects, or her desire to invent a space of quiet contemplation based upon her sensations of another space? As “aesthetic theory,” Smith’s meditations on the social and natural environment in her memoir suggest that deciding this question is less important than recognizing that, either way, her relationship to the world of objects reflects a Romanticist preoccupation with the affects produced by those objects. In one passage, she discerns the uncanny stigmata of a villager’s sexual abuse of his daughter in the space where the violence occurred:

His house was pointed out to us, a big house perched high on the hill at the entrance to the village, the exterior painted a lurid orange, as though to flaunt the violence within. A few years later, the girl married a young man from a neighbouring village, burying her past under motherhood a dozen times over, and the house gradually faded to a benign shade of pink.¹⁸⁵

Smith’s *Romantic* rendering of the crime scene should not be mistaken for a *romanticization* of it. Indeed, her comment that the tragedy was not an “unusual

occurrence in the village” (67) politicizes the situation of girls and women for whom their was no escape from familial violence but through marriage or the Convent, institutions that were not themselves free of abuses of power. Smith’s aesthetic response reflects the *rhythmanalyst’s* conviction in the political value of an energetic openness to the phenomenological. Indeed, Smith’s description of writing and painting as processes in which she created “from the pictures in [her] mind,” and that she “could never write or paint from imagination,” but relied instead “on life” asserts just such an orientation.¹⁸⁶ In spite of their ostensible differences, what emerges in the comparison of CAS members is that they were concerned with the capacity of painting to reproduce the “seeing-feeling” we experience in dreams, where even the ordinary is never concerned with mimesis, but with communicating the powerfully associative meanings that we sometimes cannot, or prefer not to, confront in waking life.

Smith’s theorization of children’s faces as metonymic embodiments of the history of human suffering reflects her modernist conception of the aesthetic as both eternal and historical. In this way, she aligns herself with the theorist of “modern life” who claimed that “beauty is always and inevitably of a double composition.” Baudelaire insisted on a “historical theory of beauty” which recognized that “beauty is made up of” not only “an eternal, invariable element” but also a “relative, circumstantial element” which consists of the “age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions.” Without the second element, “digestion or appreciation” of the first would be “beyond our powers.” The eternal comes to us through “discipline”; he offers religion as an example of that which the ephemeral both “veils” and

expresses. The latter comes to us “if not by fashion, at least by the particular temperament of the artists.”¹⁸⁷ Smith herself claimed that as an artist “one has to look into oneself. Even if it is banal and ordinary. If it is your own ..., well if you are bound to achieve anything, that’s the only way to do it.”¹⁸⁸ By distinguishing between her own sensations and those of her subjects she appears to differ from Brandtner’s Heideggerian framing of the relationship of ontology to the ontic.¹⁸⁹ The affinity between Smith and Baudelaire’s conception of the aesthetic has feminist implications when we consider Kristeva’s theorization of feminine time in similarly dualistic terms, which, together, form an opposition to masculine historical time. While the latter is defined by teleological, sequential, and progressive narrative structures, “Women’s time,” which is defined by both cyclical time (repetition) and monumental time (eternity), suggests surprising affinities to Baudelaire’s temporal frame.¹⁹⁰ Although Kristeva’s focus on temporality in female subjectivity differs from Baudelaire’s concern with the historical dimension of aesthetic experience, the intersections of these two theorizations of temporality provide another example of how the *feminine* defines a *modernist* sensibility.¹⁹¹ Together, the CAS members’ differing conceptions of the emotional advance Baudelaire’s “historical theory of beauty” as the transmission of both collective and subjective desires. On the one hand, Brandtner suggests that feelings have an eternal or universal dimension. On the other, Lyman, Smith, and Palardy conceive of the artist as a medium that contributes the “relative, circumstantial element” to the aesthetic.

Indivisuals: The Modern Portrait as Semiotic Event

If the critical response that I discussed in the previous chapter is any indication, Smith's portraits were her most successful works in "expanding the field of emotion." But what are the political implications when portraits become the object cause of semiotic eruptions? How might these painterly events lead to revolution? Smith believed that new imaging technologies freed traditional painting for modernist experimentation: "Grâce à l'art photographique, les jours de l'artiste conventionnel sont choses du passé." Photography transformed the function of portraiture: "Aujourd'hui, dans un portrait, on recherche la ressemblance du sujet, mais une ressemblance composite et surtout l'individualité de l'artiste [...] Le portraitiste qui fait oeuvre d'art maintenant est celui qui choisit les têtes à sa guise et les peint en prenant pour seul critère son idéal." As the new medium's documentary capacity liberated the painter from the conventional demand for "likeness," the portrait had to become "une chose *vivante*; ce doit être une interprétation et non une simple reproduction de traits à un moment donné. Avec la perfection à laquelle a atteint la photographie aujourd'hui, c'est un non sens de peindre un portrait qui ne retient qu'une expression momentanée," [emphasis mine].¹⁹² The modernist quest for universal principles finds an ideal vehicle in a genre that not only immortalizes specific historical subjects, but the contemporary artist's "imagination."¹⁹³ Even as she anticipates Barthes' theorization of photography as a medium that mortifies as it immortalizes the evanescent body,¹⁹⁴ she recognizes that in the age of mechanical reproduction portraiture can be resuscitated by the *rhythm analyst* as a site of an energetic collaboration between artist and

subject, a process with the potential to produce “living things;”¹⁹⁵ and in the shift from likeness to *living thing*, the portrait now makes greater ontological claims. This raises the question of what these “*indivisuals*” might want?¹⁹⁶ The fact that spectators seem to discover appeals for cathexis in Smith’s portraits provides an important clue that we are entering the realm of memory. As Jill Bennett reminds us, memory is distinct from history in that it “is neither that possessed by the individual [...], nor that which is representational or representable [...]; it is rather the dynamic of contact.”¹⁹⁷ For her, art’s ability to “sustain sensation” does “not turn on its capacity to “signify” history, or to “embody the trace of the individual subject or event” (18). Instead, it is “the sensation arising in the space that is its operative element”(18). Just as Marcuse urged an attentiveness to “the paradoxical relation of art to time” (that art belongs simultaneously to the past as formalized memory and present as sensation),¹⁹⁸ Bennett does not locate painting’s political potential in pictorial representation, but in its capacity to produce an event: “affective imagery promotes a form of thought that arises from the body, that explores our affective investment, and that ultimately has the potential to” challenge “our habitual modes of perception” (24, 44). Foucault might have been right to claim that the repressed unconscious is a culturally shared fantasy, but as Brennan pointed out “the effects of repression are real. Repression, after all, is the energetic repudiation of an idea.”¹⁹⁹ Affective responses to Smith’s portraits provide occasions for meditating on these repudiations. “Seeing-feeling” for her rural subjects forces a reconsideration of the identity thinking and nationalist/regionalist narratives that, like the universalism applied to

Basquiat, de-politicize our understanding of the relation of the past to contemporary politics. The demand of Smith's portraits is a demand for connection that requires feeling for the past in the present.

1. Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000), 117.
2. Andrew Tibor Princz, "Press Release: *To Seize the Light.*" Centre D'exposition Baie-Saint-Paul for Exhibition Jori Smith: 24 June-12 September, 1994 in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
3. Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec 1919-1939* (Québec: Éditions Nota Bene, 1998), 215.
4. Although she did not belong to the CAS, her comments refer to artists who did. Donald Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View: 1947-1980* (Montréal: Sir George Williams Art Galleries of Concordia University, 1981), 24.
5. Fernand Préfontaine, "Le Sujet en art," *Le Nigog*, no.2 (February 1918): 44.
6. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 143.
7. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 2-9, 109, 142-143, 148-158.
8. Brandon, *Art or Memorial: The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art* (University of Calgary Press, 2006), 43.
9. Signatories Borduas, Pierre Gauvreau, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Louise Renaud, and Jean-Paul Riopelle were also members of the CAS; and at least two other signatories, Marcel Barbeau and Fernand Leduc participated in CAS exhibitions. For the complete list of signatories see Chapter Two. Ray Ellenwood's comprehensive history of *Refus Global* discusses the role of each of the participants, as well as the artistic activity that preceded and followed the publication of the manifesto. See *Egregore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1992), xii.
10. Maillard was principal of the École des beaux-arts in Montréal. For a discussion of Maillard's views see the review article of Charles Hill's *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* by François-Marc Gagnon in "La peinture des années trente au Québec/Painting in Quebec in the Thirties," *Journal of Canadian Art History*, Vol. III no.1-2 (Fall 1976): 2-20.
11. Citing Virginia Nixon, Esther Trépanier argues that the association continues to inform the interpretation of regionalism in the art history of Anglophone Canada,

Peinture et modernité, 216.

12. See Chapter Three for a discussion of xenophobic responses to the Group that associated French modernist influences with German imperialism.
13. Quoted in François-Marc Gagnon, "La peinture des années trente au Québec/Québec Painting in the Thirties," 9.
14. He targets government programs that promoted local handicrafts for the tourist trade. See Chapter Two and Chapter Five for an elaboration of Lyman's views.
15. Gilles Lapointe et Raymond Montpetit, *Paul-Émile Borduas, photographe: Un regard sur Percé, Été 1938* (Saint-Laurent: Éditions Fides, 1998), 24.
16. Ellenwood, *Egregore: A History of the Montréal Automatist Movement*, 7.
17. As Gilles Lapointe points out, the fact that Borduas took great care in preserving a copy of "Poison in the Well" (Lyman's indictment of the impact of the tourist industry and government sponsored training programs in an article which appeared in *The Montrealer*, Sept. 1, 1937) gives a fair indication that he agreed with Lyman. Lapointe et Montpetit, *Paul-Émile Borduas, photographe*, 12. The authors argue that his experiences in Gaspé helped to concretize Borduas' ambivalence toward his rural roots, an ambivalence generated by the protectionist nationalism I am describing. They also examine the importance of his black and white photographs to the development of his mature painting (13-15).
18. Lapointe et Montpetit, *Paul-Émile Borduas, photographe: Un regard sur Percé, Été 1938*, 24.
19. He came to Montréal to speak to the alumni of the École des beaux-arts, and accepted an invitation to visit École du meuble where Borduas was teaching. He later met Lyman, taught classes on religious art at the École du meuble, and in early 1941 assisted in a series of lectures on modern art organized by the École and the CAS. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal 1939-1948* (Edmonton: The Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980), 22.
20. In père Couturier we find affinities to Lyman's conception of "living modern art." Paraphrasing Jacques de Tonnancour, Christopher Varley asserts that père Couturier "insisted that the essential quality of a successful artwork was not so much what it looked like but whether it lived or not – by which he meant that it must say and mean something," *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal 1939-1948*, 22.

21. David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff, *Contemporary Canadian Art* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers and Toronto: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1983), 19. See also Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 131-132.
22. The “Indépendents” was held at the Galerie Municipale in Québec City from April 26 to May 3, and reassembled as “Peinture Moderne” at Henry Morgan and Company in Montréal from May 16-28, 1941. All of the eleven artists featured in the spring of 1941 exhibition “Independents,” organized by père Couturier, were CAS members: Borduas, Marie [Simone-Mary] Bouchard, Stanley Cosgrove, Louise Gadbois, Eric Goldberg, John Lyman, Louis Muhlstock, Alfred Pellán, Goodridge Roberts, Smith and Philip Surrey. The foreword was slightly revised for the Montréal exhibition. Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal 1939-1948*, 22.
23. Rosalind Pepall, “Jori Smith: A Painter of Instinct and Passion,” in *Jori Smith A Celebration*, curator Karen Antaki (Montréal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 1997), 17-18.
24. Jori Smith, “Interview by Charles Hill,” 16 June 1974 (10), transcript Cyndie Campbell 1993, in “Artists Files: Jori Smith,” Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
25. Smith, “Interview by Charles Hill,” 7.
26. Marie-Alain Couturier, O.P., *Art et Catholicisme* (Westmount, Montréal: Éditions de l’arbre, 1941), 77.
27. Esther Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernity/Jewish Painters and Modernity: Montréal 1930-1945* (Montreal: Centre Saidye-Bronfman, 1987), 78-79 n.8.
28. I encountered different dates for Maillard’s tenure. The dates I cite appear on the webpage for “Fonds d’archives de l’école des beaux-arts de Montréal” at UQAM. See [www.archives.uqam.ca/pages/archives_privées/genere_rdaq.asp?varcote=5P - 17k - 1](http://www.archives.uqam.ca/pages/archives_privées/genere_rdaq.asp?varcote=5P-17k-1).
29. Few sources provide a detailed biography for Palardy. For a chronology, see Roger Blais, *Jean Palardy: Peintre témoin de son Époque* (Montréal: Stanké, 1993).
30. Gagnon, “La peinture des années trente au Québec/Québec Painting in the Thirties,” 10.
31. Charles Hill, *Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 2.
32. Gagnon, “La peinture des années trente au Québec/Québec Painting in the Thirties,” 8.

33. Jean Palardy, "Les Jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy," *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, Samedi 17 Mai, 1930, in "Artists' Files: Jori Smith," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
34. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité*, 74. For a brief analysis of the art critics who represented these views see Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 132.
35. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 271, 229-230.
36. Marilyn Jean McKay, *A National Soul: Canadian Mural Painting 1860s-1930s* (Montréal-Queen's University Press, 2002), 196.
37. See Robert Ayre, "Murals in our Public Buildings," *Saturday Night* 55, May 25, 1940: 2; Grace A. Caughlin, "Woodstock Reaction to Murals," *Maritime Art* 2 (December 1941): 39; Pegi Nicol MacLeod, "Adventure in Murals," *Maritime Art* 2, no.2 (December 1941): 37-38. The latter two articles consider MacLeod's mural, and the public response to it. Smith's mural is the focus in Robert Ayre and Donald Buchanan ed., "Games of Québec in a Lively Mural," *Canadian Art* 2, no.2 (December 1944-January 1945): 68-69. The editors discuss several artists in "New Canadian Murals," *Canadian Art* 5, no.2 (Christmas 1947): 68-70.
38. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 237-240.
39. Jean-Paul Lemieux participated as a non-member in the CAS exhibition of 1940. For a brief description of JANS see Guy Robert, *Lemieux* (Montréal: Stanké, 1975), 28-29. He and his wife, Madeleine Desrosiers, took up residence in different villages in the Charlevoix region before settling at l'Île aux Coudres. Smith offered her house in Petite-Rivière to Lemieux while she was in France during the spring of 1947. See Édith-Anne Pageot, "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon" (Ph.D diss., Université de Montréal, 2004), 45-47.
40. Biographical accounts are misleading about the dates of Lemieux' tenure at the École. Here is Guy Robert's time line: Lemieux attended the school full time from September 1926 to the spring of 1929. He returned in 1931 before graduating in 1934. *Lemieux*, 23-36.
41. The mural no longer exists; and unfortunately the only reproduction I found appears in library (reference) copies of *Canadian Art*. There is little point in reproducing the black and white magazine photograph on a poor quality library copier since the layout on facing pages already seriously diminishes the sense of the original mural. Robert Ayre and Donald Buchanan ed., "Games of Québec: A lively Mural," *Canadian Art*, Vol. 2 no. 2 (Dec.44): 68-69.

42. Marylin Jean McKay, *A National Soul: Canadian Mural Painting 1860s-1930s* (Montréal-Queen's University Press, 2002), 196.
43. McKay, *A National Soul: Canadian Mural Painting 1860s-1930s*, 195. McKay's study is important because it is the first to provide a much needed history of mural painting in Canada. However, some crucial omissions limited the usefulness of the study to my project. For example, although she does discuss works that no longer exist, Smith's mural is not mentioned. Further, although there are references to the murals of Marian Scott and Pegi Nicol MacLeod, these works like those of some other female muralists are only mentioned in passing. Further, it would be easy to overlook Scott because her name does not appear in the index (I searched the appendix to find her). Additionally, the author's depoliticized approach to her material has the effect of projecting a certain apolitical naiveté onto art critics and artists. This problem is also evident in McKay's "Canadian Political Art in the 1930s: *A Form of Distancing*," in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. Alejandro Anreus, Linden Diana and Jonathan Weinberg (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2006), 71-94, 317-320.
44. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 246. To complicate matters, as Trépanier points out, portraits set against the rural Québec landscape became associated with Anglophone Canada's conception of region within a larger concept of nation. For a discussion of the figurative compositions by Edwin Holgate, Prudence Heward and Andre Biéler see *Peinture et modernité*, 219, 223, 229-231.
45. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930* (Manotick, ON.: Penumbra Press, 1998), 73.
46. See Terry Copp, "The Health of the People: Montreal in the Depression Years," *Norman Bethune: His Times and his Legacy/son époque et son message*, ed. David A. Shephard and Andrée Lévesque for The Bethune Foundation/La Fondation Bethune (Ottawa: The Canadian Public Health Association, 1982), 131-2.
47. In Québec, poor economic conditions were exacerbated by the fact that, in comparison to other North American cities, Montréal demonstrated one of the worst records for providing food, shelter and healthcare for unemployed and lower income families. Rural families were even less likely to receive support from their poorer local communities, and many migrated to the cities in search of either employment or government support. Although Montréal eventually developed a Relief Commission similar to Toronto's Municipal Department of Public Welfare, assistance rates and financial resources were generally higher and the unemployment rates lower in Toronto than in any other Canadian city. Terry Copp, "The Health of the People: Montreal in the Depression Years," 129-137.

48. Trépanier suggests that besides offering an endless supply of visually interesting subjects, the city was more accessible than the “wilderness” during the Depression when the ability of many artists to travel became severely restricted. *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity: Montreal 1930-1945*, 34-42.
49. Hill, *Painting in the Thirties*, 16. Miller Britain is one exception; he appears on the membership lists of 1942 and 1948, but lived in New Brunswick. See his painting *Rummage Sale* (1940) in Varley’s *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 49. For a discussion of socially conscious works by artists living outside Montréal, see Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 197.
50. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 113, 116-117.
51. Andrus, *Ghitta-Caiserman-Roth*, 22.
52. Andrus, *Ghitta-Caiserman-Roth*, 24. Notably, Caiserman-Roth emphatically rejected idealized conceptions of rural life as antithetical to modernism.
53. James Purdie, “Art: the Survivors of the Harsh Decade Look Back,” *The Globe and Mail*, 3 June 1975: 15.
54. Quoted in Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View: 1947-1980*, 24-25, 69.
55. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 24.
56. The “Padlock Act” of 1937 provided the legal means to close any site and arrest those who published or disseminated communist and other “seditious” materials. While the law effectively banned leftist meetings, Adrien Arcand’s National Social Christian Party was openly anti-Semitic. The restriction of civil liberties and the rise of anti-Semitism mirrored fascistic movements in Europe. Gagnon, “La peinture des années trente au Québec/Québec Painting in the Thirties,” 2-20.
57. Quoted in Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 72. According to Trépanier, Caldwell speculates that the greater “economic and political power” of Anglophones “allowed them to be anti-Semites without feeling obliged to defend their position.” She also reminds us that “McGill University maintained, more or less officially, a fixed quota on the number of jews studying law or medicine.”
58. See Trépanier for an explanation of the generational differences. The third generation, which included Sylvia Ary, Rita Briansky, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, Alfred Pinsky and Moe Reinblatt were the most politicized. They were not CAS members,

Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity, 26-28 and 50 n.28.

59. Ibid.

60. The first generation of Jewish artists described by Trépanier included CAS members Alexander Bercovitch, Eric Goldberg, and Bernard Mayman. The second generation included Louis Muhlstock, Harry Mayerovitch, Ernst Neumann as well as Fanny and Rose Wiselberg, Jack Beder, Sam Borenstein, and Herman Heimlich. Both CAS and non-CAS members exhibited at the Montréal Art Association, see Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 26.

61. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 133.

62. For reproductions of: *Poor People* c.1943 by Ernst Neumann, *Unemployed* c.1949 by Sylvia Ary, *The Soup Kitchen* (compositions sharing the same title by Rita Briansky, Louis Muhlstock and Harry Mayerovitch) see Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 53-54.

Some critics and artists saw potential for political and social commentary in portraiture and figurative compositions. For an extended discussion of these issues see Chapter Two of my M.A. Thesis, "Interfaces of the Portrait: Liminality and Dialogism in Canadian Portraiture During the Wars" (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1996). For a discussion of the importance of the figure to Montreal's Jewish community see Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 60-62. More recently, Trépanier expanded on the relationship between modernism as a crisis of subjectivity and representations of the body in the social environment by situating figurative works by Québec artists in relation to the return to the figure in Europe and the United States. See *Peinture et modernité*, 196-197.

63. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity*, 66 n.9.

64. Globally, these paranoid representations of women should be situated in relation to the anxieties produced by the women's suffrage movement and immigration from the colonies. The presence of women, "other" linguistic communities, non-Whites and non-Christians threatened the supposed stability of Western nations. While cities seemed to promise steady employment and access to a middle class lifestyle, poverty, crime and prostitution became the reality for the many uneducated workers, immigrants and women who migrated to the cities. As the most visibly abject presence on city streets, these groups represented the material embodiment of the worst of modern life. These social factors informed the primitivist nostalgia for the imagined simplicity and harmony of non-industrialized life; and the vogue for so-called "primitive" objects and lifestyles extended beyond European rural communities to non-industrialized nations who were

imagined to occupy a lower position on Darwin's evolutionary chain. I consider the nationally specific forms of this primitivist nostalgia in Canada in the two previous chapters.

65. I discuss Kristeva's theory in greater depth in my discussion of colour and affect below. See "Giotto's Joy," *Desire in language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez and trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia, University Press, 1980), 219.

66. Charles Hill, Louis Muhlstock, Marian Scott, Leo Kennedy, "They could split rock ...": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," in *Norman Bethune: His Times and His Legacy, son époque et son message*, ed. David A. Shephard and Andrée Lévesque for The Bethune Foundation (Ottawa: The Canadian Health Association, 1982), 115-118.

67. Charles Hill, Louis Muhlstock, Marian Scott, Leo Kennedy, "They could split rock ...": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," 116.

68. Muhlstock remembered his exchange with O'Brien when they first met in Viger Square. When the artist asked why he kept himself apart from others, O'Brien explained that their excessive chatter "was not conversation." When Muhlstock hired Jos Lavallée, an unemployed day labourer, as a model the latter was looking for work at the corner of Bleury and St. Catherine Street. Lavallée sat for Muhlstock more than once: *Vieux Canadien* and *Supper for Two* are two of the products of these sittings. Jennifer Couëlle, *Un Dessinateur: Louis Muhlstock/Louis Muhlstock: The Draughtsman* (The Art Gallery Sadye Bronfman Centre, 1989), 34.

69. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et Modernité*, 68 n.23.

70. Trépanier, *Peintres Juifs et Modernité*, 46.

71. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 229.

72. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 201-209.

73. Quoted in Barbara Meadowcroft, *Jori Smith* (Montréal: Galerie Dominion, 1993), unpaginated.

74. This analysis of *La Communiant*e expands on points I made in my Masters Thesis. See, "Interfaces of the Portrait: Liminality and Dialogism in Canadian Women's

Portraiture Between the Wars” (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1996), 104-105, 111-113 .

75. See Chapter Three for an elaboration of the distinction between monuments and memorial sites.

76. Roland Barthes theorizes the punctum as the unexpected element in a photograph that disrupts conventional codes (the studium). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

77. *Montreal Star*, Nov. 18, 1964, in “Artists’ Files: Jori Smith,” National Gallery of Canada.

78. Édith-Anne Pageot, “Jori Smith, une figure de la modernité picturale québécoise: Étude d’un cas: le portrait d’enfant,” *Globe: Revue internationale d’études québécoise*, 3 no 2 (2000): 171-186.

79. Numerous sociological studies have shown that childhood is an invention that varies in meaning according to specific historical, cultural and socio-economic formations. See Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, Vintage Books, 1962). Christine M. Boyer has shown how social reform movements in the United States, as early as the nineteenth century, brought attention to child development. Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983). See the previous chapter for a brief discussion of how similar convictions informed Montréal artists’ involvement in art education for children during the Depression. For a brief history of the Children’s Creative Art Centre see Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 102-103, 117.

80. Meadowcroft, *Jori Smith: Selected Works 1932-1993*.

81. To put this in psychoanalytic terms, just as gender is the “forced choice” for biologically constituted subjects, the portrait memorializes a formative trauma for the modern subject. Childhood, like other identity categories, is premised on the differentiation of biologically constituted bodies. For a discussion of the portrait in terms of the focus on erogenic zones, see Lefebvre’s, *Writings on Cities*, 30-33.

82. See the previous chapter for a discussion of the government incentives and programs designed to keep women, literally, on the farm.

83. Trépanier argues that, generally speaking, portraiture of the thirties, especially compositions that focus on “traits psychologiques,” countered, rather than supported, an

idealized regionalism because they suggest the harsh reality of the Depression. Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité au Québec*, 229, 231.

84. Danielle Juteau, "From Nation-Church to Nation-State: Evolving Sex-Gender Relations in Québec Society," in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Minoo Moallem (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 148.

85. Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F. R. Scott* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987), 137.

86. We can see the connection between the high birthrate during the Depression and an increase in the number of women who took orders in the following decade. In 1931, 20.4% of married women in Québec had six or more children; and by 1941, 3% of all women in Québec aged fifteen (mostly from large families) were nuns. Danielle Juteau, "From Nation-Church to Nation-State, 146-149. The more saddening statistic is that Montréal's five hundred brothels of the 1920s grew considerably in number during the 1930s and 1940s. Esther Trépanier, *Univers urbains: la représentation de la ville dans l'art québécois du XXe siècle* (Québec: musée du Québec, 1998), 27.

87. I discussed the piece briefly in the previous chapter. The haut-relief sculpture by an unknown artist was donated by Smith to the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec in Montréal. The photograph appears on the "VMC Image Gallery" of the CHIN website, and can be accessed by entering Smith's name. See VMC Image Gallery, <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>.

88. This work is part of his *Empty Room* series.

89. See Muhlstock's description of the neighbourhoods where he grew up after his family immigrated from Austro-Hungary when he was seven. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, "*They could split rock ...*": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Art Centre – A Conversation Piece," 114.

90. Trépanier makes this statement in *Jewish Painters and Modernity: Montréal 1930-1945* (Montréal: Centre Saidye-Bronfman, 1987), 46. Jennifer Couëlle and Monique Nadeau-Saumier express a similar view in *Louis Muhlstock: The Draughtsman*, 34-36.

91. Quoted in James Purdie, "Art: the Survivors of the Harsh Decade Look Back," *The Globe and Mail*, 3 June 1975, 15.

92. Trépanier elaborates that it is not only the absence of the human figure in these paintings, but their painterliness – the preoccupation with the effects of light, form and colour – that distances the works from their subject matter. She asks: “N’est-ce pas finalement par le dessin, qui autorise une notation plus immédiate du réel [...] que l’artiste témoigne surtout de ses positions sociales et humanistes?,” *Peinture et Modernité*, 209. Couëlle and Monique Nadeau-Saumier also believe that the immediacy of drawing lends itself to social commentary. See *Louis Muhlstock: The Draughtsman*, 34-36. Griselda Pollock presents a similar argument in her comparison of the photographs and drawings of Edward Mumby, claiming that the artist’s erotic desire manifests itself more directly in the latter medium. Pollock, “*With My Own Eyes: Fetishism, the Labouring Body, and the Colour of Sex*,” *Art History*, 17 no.3 (Sept. 1994): 342-382.
93. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 117.
94. Lefebvre conceives of rhythmanalysis as a “transdisciplinary project.” Just as Scott’s modernist revolutionaries include “creators” as well as “the politician or the economist,” the rhythmanalyst is “more aware of times than of spaces, of moods than of images, of the atmosphere than of particular spectacles, he is strictly speaking neither psychologist, nor a sociologist, nor anthropologist, nor economist,” Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 229.
95. “Diary 1939,” undated sheet quoted in Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 106 n. 44.
96. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 228-229.
97. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 229. According to the medical textbook I consulted, the proper spelling is (cardiac) *arrythmia*. See Byron Marshall Hyde, *The Clinical and Scientific Basis of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome* (Ottawa: The Nightingale Research Foundation, 1992), 376.
98. The art historians overlook the fact that such artists as Muhlstock viewed modernism in terms of a two pronged assault on conservatism; both formalism and social content represented politically motivated iconoclasm. Keeping this goal in focus leads to a different orientation to the paintings: one can still feel a proximity to the absent subjects in the form of melancholic empathy.
99. It is remarkable that under these circumstances artists managed to produce at all. Marian Scott remembered “one painter who used to go around to the back of Steinberg’s or Dominion stores and collect wilted vegetables ... to support himself.” Quoted in Cathy Hobart, “Art Transformed,” *Branching Out*, Vol. 12 no.1, 1980: 12, in “Artists’ Files: Marian Scott,” National Gallery of Canada. Although Smith did not recall how she saved

for her materials, Muhlstock remembers that many “couldn’t afford frames or canvas, and little paint, so we drew on Kraft wrapping paper that we obtained from friends who had factories, and we painted on stretched-out sugar bags (each costing \$.10) that we treated with a coat of size.” For Smith’s recollections see her “Interview with Charles Hill,” 12. Muhlstock’s comments are taken from Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, “*They could split rock ...*”: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children’s Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece,” 115.

100. Smith, “Interview with Charles Hill,” 11-12.

101. I say this because of the association of Oxfam, a famine relief agency, with poverty. Notably, this association is called into question by the curious fact that, although the organization was only established in Britain in 1942, and in Canada and Québec during the 1960s, the painting is dated 1930. Originally formed by a group of university students concerned about the famine in Greece resulting from the Nazi occupation during WWII, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief extended its relief efforts to refugees and displaced people across Europe. A major international non-governmental aid organization by 1960, it founded the Canadian Committee for World Relief in 1963. Oxfam-Québec, a permanent regional section of Oxfam-Canada, opened in 1968 to “address the interests of French speaking populations.” I consulted the official websites for Oxfam-International (www.oxfam.org), Oxfam-Canada (www.oxfam.ca), and Oxfam-Québec (www.oxfam.qc.ca/index_en.asp) for brief histories of the organization.

102. When Jori Smith described the challenge of eking out an existence during the 1930s, she singled out Scott for her generosity:

I know that what we had for a long time was this pupil, his name was Heckie Schanks, and he came every Saturday and he brought two dollars. And once he didn’t, he forgot the money. I’ll never forget that, that was awful. Fortunately we had wonderful friends who worried about us. Like the Scotts. I don’t know how many times we had dinner there. I have never forgotten that. She was the kindest person I have ever met. I remember once she discovered I was in bed with a terrible gripe, so she went back home and she cooked a chicken, she brought it along with all the fixings you know. That kind of a person.

Smith, “Interview with Charles Hill,” 12.

103. Smith, “Interview,” 3-4.

104. Smith, “Interview,” 14.

105. For a brief discussion of the relationship of communist politics to art production in Canada see Esther Trépanier, *Peinture et modernité*, 197-201.
106. Smith, "Interview with Charles Hill," 13.
107. In 1932, Frank Scott of the McGill Law Faculty and Frank Underhill of the University of Toronto were among the founders of the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). With J. S. Woodsworth, a labour MP from Manitoba as its first president, the CCF brought together workers, farmers, intellectuals, and artists like Smith, Palardy and Marian Scott who wanted democratically-instituted socialism. Fritz Brandtner, Louis Muhlstock and others contributed drawings and cartoons to the Marxist Journal *New Frontier*, and to the *Canadian Forum*, which became the mouthpiece of the LSR and the CCF. Hill, *Painting in the Thirties*, 16. Although formed primarily as a research group, the LSR issued a manifesto indicting capitalism, the core of which was incorporated into the so-called Regina manifesto of the Cooperative Commonwealth Party in July 1933. Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F.R. Scott*, 137. For a discussion of Marian Scott's involvement in both the CCF and the LSR, see Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 116-117
108. Bethune played a crucial part in bringing art communities in Montréal and Toronto together for this purpose, encouraging them to produce posters, and to organize exhibitions in support of the causes he defended. In 1938, they took part in exhibitions and auctions for the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (one of its goals was to raise funds to send Bethune with medical supplies to support the Republican army) and the Spanish Children's Relief Campaign.
109. Bethune, Henning Sorenson and Hazen Size organized a blood donor service and the Canadian Blood Transfusion Service to serve Madrid and other fronts. Between December 1936 and January 1937, Bethune also participated in several radio broadcasts from Spain to stimulate support for the loyalist cause. See Larry Hannant ed., *The Politics of Passion: Norman Bethune's Writing and Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 118-129.
110. The arts community hoped to raise political awareness through such projects as The Exhibition of Soviet Art (held under auspices of the "Friends of the Soviet Union") at Henry Morgan & Co. in Montreal from May 15th to June 1st, 1935. Committee members consisted of a small group of Anglophone and Francophone artists and critics open to modernity. See Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 116.
111. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy "They could split rock ...": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," 121.

112. Smith, "Interview with Charles Hill," 29.

113. Smith, "Interview with Charles Hill," 29. Almost ten years later, she expressed similar sentiments about WWII in a letter to Harry Orr McCurry: "I would like very much to be sent to some scene of action for first hand impressions. It is practically impossible to conceive the horrors of this war sitting in a studio reading the newspapers or listening to radio bulletins." It seems likely that Smith wrote to McCurry sometime in the winter of 1943 since he replied to her in March of that year. See "Letter from Jori Smith Palardy to Mr. McCurry," 5.41W War Records Applications R-S (Canadian War Art), National Gallery of Canada Fonds. Although McCurry hoped to arrange opportunities for women in Canada, he was skeptical about government support. As Director of the National Gallery he played an important role in securing war commissions for women and men. He not only lobbied the federal government, but also used part of the Gallery's budget to commission works for possible purchase. See "Letter to Mrs. Palardy," March 10, 1943, 5.41W War Records Applications R-S (Canadian War Art), National Gallery of Canada Fonds.

Monographs are the best sources on the war-time production of Canadian women artists. For an autobiographical example that focuses on the lives of women in the military, see Molly Lamb Bobak, *Double Duty: Sketches and Diaries of Molly Lamb Bobak, Canadian War Artist*, ed. Carolyn Gossage (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992). A shorter autobiographical account is provided in Pegi Nicol Macleod's article "Recording the Women's Services," *Canadian Art*, 2, no.2 (December 1944-January 1945): 48-51. For a very brief history of women's contributions to the war record, see Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1992), 55-58, 102-105. Terresa McIntosh provides a comprehensive history in "Other Images of War: Canadian Women Artists of the First and Second World Wars" (Masters Thesis: Carleton University, 1991). For sources on Canadian war art that include women, see Dean Oliver and Laura Brandon, *Canvas of War: Painting the Canadian War Experience, 1914-1945* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre in association with the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa and the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, Hull, 2001); and Joan Murray, *Canadian Artists of the Second World War* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1981).

114. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, "*They could split rock ...*": Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children's Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece," 120.

115. Smith, "Interview with Charles Hill," 13; See also, Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 117. I do not recall discovering a record of the works that Smith donated (and, in general she does not seem to have been very concerned with this sort of record keeping). It did not occur to me to check, until Dr. Barbara Godard suggested that I look for such documents at the Library and Archives Canada. Unfortunately, I had already completed

my research.

116. The W. P. A. (1935-1943) was a Depression era measure that employed women and men from diverse fields in infrastructural and public projects. At its peak, it employed three thousand artists in New York alone. Artists unionized after the formation of the program. See Audrey McMahan, "A General View of the W.P.A. Federal Art Project in New York City and State," *The New Deal Art Project/An Anthology of Memoirs*, ed. Francis V. O'Connor (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), 56.

Canadian artists would have to wait for The Kingston Conference of June 1941 to organize a national forum for their combined aesthetic and political interests. Conceived by André Biéler, the conference brought members of the artistic community together to discuss technical innovations and the artist's role in society. Within a few months of the conference recommendation, the Federation of Canadian artists (FCA) became a national organization with Biéler as president. They held their first meeting in May 1942. It was the first "inclusive" national organization of artists; before the FCA, all major organizations were restricted by region or media, and/or new members had to be elected by the existing membership. See Aba Bayefsky and Humphrey N. Milnes, "Fields of Force in Canadian Art, 1930-1980," in *The Arts in Canada: The Last Fifty Years*, ed. W.J. Keith and B-Z. Shek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Michael Bell and Frances K. Smith ed., *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1992); and Hélène Sicotte, "À Kingston, Il y a 50 Ans, La Conférence des artistes canadiens: débat sur la place de l'artiste dans la société," *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, 14 no.2 (Spring 1993): 28-49.

117. Quoted in Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 73. Tippett provides an overview of government incentives and other forms of institutional funding for the arts during the thirties, as well as a brief analysis of the attitudes of politicians at both the provincial and federal levels of government. See especially, her third chapter "A Mad Desire to Bring About State Control: Government Patronage and the Arts," 63-91, 205-213..

118. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 17.

119. Ibid.

120. Pepall, "Jori Smith: A Painter of Instinct and Passion," 16.

121. Smith, "Interview with Charles Hill, 9-10. For an elaboration of Lyman's thought see Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique québécois

de 1936 à 1942”; and Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society*, 9-12.

122. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 116.

123. Jori Smith recalled the spirit that informed the discussions of art and politics at the Lymans: “They liked to be surrounded by creative people. They had a sort of salon as they did in France. Open house Sunday afternoons, big tea parties, twenty, thirty people there. They entertained people like Marian Scott and her husband, ... and anyone who was willing to come, it was an open house. And it was quite interesting because you were free to wander about and talk to anyone you wished. Like a meeting place.” Smith, “Interview with Charles Hill, 9-10. Marian Scott met Norman Bethune at one such gathering, a relationship that would have an important impact on her creative development. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern*, 93-94.

124. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, “*They could split rock ...*”: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children’s Creative Art Centre – A Conversation Piece,” 120.

125. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 116.

126. Ibid.

127. Like other Canadian artists, they rarely used their painting as a political vehicle. For a survey that is critical of this absence in Canadian art, see Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a Peoples’ Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974).

128. Bethune continues: “He reminds the world of its dark ancestry, shows the present, and points the way to its new birth. He is at once the product and the preceptor of his time.” Bethune’s comments again signal how the past became politicized in visual modernism. Norman Bethune, “Letter From Madrid, May 5, 1937” reproduced in Roderick Stewart, *The Mind of Norman Bethune* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 70-72.

129. Quoted in Cathy Hobart, “Art Transformed,” *Branching Out*, 12 no.1 (1980): 13 in “Artists’ Files: Marian Scott,” Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

130. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 113.

131. As Christopher Varley points out, *Trouble* represents a departure from Lyman’s usual subjects, although his “uncharacteristic piece of social commentary” must have been “important” to him since he included it not only in the first CAS members show in December 1939, but the Eastern Group of Painters exhibition of 1940, and again under the title *Poverty* in a major show of Canadian art that toured the Eastern United States in 1942. See *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal 1939-1948*, 18. The painting, now

lost, is reproduced in Jerrold Morris, *The Nude in Canadian Painting* (Toronto: New Press, 1972).

132. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, “*They could split rock ...*”: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children’s Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece,” 113.

133. Hill, Muhlstock, Scott, Kennedy, “*They could split rock ...*”: Painting in Montreal in the 1930s, and the Children’s Creative Art Centre - A Conversation Piece,” 120.

134. At the time Caiserman was not yet Caiserman-Roth. She was still married to the artist Alfred Pinsky, whom she married in 1945 and divorced in 1958. She married the architect Max Roth in 1962. See Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View 1947-1980*, 9, 36.

135. Ghitta Caiserman executed explicit anti-militaristic commentary for a brief period during her student days in New York. For examples see Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View 1947-1980*, 21. Trépanier also discusses this aspect of Caiserman’s production in *Peintres Juifs et modernité/Jewish Painters and Modernity: Montreal 1930-1945*, 58.

136. The Marxist suspicion of bourgeois aestheticism cut across disciplinary lines. It is beyond the scope of this project to consider the debates in which leftist novelists, poets and dramatists participated. It is worth noting, however, that the debates associated with the politicization of literary production diverged significantly from those in the visual arts because in the latter, the concept of political “content” became associated with the agendas of reactionary conservatives or doctrinaire Marxists. For a consideration of the debates that framed literary production and drama in Anglophone Montréal see Candida Rifkind, “Labours of Modernity: The Literary Left in English Canada, 1929-1939” (Ph.D diss., York University, November 2003).

137. In Chapter Three I contrasted the aestheticism of European modernists with the Aestheticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Monroe Beardsley, “An Aesthetic Definition of Art,” in *What is Art?*, ed. Hugh Curtler (New York: Haven Press, 1983).

138. Quoted in Déry, “L’Influence de la critique de John Lyman,” 158.

139. Ibid.

140. Smith, “Interview with Charles Hill,” 7.

141. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 117.

142. Adorno argued that: “There is no denying that the antagonistic condition Marx called alienation was a powerful leaven for modern art. However modern art was not simply a replica or reproduction of that condition but has denounced it in no uncertain terms, transposing it into an *imago*. In so doing modern art became the opposite other of an alienated condition. The former was as free as the latter was unfree.” This translation of Adorno’s comments in *Aesthetic Theory* appears in Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 9.
143. Quoted in Déry, “L’Influence de la critique de John Lyman,” 158.
144. As I noted earlier, Smith herself suggested that her figurative works signalled a contradiction in the politicization of her aesthetic.
145. Carol Becker, *Zones of Contestation: Essays on Art, Institutions, Gender, and Anxiety* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 39.
146. See Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*.
147. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 6.
148. Becker, *Zones of Contestation*, 44.
149. Becker, *Zones of Contestation*, 40.
150. Ibid.
151. Lyman quoted in Déry, “L’Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique québécois de 1936 à 1942,” 69.
152. Lyman quoted in Déry, “L’Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique québécois de 1936 à 1942,” 148.
153. Quoted in Nancy Beale, “Visual Arts: Artist’s Passing Marks Cultural Chapter,” *The Citizen* in “Artists’ Files: Marian Scott,” Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
154. Smith quoted in “To Seize the Light,” *Press Release*.
155. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 117.
156. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 9.

157. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 10-11. Jill Bennett provides a possible answer to Brennan's question. She argues that skin helps to maintain the boundary between subject and other. Her anecdote about an art history student for whom paintings became intolerable after the loss of her surface skin sensation provides compelling evidence for Bennett's theory. The student felt overwhelmed by visual media because, in her view, the disability prevented her from differentiating her body from other objects. She speculated that spectators squirm during horror movies, for example, as a way of maintaining distance from what they are observing. Skin, then, prevents us from being absorbed into the field of vision; it is, therefore, constitutive of visual perception. Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 42-43.

158. Déry, "L'Influence de la critique de John Lyman dans le milieu artistique québécois de 1936 à 1942," 148.

159. Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art*, 97-101, 105 n.26. More specifically, she linked emotional experience to colour and design, 99.

160. The epigraph that introduces this chapter is taken from "To Seize the Light," *Press Release*.

161. Quoted in Jean Royer, "Philip Surrey, le solitaire en sa ville," *L'Action Quebec* (26 Fevrier 1966), page "B" in "Artists' Files: Philip Surrey," Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

162. Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 312. Interestingly, while Benjamin was drawn to Paul Klee's "angel of history," Sartre discovered an *angel of colour* in the same artist. Ball asserts that Sartre appreciated Klee primarily as a colourist, and quotes him as saying: "Klee is an angel who re-creates the miracles of this world." Ball does not provide the reference for Sartre's statement (Ball, 309).

The fact that Kandinsky experienced synesthesia (a perceptual condition in which two different sensory sensations are triggered simultaneously by the same stimulus) raises the interesting question of why he remained committed to his "semiotic" approach to colour. Synesthesia is most commonly experienced as "colour-hearing": the association of specific colours with timbral or pitch sensations (Ball, 22). I would have thought that this heightened sense of the involvement of more than one sense in the perception of colour and sound might have led Kandinsky toward a more embodied theory of colour. Kandinsky published his ideas in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* in 1912 (the English translation appeared in 1914). See Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

163. Smith, "Interview," 8.
164. Smith, "Interview," 10-11.
165. Smith, "Interview," 7.
166. Édith-Anne Pageot provides a short list of exhibitions, "Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon," 44.
167. In 1952, Matisse enthused over the emotional power of colour: "Colors win you over more and more. A certain blue enters your soul. A certain red has an effect on your blood pressure. A certain color tones you up. It's the concentration of timbres. A new era is opening." Quoted in Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Colour*, 301.
168. Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*, 305.
169. Modernist painting is frequently understood as the continuation of the exploration of pictorial space that began with the Renaissance invention of Euclidean space, leading to the flattening of space by such Post-Impressionists as Cézanne, and more radically in the Cubism of Picasso and Braque, culminating in the abstractions of Kandinsky and others.
170. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 30-1.
171. Julia Kristeva, "Giotto's Joy," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez and trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 219.
172. Kristeva, "Giotto's Joy," 220.
173. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 35.
174. Indeed, much of her book is devoted to the affective capacities of figurative drawing, painting, photography and mixed media.
175. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 5.
176. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 35.
177. hooks, bell, "Altars of Sacrifice: Re-membering Basquiat," in *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*, ed. Kimberly N. Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002).

178. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 41.
179. Léon Jalder, “Les Jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy,” *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, Samedi 17 Mai, 1930 in “Artists’ Files: Jori Smith,” Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.
180. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 67.
181. “Nature can be compared to a frame (the frame of life). It is the edge around the boundaries of experience. If we continue to consider only the frame of nature and not the emotional content, then we have not gained anything or used meaningfully the language of the painter. Art comes from character and personality more than from theory and imitation of nature.” Quoted in Helen Duffy and Frances K. Smith, *The Brave New World of Fritz Brandtner* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1982), 42.
182. Quoted in Royer, “Philip Surrey, le solitaire en sa ville.”
183. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 117.
184. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 38.
185. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 67. Although Smith describes the incest as a “seduction,” it is clear that she believes that the father subjected his daughter to violence.
186. In the previous chapter, I quote Smith’s comment, made in an interview with Pageot, more fully. She was responding to a question about the writing and editorial process. See “Images du sujet, du féminin et du masculin chez Smith, Roberts, Lyman et M.Gagnon,” 43.
187. Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), 3.
188. Smith, “Interview with Charles Hill,” 7.
189. Smith perhaps retains a Kantian understanding of the aesthetic, where the world of objects does not generate artistic expression, but emerges in the subject’s spiritual and rational interaction with the former. On the other hand, the Jungian influence in her thought signals a modernist re-theorization of Kantian spirituality as unconscious processes, and a further secularization of eighteenth century aesthetics. See Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Papers on Analytic Psychology*, ed. and trans. Constance E. Long (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox), 1920. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*,

trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961); and “*Analytic of the Beautiful*” from the “*Critique of Judgement*” with Excerpts from “*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Viewpoint, Second Book*,” trans. Walter Cerf (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). For an analysis that situates the ostensible universalism of Kantian aesthetics in relation to scientific rationalism, see Thierry De Duve, “On Postmodernism, Ethics, and Aesthetics in the Age of Global Markets,” in *Capital Culture: A Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art*, ed. Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 60-64.

190. See Julia Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 187-213.

191. Together Kristeva’s arguments about painting in “Giotto’s Joy,” avant-garde practices in her “Essay on Abjection,” and about female subjectivity in “Women’s Time” effect a feminist reworking of Baudelaire. See “Giotto’s Joy,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez and trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 210-236; “Approaching Abjection,” in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) 1-31, 211; and “Women’s Time,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi and trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 187-213.

192. Léon Adler, “Les jeunes: Marjorie Smith et Jean Palardy,” *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, Samedi, 17 Mai, 1930 in “Jori Smith, Artists Files,” Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

193. Ibid.

194. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 63-64, 78-100. I should note that Smith diverges from Barthes who argues that photography is more historical than the painted portrait because it makes a greater claim to referentiality (77). On the other hand, his view that photography is less historical than other commemorative forms because it is more ephemeral than, say, the monument (93) seems compatible with her argument about photography’s inability to capture all but the fleeting. The sympathy between their views is reinforced by the distinction they both make between visual media in its documentary function and media concerned with memory.

195. If her explanation that portrait painting is made new by its unique ability to synthesize more than one vision – that of the sitter and the artist – does not adequately distinguish it from portrait photography, or from the aims of previous generations of painters who would have insisted that even their commissioned work was the product of

their own aesthetic achievement, it nevertheless helps to clarify her views on “modern” painting.

196. I am borrowing the concept of *desiring* images from W.J.T. Mitchell’s discussion of spectatorial identification as a generically specific and historically and socio-politically situated practice. See “What do Pictures Want? An Idea of Visual Culture,” in *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity*, ed. Terry Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1997.

197. Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, 44.

198. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 67.

199. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 18.

Conclusion

A great deal has happened in the years since I began this project, events that altered its direction and scope. Although Smith's connection to Charlevoix is evidently significant to her production, it was not until I was well into my dissertation that I began to realize how her passion for the region represents an engagement with a key trajectory in Québec modernism, a trajectory whose legacy persists in the present. Charlevoix has remained an important cultural centre since Smith participated in Barbeau's efforts to record its local traditions. The government programs and ethnological activity I discussed in Chapters Four and Five have shaped the region, and it has been marketed successfully and variously as the site of a flourishing artistic community, a lively tourism industry, a yearly cultural festival Symposium International, and, in 1989, as a world biosphere reserve for UNESCO. The latter two events would seem especially to be the fulfilment of Smith's project to keep the memory of the region alive, as do the cultural objects collected to Smith and Palardy, which are now housed in Canadian museums.¹ Smith continued to spend her summers in the house she and Jean Palardy bought in Petite Rivière in 1940, until it was expropriated in 1970. Afterward, she returned only occasionally "for brief weekend visits."²

Over the years, Smith received public recognition in the form of painting and drawing prizes, representation in solo and major group exhibitions, as well as in private and public art collections, and an honorary doctorate from Concordia University in

Montréal in 1988. More recently, her achievements as an artist and author were recognized in a major retrospective exhibition of her work at the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery (Concordia University) in 1997,³ and in the publication of her memoir *Charlevoix County, 1930* in 1998.⁴ In 2001, she was named to the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, and in May 2001 she received the medal of Québec's National Assembly. Smith, then, is a more important artist, in an institutional sense, than when I started; she is no longer associated exclusively with her painting of the interwar years, but with her recent literary and visual production as well. This public recognition of Smith's contribution informed my re-thinking of how I would situate her in the history of Canadian art. Besides being pleased for Smith, I am relieved that my focus on her production of the 1930s and 1940s is not likely to reinforce her status as a minor figure in Canadian art's distant past. It will not become a disheartening addendum to the feminist recovery projects that should have already secured her reputation as an artist who produced into the twenty-first century.

Sadly, the most decisive event was Smith's death on November 12, 2005 at the age of ninety-eight, an event that represented a personal loss for me, not only of a research subject, but also of a very fond acquaintance. I only met Smith a few times, but her warmth, as well as her openness and candour meant that we moved onto a friendly footing very quickly. She demanded the same directness of her interlocutors; and I was struck by her tremendous curiosity and excitement about people, and the world in general. About one hour into my first meeting with her, Jori removed the tea things and asked if I

wouldn't prefer martinis. Under the watchful gaze of her cat Dusty my "art historical interview" became a conversation about Québec sovereignty, artistic process, her loathing of shopping (when I admired her blouse), life in a senior's building, our favorite books (she too had a girlhood affection for *Jane Eyre*, which she was re-reading), her memories growing up, and our mutual love of animals.

We stayed in touch, and I saw her briefly a few more times. I was never able to conduct a proper interview. Even when we talked about her work, the form of the exchanges seemed more like the critiques that I remember from art school, than those that took place in art history and women's studies graduate seminars. Although she might speak a little about the genesis of the works hanging in her studio/apartment, she was more likely to articulate her relationship to them as a viewer: her likes and dislikes. I wish that I had realized sooner the nature of her attitude toward finished pieces. I would have tried to buy the melancholic painting of an elderly woman, a painting that was striking because of the competition between the chilly blue and white palette and the sympathetic warmth with which the figure was treated. The sitter was a neighbour with whom she had struck up a friendship. When I noticed that it was gone on my next visit, Jori told me she had destroyed it when her friend died. It is frustrating to realize that similar impulses are responsible for the loss of many works over the years; her choices about what to destroy were not motivated by an impartial critical gaze, but by her cathexis to her subjects. Perhaps there is some compensation in knowing that Jori's attachment to her paintings as subjects accounts for the affective power of those that do survive.

The last time I saw Jori it was a fine spring day. It was warm enough in the sun to wear short sleeves, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. We were discussing George Steiner's most recent book, about which she was very enthusiastic. As we looked out the window of her Westmount apartment, she declared suddenly: "leaves are beautiful in the spring, they have no outlines!" I could see what she meant, as the young tender green flickered and dissolved into the late afternoon blue. When I responded that I had never noticed the visual effect before, she replied "Neither did I. I only thought of it just now!" This exchange was fairly typical of my conversations with Jori. We would bounce from one topic to another, but whatever the subject, in some sense it was always about art, or at least, seen through the eyes of an artist.

As I wrote the thesis, I thought frequently about Jori's engagement with art and the world, an engagement concerned with capturing the emotional and fantasmic aspects of visual experience. On the one hand, her impatience with questions about artistic "intention" presented a challenge for me as a researcher. On the other hand, perhaps because of my own studio training, I am also more interested in the associations and emotions conjured by the image than in biographical profiles and strictly formalist analyses. I was forced, or freed to engage with the paintings on "their own terms." In this endeavour, the academics, critics and students who responded to the works that I presented in lectures and conference papers were crucial to theorizing the different reactions her work might provoke. I don't know whether Jori would have agreed with my interpretation of her aesthetic goals, or with my reading of specific compositions. I do

know, however, that if she had disagreed, she would have told me so in no uncertain terms! I wish she was here to do so now.

1. For example, between 1971 and 1986 Jori Smith and Jean Palardy donated 261 objects from their art collection to le Musée des Maîtres et Artisans du Québec in Montréal (formerly Musée de Saint Laurent). The collection of artworks by French and Québec artists (collected in rural Québec) spans several centuries, and includes rugs, sculptures, and sacramental objects. See the Image Gallery on the CHIN website for photographs and information about the objects and their provenance, <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>.
2. Jori Smith, "Postscript," in *Charlevoix County, 1930* (Manotick, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1998), 93.
3. Karen Antaki, *Jori Smith: A Celebration* (Montréal: Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 1997).
4. Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*, 93.



fig. 1



fig. 2

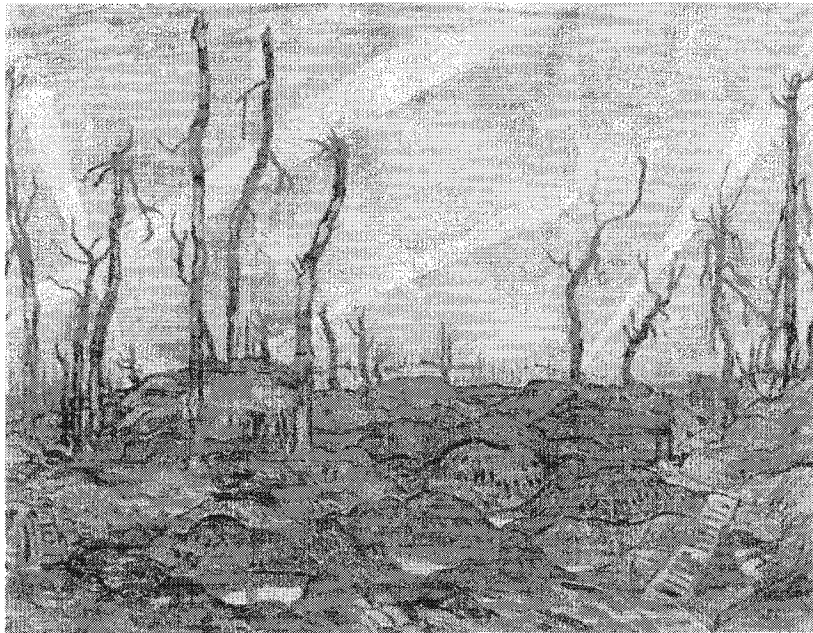


fig. 3

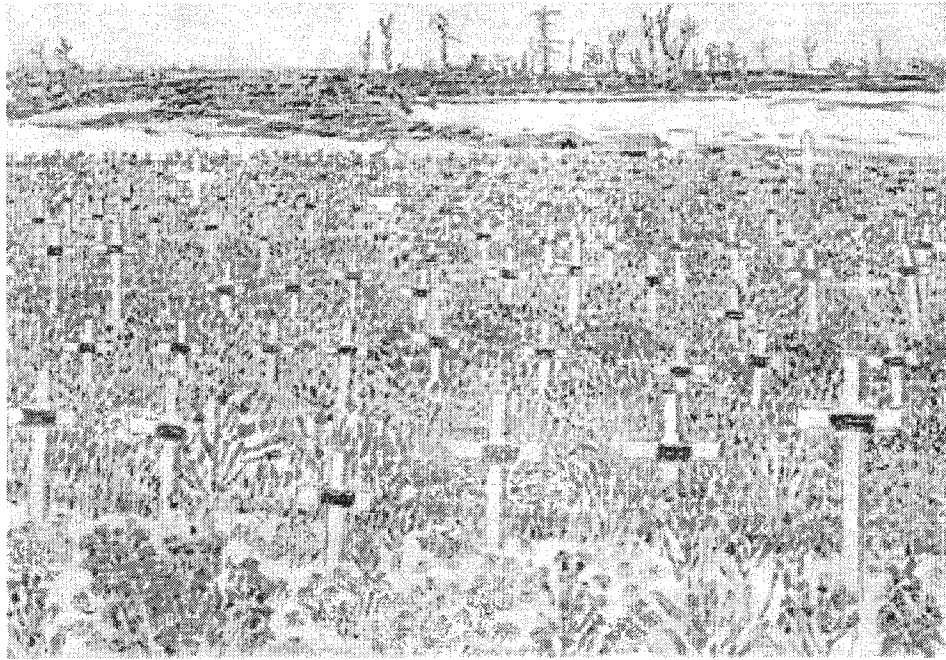


fig. 4

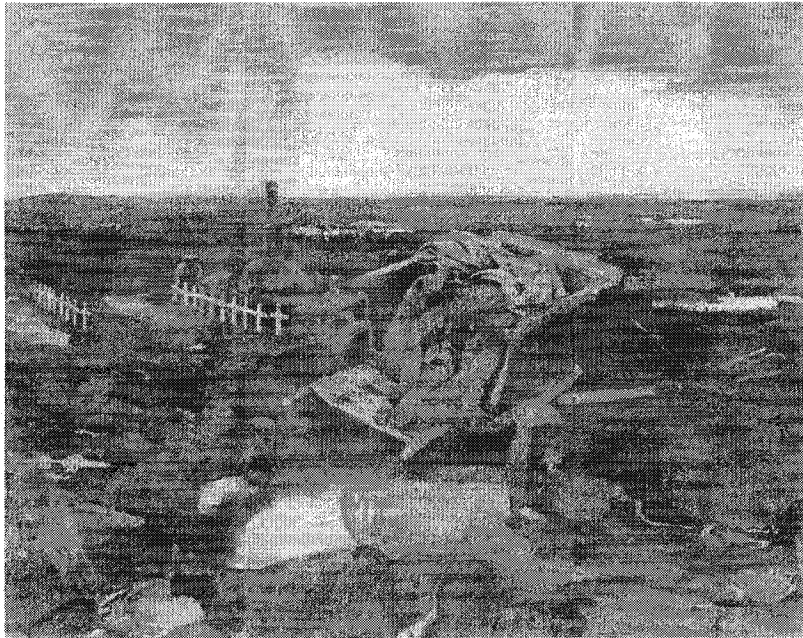


fig. 5



fig. 6

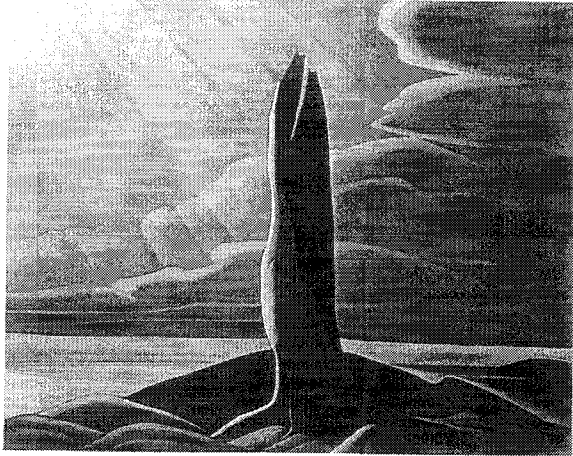


fig. 7

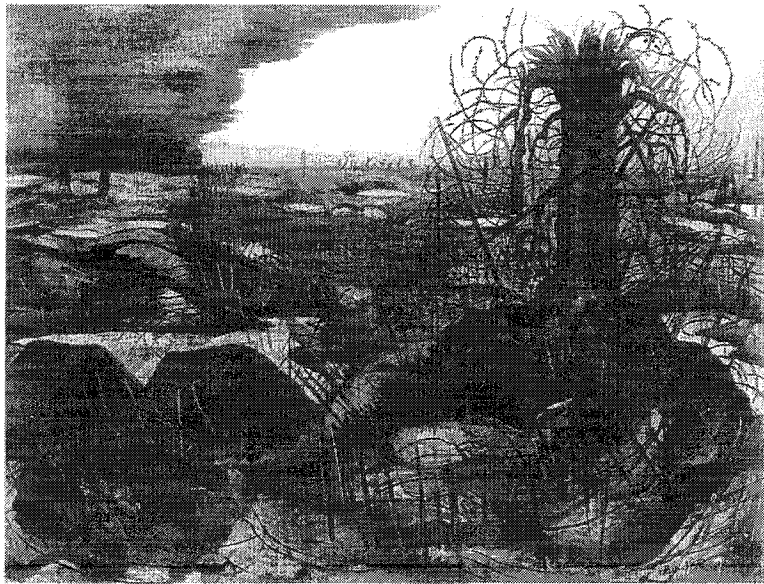


fig. 8



fig. 9



fig. 10



fig. 11

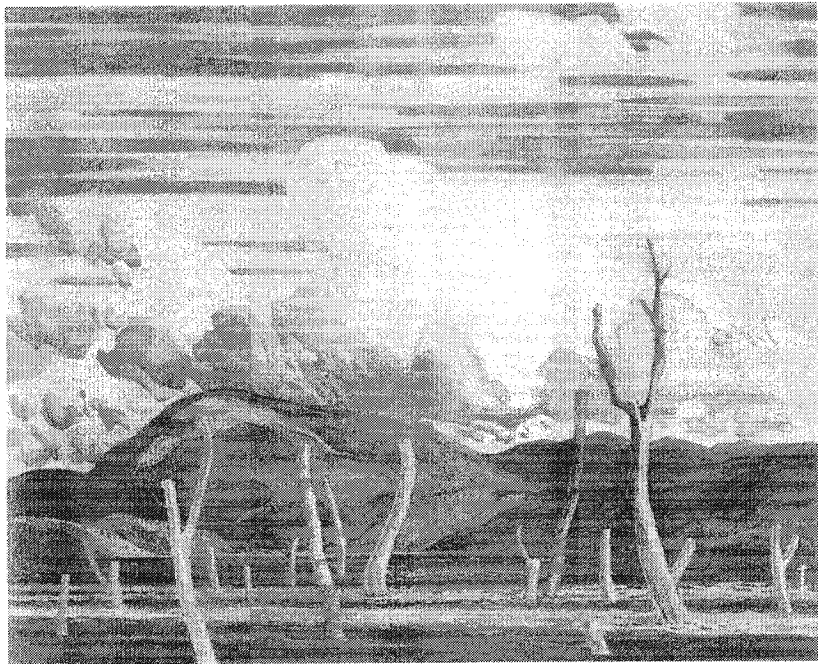


fig. 12



fig. 13



fig. 14



fig. 15

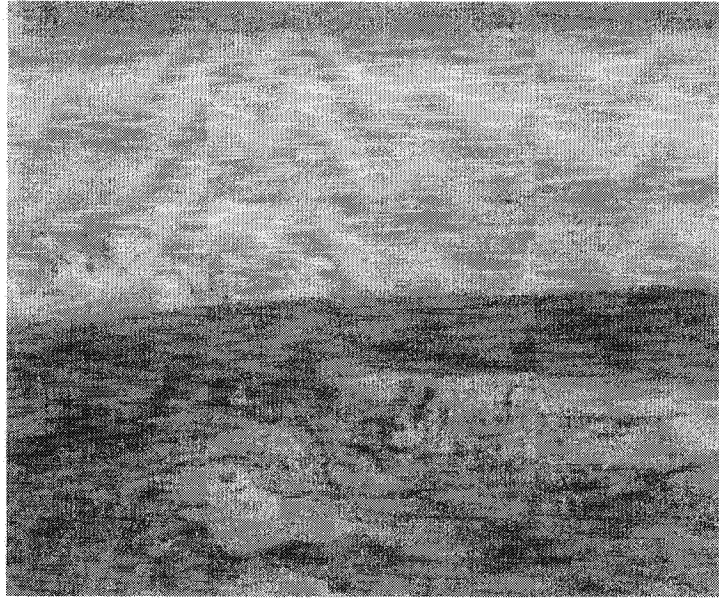


fig. 16

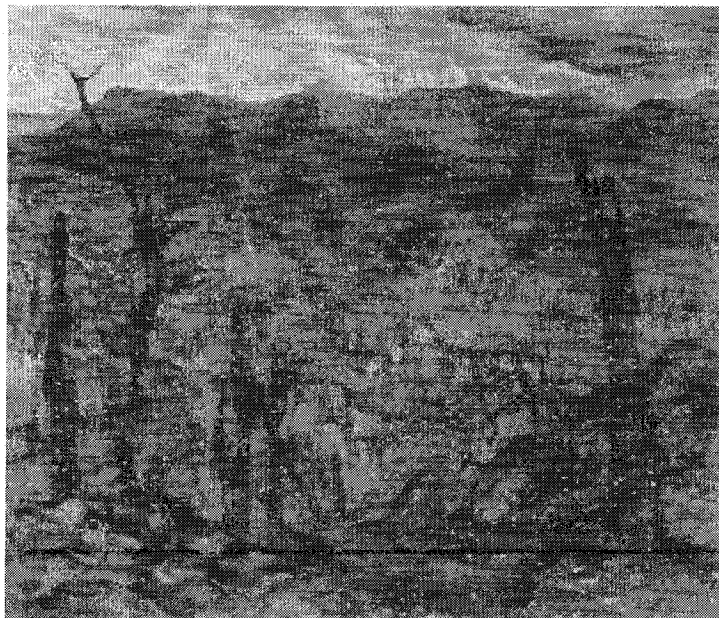


fig. 17



fig. 18

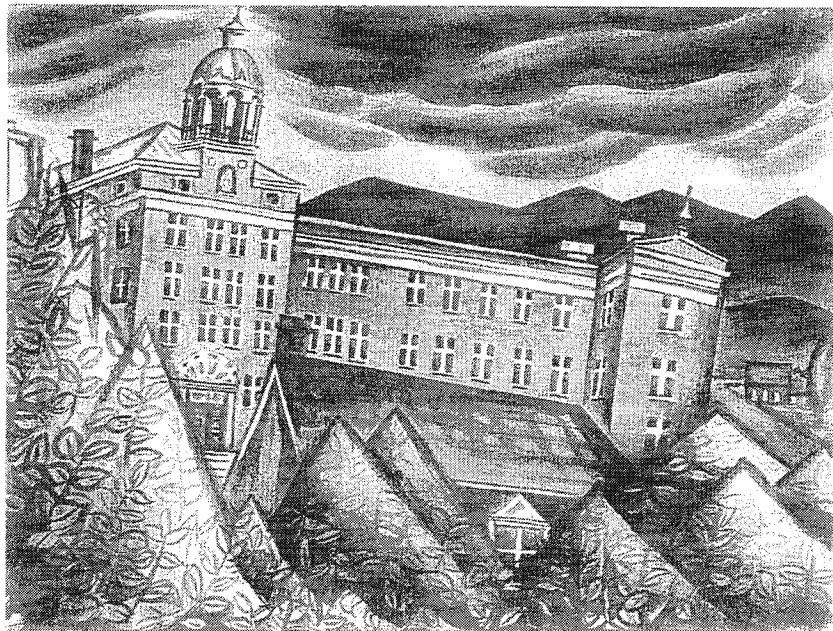


fig. 20



fig. 19



fig. 21



Fig. 22



fig. 23



fig. 24

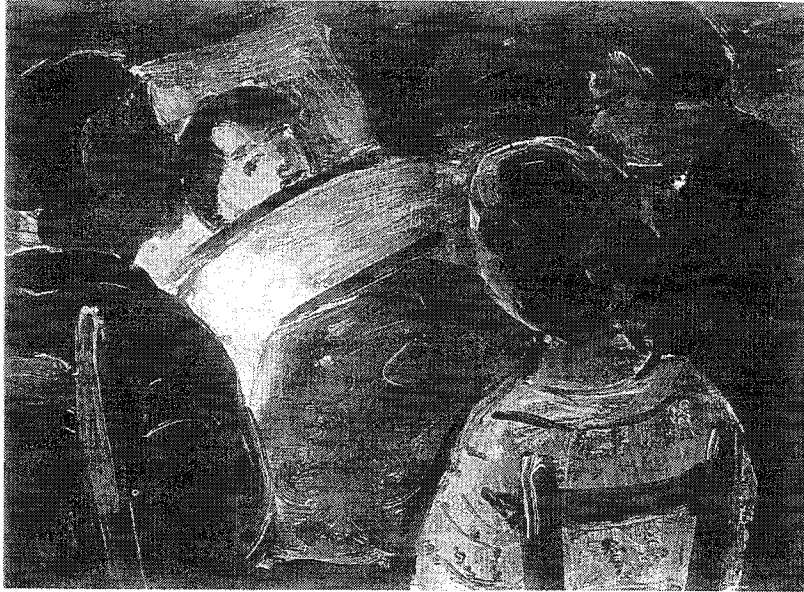


fig. 25



fig. 26



fig. 27



fig. 28



fig. 29

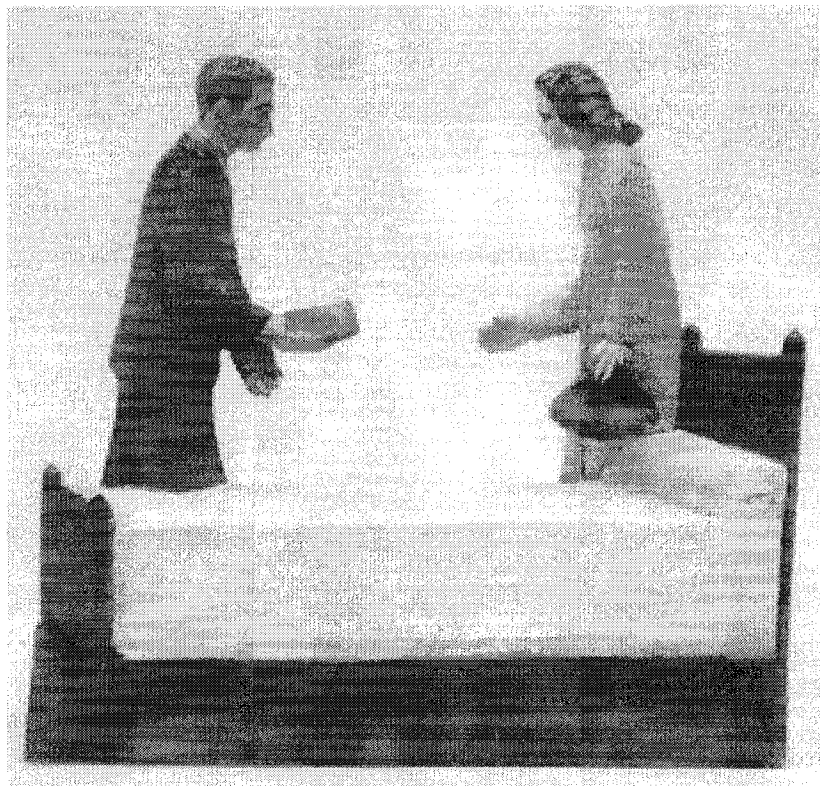


fig. 30

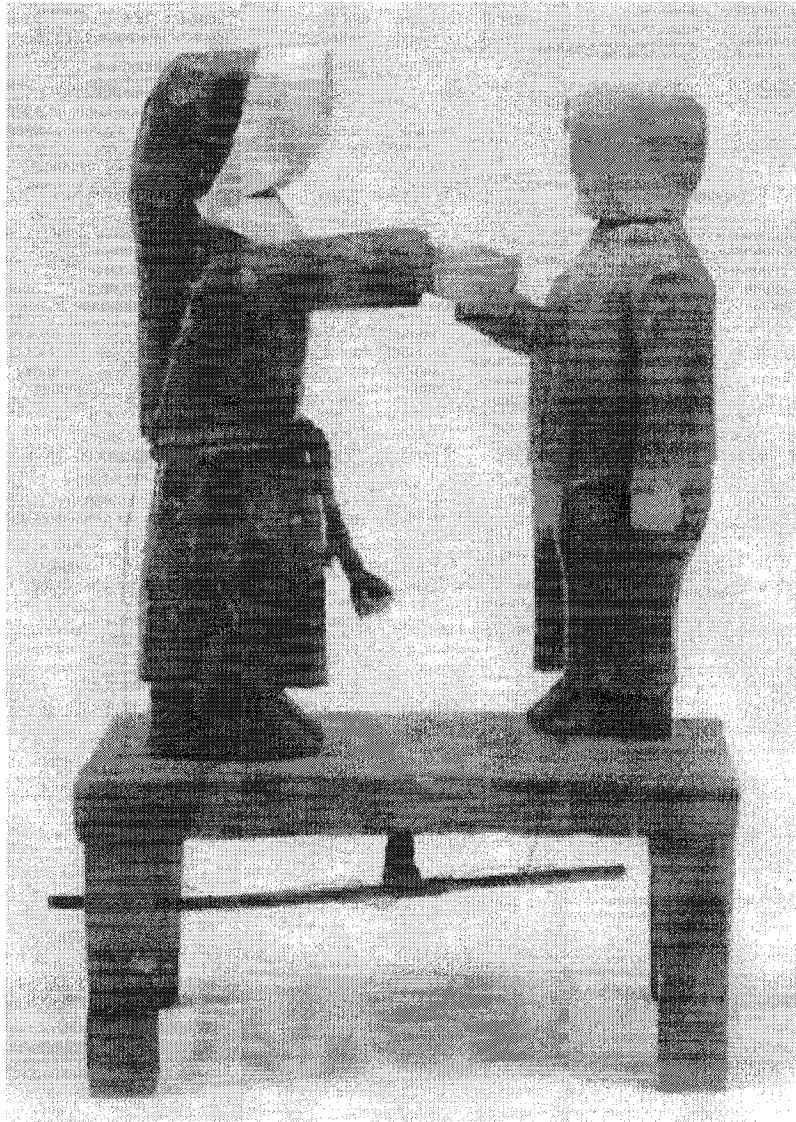


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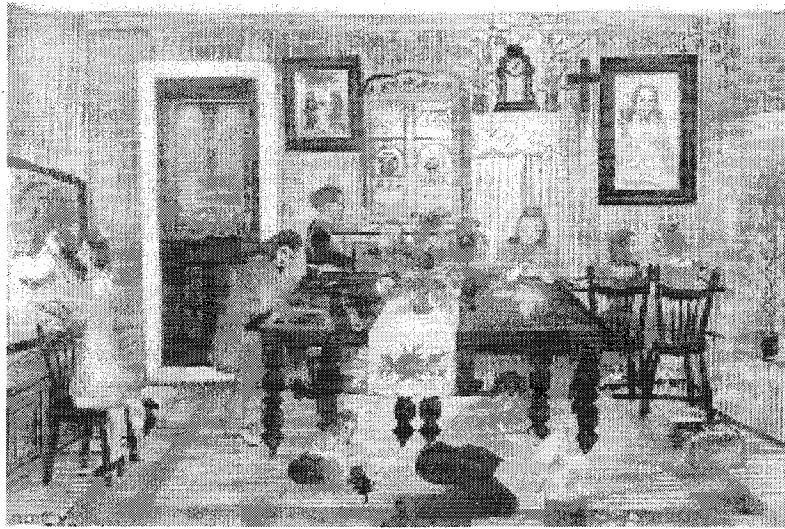


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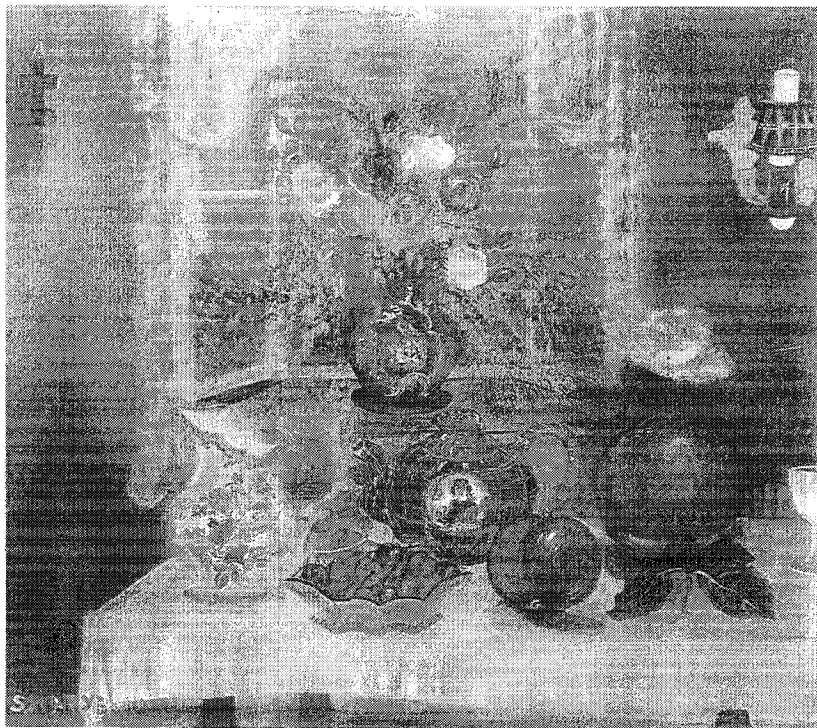


fig. 33



fig. 34

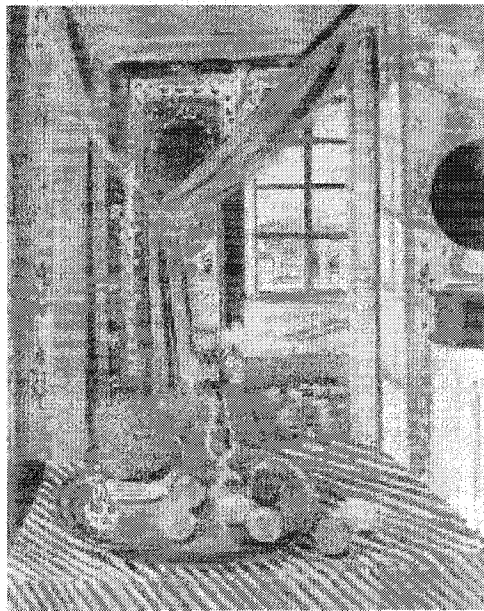


fig. 35



fig. 36



fig. 37

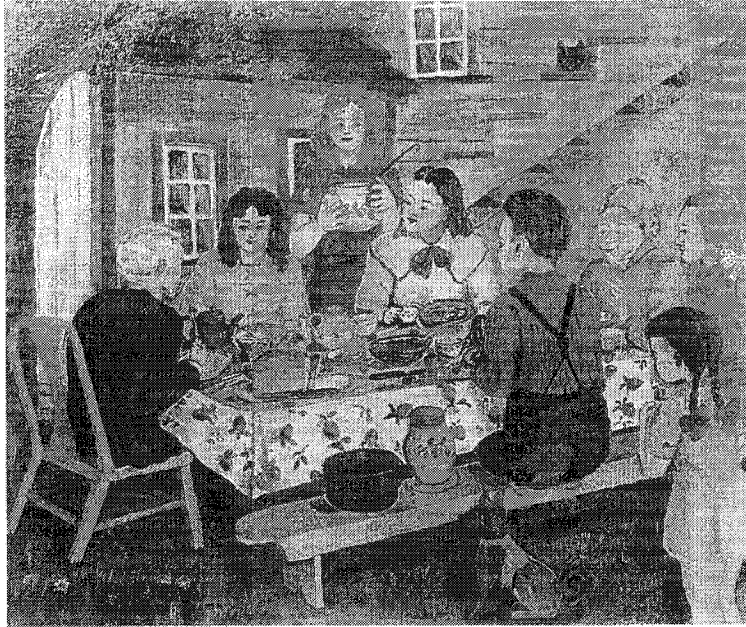


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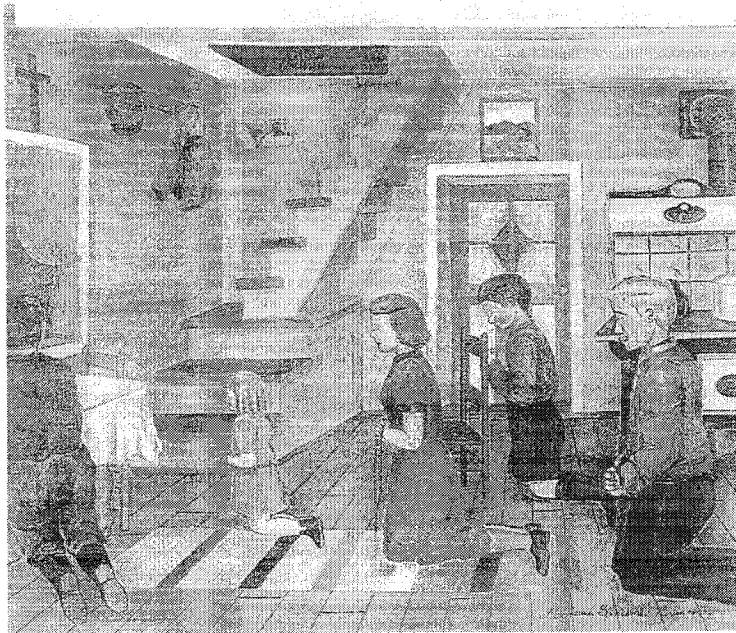


fig. 39



fig. 40



fig. 41

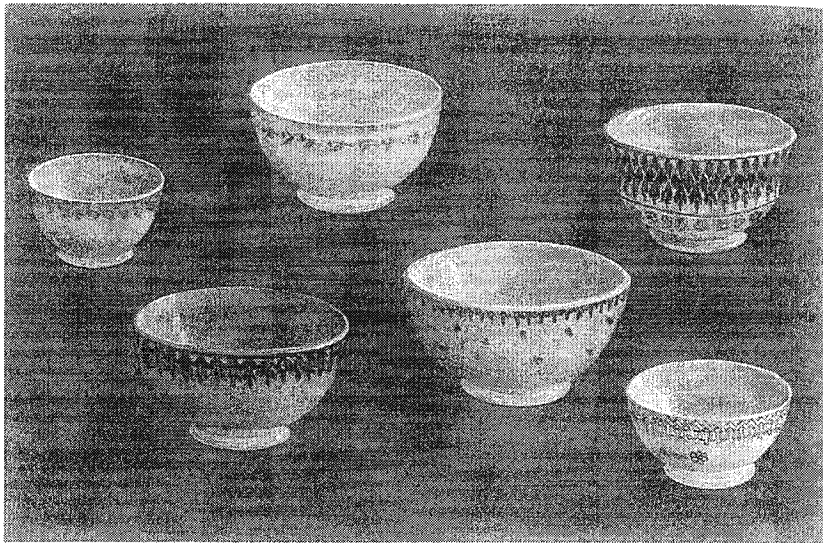


fig. 42

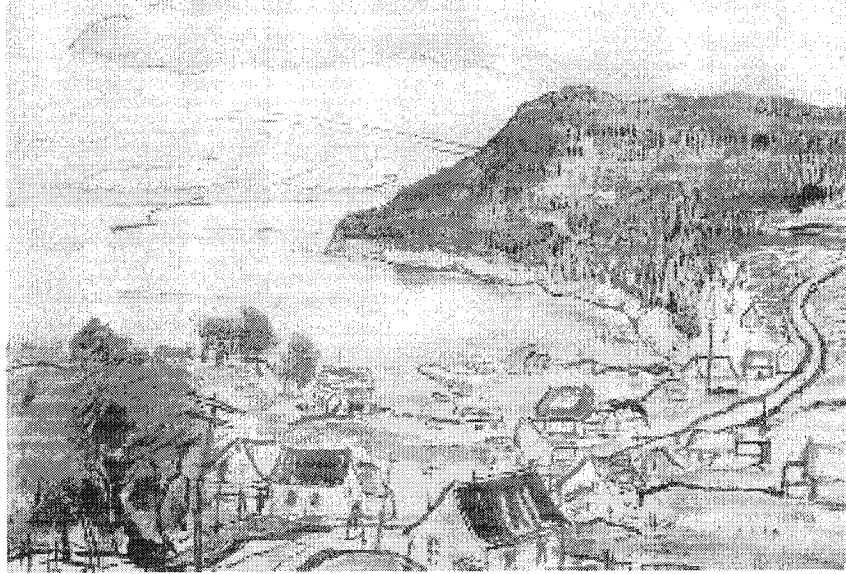


fig. 43



fig. 44



fig. 45

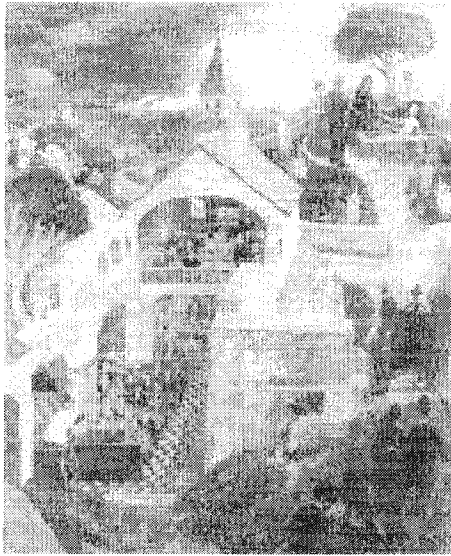


fig. 46



fig. 47



fig. 48



fig. 49

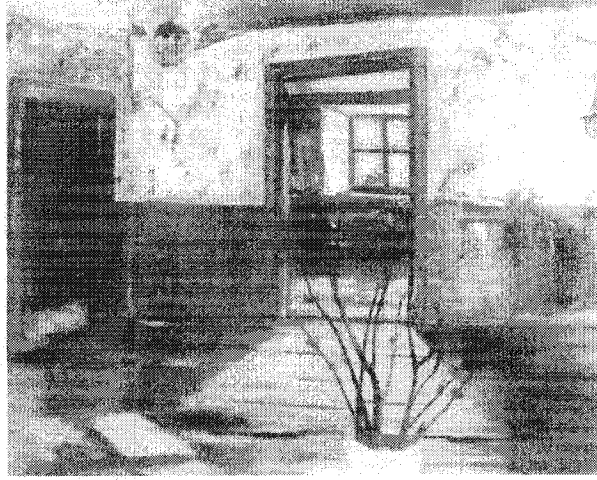


fig. 50

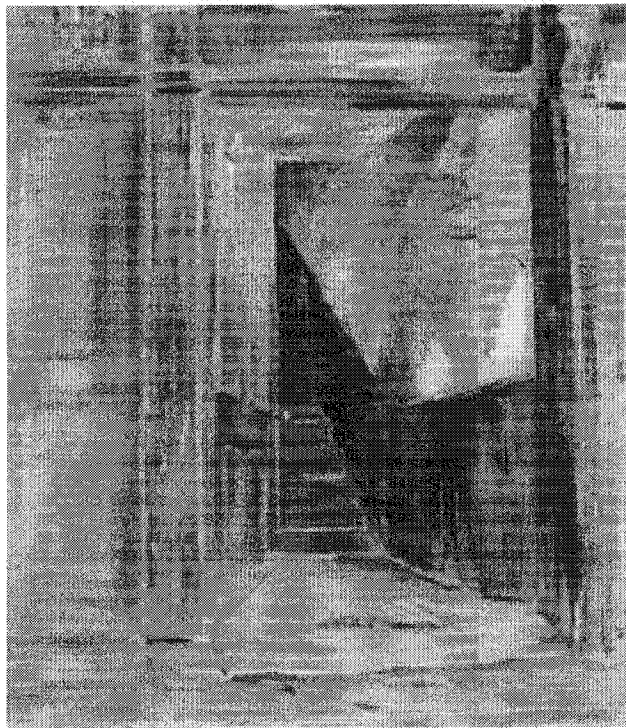


fig. 51

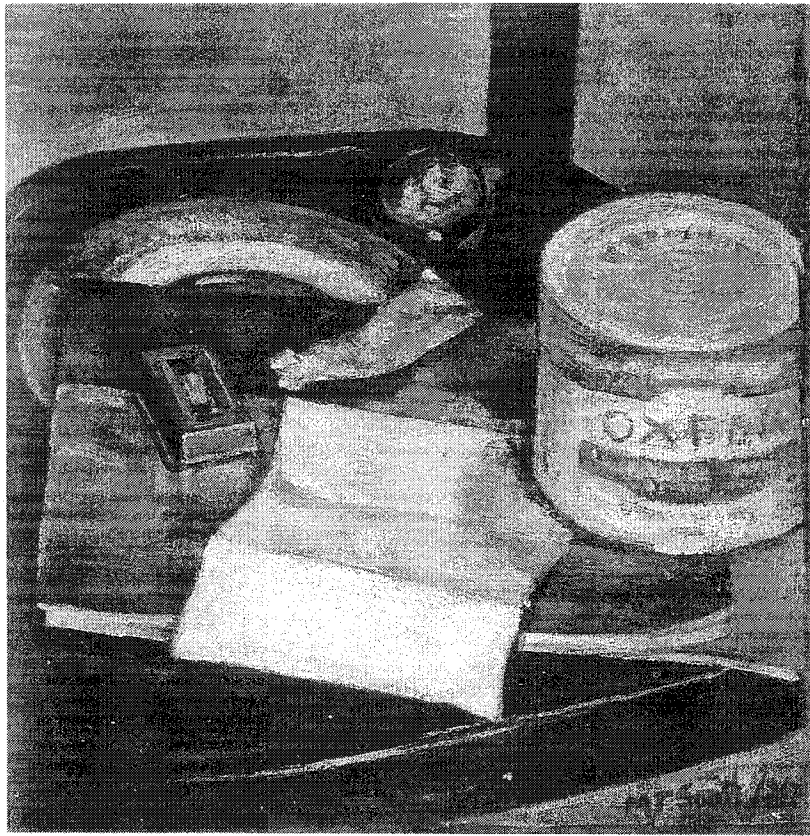


fig. 52

Appendix A: Biography and Chronology of Major Exhibitions

- 1907 Marjorie Elizabeth Smith, born January 1 in Montréal to Naomi Neal (originally from Ireland) and James Thurston Smith (born in Oxford, England).
- 1922 Studies for three months under Randolph Hewton at the Art Association of Montréal's Art School (now The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts).
- 1923- Attends École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal.
1928
- 1926 Wins several prizes, including: Prix du directeur des Beaux-Arts (Silver Shield); First Prize for Oil Painting from life (Bronze Medal); First Prize for Drawing from Life, Higher Course (Bronze Medal); and First Prize for Drawing Classical Studies (Bronze Medal).
- 1927 Wins Second Prize for Oil Painting from Life (ex aequo), and Prix du Ministre for best student.
- 1928 Wins several prizes, including: Prix exceptionnel for general proficiency (First Medal); prize for vacation work; First Prize and Honours in Painting and Drawing.
- 1928- Participates in Art Association of Montreal Spring Exhibition.
1934
- 1929 Meets Jean Palardy while on a painting trip in Chicoutimi.
- 1930 Marries Jean Palardy at Murray Bay (La Malbaie). January to June runs JANS, a commercial art company at 1154 Beaver Hall Square in Montréal, with Palardy and Jean Paul Lemieux.
- 1931- Resides in Charlevoix County.
1933
- 1933 Participates in: *Exposition de peintures par artistes féminins canadiens, Eaton's, Montréal*; RCA Annual Exhibition, Montreal.
- 1934- Travels with Palardy in England, France and Spain.
1945

- 1937 Featured in solo exhibition at Picture Loan Society, Toronto. Participates in: Montreal Arts Club Exhibition; *Canadian Group of Painters* exhibition.
- 1938 Participates in Eastern Group of Painters (first exhibition), W. Scott and Sons, Montréal.
- 1938- Paints mural at Mont Tremblant Lodge, Québec.
1939
- 1939 Participates in *Contemporary Arts Society* exhibition, Stevens Gallery, Montréal.
- 1940 Participates in Eastern Group of Painters Exhibition, Art Association of Montreal. Smith and Palardy rent apartment from Albert Laliberté, on rue Saint-Famille Montréal, and buy a summer home in Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, Charlevoix County.
- 1941 Participates in: *Exposition des indépendants*, Palais Montcalm, Québec City; *Peinture moderne* exhibition, Henry Morgan and Co., Montréal.
- 1942 Participates in: Canadian Group of Painters exhibition, Art Gallery of Toronto and the Art Association of Montréal; *Aspects of Canadian Painting* exhibition, Phillips Academy, Andover Massachusetts.
- 1944 Participates in: exhibition at Dominion Gallery, Montréal (with Alan Harrison, Sybil Kennedy and Jacques de Tonnancour); *The Development of Painting in Canada* exhibition, Art Gallery of Toronto.
- 1945 Participates in *Contemporary Arts Society* exhibition, T. Eaton Co. For the first time in over ten years, exhibits with the Art Association of Montreal (and again in 1948, 1951, 1955, 1956).
- 1946 Wins a provincial government grant to paint in Haiti. Participates in group shows: Albany Institute, New York; *Contemporary Arts Society*, Dominion Gallery, Montréal; *Artes Graficas do Canada*, Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.
- 1946- Fall to summer lives in Paris and at La Gaude, Provence (three months). Winter
1947 spent Lake Atitlán, Guatemala.

- 1947 Participates in *Canadian Women Artists* exhibition, Riverside Museum, New York; exhibition rue Sainte-Famille studio
- 1949 Participates in *Canadian Women Painters* exhibition, West End Gallery, Montréal.
- 1950- Travels with Palardy in Italy and France.
1951
- 1952 Travels with Gilles Corbeil (Galerie Gilles Corbeil, Montréal) in Tournette-sur-Loup, France; and alone to Ibiza, Bracelona, San Sebastián and Toledo.
- 1955 Invited to Bern by Edmond Turcotte, Ambassador to Switzerland; drives to Frankfurt, and Spain. Wins Jessie Dow prize for best painting at Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Spring Exhibition; featured in solo exhibition at Dominion Gallery, Montréal.
- 1956 Travels to Spain and Greece.
- 1957 Participates in *Five Canadian Painters* exhibition, George Waddington Galleries, Montréal.
Separates from Palardy.
- 1958 Spends one month in Manila; takes a cruise from Hong Kong to Nice.
- 1959 Spends winter in Avignon, and spring in Italy. Participates in *The Arts of French Canada* exhibition, Winnipeg Art Gallery.
- 1963 Featured in solo exhibition ArtLenders, Montréal.
- 1964 Featured in solo exhibition Galerie XII, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.
- 1965 Spends October-March in Italy and Portugal.
- 1966 Moves to Senneville, Québec. During the mid-1980s, she moves from Senneville to live closer to the Montréal downtown.
- 1967 Participates in exhibitions: *Peinture vivante du Québec; vingt-cinq ans de libération de l'oeil et du geste*, Musée du Québec, Québec City.
- 1969 Fall in Burgundy and Cap-Ferrat, France.

- 1971 Fall in Sardinia and Cap-Ferrat.
- 1971-1986 Jori Smith and Jean Palardy donate 261 objects from their art collection to le Musée des Maîtres et Artisans du Québec (formerly Musée de Saint Laurent) in Montréal. The collection of artworks by French and Québec artists spans several centuries, and includes rugs, sculptures, and sacramental objects.
- 1975 Participates in exhibitions: *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada*, Agnes Etherington Gallery, Kingston; *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, National Gallery of Canada; *14 Women Painters*, Galerie Gilles Corbeil, Montréal.
- 1976 Participates in exhibitions: *Three Generations of Quebec Art*, Musée d'art contemporain; *Jori Smith*, Kastel Gallery, Montréal.
Gives up house at Petite-Rivière-Saint-François.
- 1977 Participates in *Two Women* exhibition, Twenty-one McGill Street, Toronto.
- 1978 Participates in *Modern Painting in Canada* exhibition, Edmonton Art Gallery.
- 1979 Featured in solo exhibition Kastel Gallery, Montréal.
- 1980 Participates in group retrospective, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montréal, 1939-1948*. Edmonton Art Gallery.
- 1981 Travels to Sardinia, Venice. Participates in *Images of Charlevoix: 1784-1950* exhibition, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; featured in solo exhibition Kastel Gallery, Montréal.
- 1982 Participates in *Modernism in Quebec Art: 1916-1946* exhibition, National Gallery of Canada.
- 1983 Travels to Venice.
- 1984 Travels to Ireland. Featured in *Jori Smith, Watercolors* exhibition, Agassiz Galleries, Winnipeg.
- 1986 Featured in solo exhibition, Kastel Gallery, Montréal.
- 1988 Honourary doctorate conferred by Concordia University in Montréal.
- 1993 Featured in solo retrospective, *Rediscovering Jori Smith: Selected Work, 1932-*

- 1993, Dominion Gallery, Montréal.
- 1994 Featured in solo exhibition, *To Seize the Light I See*, Centre d'Exposition Baie-Saint-Paul.
- 1997 Featured in major solo retrospective, *Jori Smith: A Celebration* at Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University.
- 1998 Publication of *Charlevoix County, 1930*. The memoir is nominated for a Québec Society for the Promotion of English-Language Literature (QSPELL) award. Solo exhibition, Dominion Gallery, Montréal.
- 1999 Featured in an exhibition at the Winchester Gallery.
- 2000 Named to the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts.
- 2001 Receives the medal of Québec's National Assembly in May.
- 2003 Named to Order of Canada.
- 2005 Dies November 12 at the age of ninety-eight.

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ARCHIVAL: DOCUMENTS CITED

The documents listed below are located at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC was formerly the Public Archives of Canada and National Library of Canada), the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), and the National Gallery of Canada (NGC). The archives of many of the collectors and artists that appear in my thesis – including Jori Smith – are deposited at LAC, whereas the Marius Barbeau archive is located at CMC. These two archives contain miscellaneous personal items: correspondence, diaries, photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, exhibition reviews, souvenirs, etc. At the NCG, newspaper clippings, media releases, gallery announcements and pages photocopied from exhibition catalogues collected by curators and librarians are placed in "Artists Files" and can be consulted at the library. Correspondence, taped interviews and transcripts are held in separate files in the archives and can be consulted by appointment (some of the interview transcripts are now accessible on the NGC CyberMuse website). In the case of newspaper clippings, the dates, titles and other important details are frequently missing (hence the placement of these resources in this section of the bibliography). I have also listed "Artists' Files" which provided useful background material.

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