CANADIAN PAINTERS IN A MODERN WORLD 1925–1955

WRITINGS AND RECONSIDERATIONS

LORA SENECHAL CARNEY

Canadian Painters in a Modern World, 1925–1955

MCGILL-QUEEN'S/BEAVERBROOK CANADIAN FOUNDATION
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Canadian Painters in a Modern World, 1925–1955
Writings and Reconsiderations
Lora Senechal Carney

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Writings and Reconsiderations

Lora Senechal Carney

McGill-Queen's University Press
Montreal & Kingston • London • Chicago

ISBN 978-0-7735-5114-5 (cloth)
ISBN 978-0-7735-5115-2 (paper)
ISBN 978-0-7735-5192-3 (ePDF)

Legal deposit third quarter 2017
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec

Printed in Canada on acid-free paper

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

McGill-Queen's University Press acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund for our publishing activities.

Title page and chapter title page images: Bertram Brooker, *Fugue* (details), c. 1930 (Fig. 1.6)

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Carney, Lora, author
Canadian painters in a modern world, 1925–1955 : writings and reconsiderations / Lora Senechal Carney.

(McGill-Queen's/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation studies in art history)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Issued in print and electronic formats.
ISBN 978-0-7735-5114-5 (hardcover).
ISBN 978-0-7735-5115-2 (softcover).
ISBN 978-0-7735-5192-3 (ePDF)

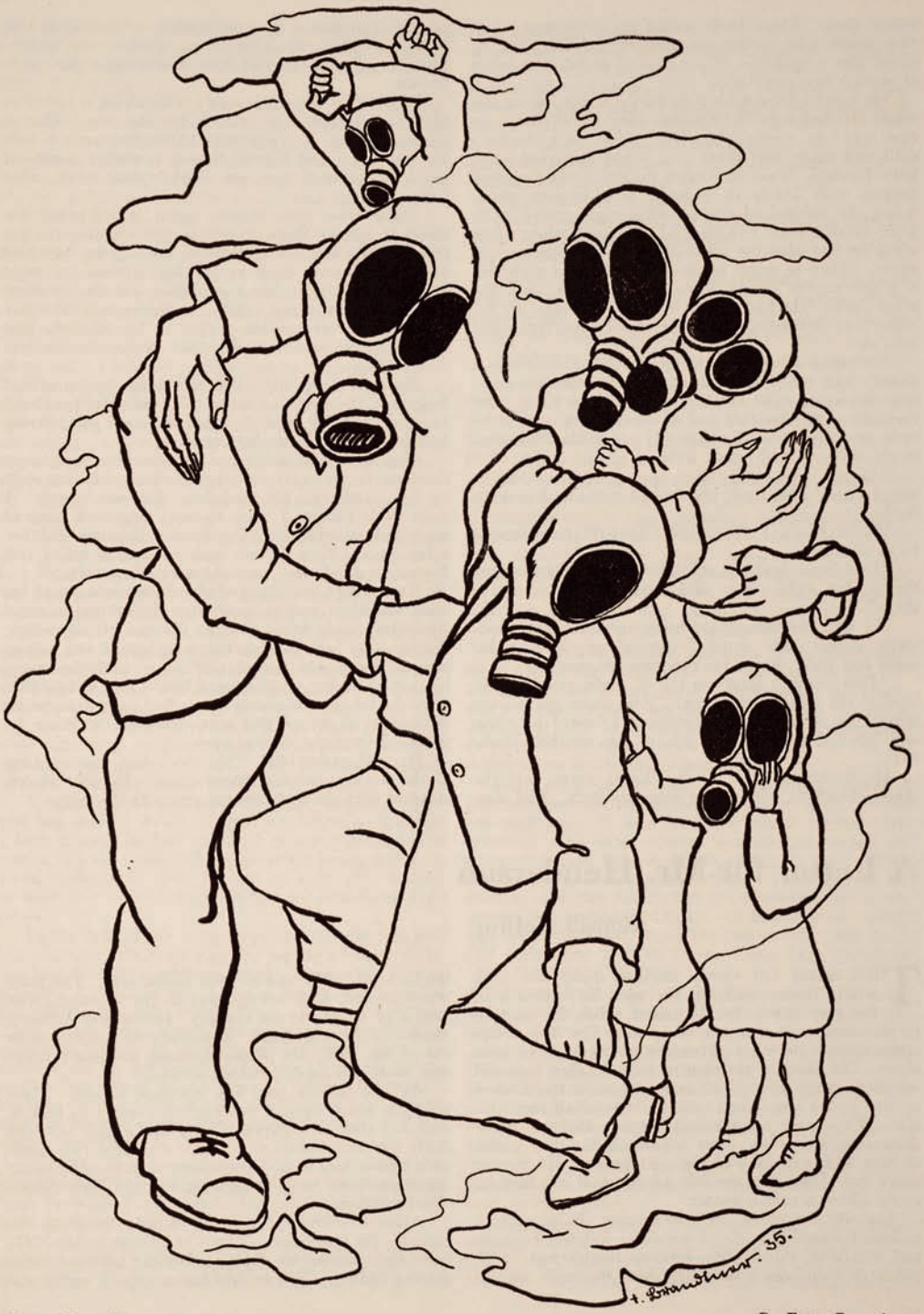
1. Painting, Canadian – 20th century. 2. Art and society – Canada – History – 20th century. I. Title. II. Series: McGill-Queen's/Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation studies in art history

ND249.C387 2017 759.11 C2017-903389-1
C2017-903390-5

To
Daniel Robert Carney and Julia Emma Carney and their families

and to the memory of

Dora Emma Erdman Senechal and Marvin William Daniel Senechal



Non-Combatants. *By Fritz Brandtner*

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Louis Archambault 1915–2003
Miluqtuarjuk Arnaqquq
Caven Atkins 1907–2000
Marcel Barbeau 1925–2016
Conyers Barker (Ernest Conyers Barker) 1909–2003
Maxwell Bates 1906–1980
Aba Bayefsky 1923–2001
Jack Beder 1910–1987
Frederic M. Bell-Smith 1846–1923
Louis Belzile 1929–
Alexandre Bercovitch 1891–1951
Norman Bethune 1890–1939
André Biéler 1896–1989
B.C. Binning 1909–1976
Ronald Bloore 1925–2009
Bruno Bobak 1923–2012
Paul-Émile Borduas 1905–1960
Sam Borenstein 1908–1969
Mary Bouchard (Simone Mary Bouchard) 1912–1945
Fritz Brandtner 1896–1969
Miller Brittain 1912–1968
Bertram Brooker 1888–1955
Leonard Brooks 1911–2011
Robert Bruce 1911–1980
Jack Bush 1909–1977
Oscan Cahén 1916–1956
Ghitta Caiserman (Ghitta Caiserman-Roth from 1962) 1923–2005
Emily Carr 1871–1945
Roland-H. Charlebois (Roland-Hérard Charlebois) 1906–1965
Paraskeva Clark 1898–1986
Alex Colville (Alexander Colville) 1920–2013
Charles Comfort (Charles Fraser Comfort) 1900–1994
Bruno Cormier 1919–1991
Stanley Cosgrove 1911–2002
Rody Kenny Hammond (Rody Kenny Courtice from 1926) 1891–1973
Marie-Alain Couturier, O.P. 1897–1954
Maurice Cullen 1866–1934
Alma Duncan 1917–2004
Henry Eveleigh 1909–1999
Barker Fairley 1887–1986
Roger Fauteux 1923–
Marcelle Ferron 1924–2001
Orville Fisher 1911–1999
L.L. FitzGerald (Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald) 1890–1956
Marc-Aurèle Fortin 1888–1970
Lillian Freiman 1908–1986
Helen Kemp Frye 1910–1986
Denyse Gadbois 1921–
Louise Gadbois 1896–1985
Clarence Gagnon 1881–1942
Claude Gauvreau 1925–1971
Pierre Gauvreau 1922–2011
Eric Goldberg 1890–1969
Charles Goldhamer 1903–1985
Paul Goranson 1911–2002
Hortense Gordon (Hortense M. Gordon) 1889–1961
Josephine Hambleton (Josephine Hambleton Tessier) 1919–2012
Lawren Stewart Harris 1885–1970
Julien Hébert 1917–1994

Gilles Hénault 1920–1996
Prudence Heward 1896–1947
Bess Housser (Bess Housser Harris from 1934) 1890–1969
James Houston 1921–2005
E.J. Hughes 1913–2007
Jack Humphrey (Jack Weldon Humphrey) 1901–1967
Leonard Hutchinson 1896–1980
Laurence Hyde 1914–1987
Sheepa Ishulutaq
Gershon Iskowitz 1921–1988
A.Y. Jackson (Alexander Young Jackson) 1882–1974
Donald Jarvis (Don Jarvis) 1923–2001
Lucy Jarvis 1896–1985
Jauran (Rodolphe de Repentigny) 1926–1959
C.W. Jefferys (Charles W. Jefferys) 1869–1951
Jean-Paul Jérôme 1928–2004
Alphonse Jongers 1872–1945
Anne Kahane 1924–
Paul Kane 1810–1871
Sybil Kennedy 1899–1986
Kopeekolok (Qoperqualu) 1916–2004
Cornelius Krieghoff 1815–1872
Molly Lamb (Molly Lamb Bobak from 1945) 1922–2014
Fernand Leduc 1916–2014
Ozias Leduc 1864–1955
Agnès Lefort 1895–1973
Jean Paul Lemieux 1904–1990
Rita Letendre 1928–
Arthur Lismer 1885–1969
Kenneth Lochhead 1926–2006
Alexandra Luke (also known as Margaret McLaughlin from 1928) 1901–1967
John Lyman 1886–1967
J.E.H. MacDonald (James Edward Hervey MacDonald) 1873–1932
Jock Macdonald (J.W.G. Macdonald) 1897–1960
Arthur McKay (Art McKay) 1926–2000
Gordon MacNamara 1910–2006
Joanasie Maniapik 1936–2007
Henri Masson 1907–1996
Harry Mayerovitch 1910–2004
Yvonne McKague (Yvonne McKague Housser from 1935) 1898–1986
Norman McLaren 1914–1987
Doris Heustis Mills (Doris Heustis Mills Spiers from 1939) 1894–1989
David Milne 1882–1953
Guido Molinari 1933–2004
Jean-Paul Mousseau 1927–1991
Louis Muhlstock 1904–2001
Munamee (Mannumi Shaqu) 1917–2000
Kathleen Munn 1887–1974
James Wilson Morrice 1865–1924
Lilias Torrance Newton 1896–1980
Ernst Neumann 1907–1956
Pegi Nicol (Pegi Nicol MacLeod from 1936) 1904–1949
Taina Nowdlak
Levi Nutaralaaq 1937–
Oshweetuk (Osuitok Ipeelee) 1923–2005
Jean Palardy 1905–1991
Alfred Pellan 1906–1988
Maurice Perron 1924–1999
Nathan Petroff (Paul Petroff) 1915–2007
Joe Plaskett 1918–2014
Towkie Qappik
Leah Qaqqasiq 1935–

George Agnew Reid 1860–1947
Moe Reinblatt (Moses Reinblatt) 1917–1979
Samuel Reindorf 1914–1988
Louise Renaud 1922–
Jeanne Rhéaume 1915–2000
Jean-Paul Riopelle 1923–2002
Goodridge Roberts 1904–1974
Robert Roussil 1925–2013
Yvonne Roy
Carl Schaefer 1903–1995
Marian Dale Scott 1906–1993
Jack Shadbolt 1909–1998
Ellen Simon 1916–2011
Jori Smith 1907–2005
Dorothy Stevens 1888–1966
Françoise Sullivan 1925–
Philip Surrey 1910–1990
Edna Taçon 1913–1980
F.B. Taylor (Frederick B. Taylor) 1906–1987
Tom Thomson 1877–1917
Tikketuk: possibly Isaac Takatak 1930–
Jacques de Tonnancour 1917–2005
Fernand Toupin 1930–2009
Harold Town 1924–1990
Tungeelik (Mark Tungilik) 1913–1986
Ina D.D. Uhthoff 1889–1971
Frederick Horsman Varley (F.H. Varley) 1881–1969
Rosie Veevee 1933–2012
Guy Viau 1920–1971
Lowrie Warrener 1900–1983
Gordon Webber 1909–1965
Elizabeth Wyn Wood 1903–1966

List of Pre-1960 Writers on Art Named in This Book

Walter Abell 1897–1956
Robert Ayre 1900–1980
Clive Bell 1881–1964
Norman Bethune 1890–1939
Salem Bland 1859–1950
Miller Brittain 1912–1968
Bertram Brooker 1888–1955
Donald Buchanan 1908–1966
Emily Carr 1871–1945
Sheldon Cheney 1886–1980
Paraskeva Clark 1898–1986
Charles Comfort (Charles Fraser Comfort) 1900–1994
Marie-Alain Couturier, O.P. 1897–1954
Charles Doyon (Jean-Charles Doyon) 1905–1966
Dr Paul Dumas 1910–2005
Robert Élie 1915–1973
Barker Fairley 1887–1986
Rémi-Paul Forgues 1926–2012
Roger Fry 1866–1934
Helen Kemp Frye 1910–1986
Northrop Frye 1912–1991
Maurice Gagnon 1912–1999
Madeleine Gariépy
Claude Gauvreau 1925–1971
Pierre Gauvreau 1922–2011
Henri Girard
John Grierson 1898–1972
Josephine Hambleton (Josephine Hambleton Tessier) 1919–2012
Lawren Stewart Harris 1885–1970
Jean-Charles Harvey 1891–1967
Julien Hébert 1917–1994
François Hertel (Rodolphe Dubé) 1905–1985
Frederick Housser (F.B. Housser) 1889–1936
James Houston 1921–2005
Alan Jarvis (Alan Hepburn Jarvis) 1915–1972
Fernand Leduc 1916–2014
Agnès Lefort 1895–1973
Alexandra Luke (also known as Margaret McLaughlin from 1928) 1901–1967
John Lyman 1886–1967
Jock Macdonald (J.W.G. Macdonald) 1897–1960
Lawrence Mason 1882–1939
Pearl McCarthy 1895–1964
Graham McInnes (G. Campbell McInnes) 1912–1970
Marshall McLuhan 1911–1980
Wilfred Gordon Mills 1886–1960
David Milne 1882–1953
Guido Molinari 1933–2004
Ernst Neumann 1907–1956
Pegi Nicol (Pegi Nicol MacLeod from 1936) 1904–1949
Marcel Parizeau 1898–1945
Thérèse Renaud 1927–2005
Françoise de Repentigny
Rodolphe de Repentigny (who painted under the name of Jauran) 1926–1959
Reynald (Ephrem-Réginald Bertrand) 1905–1965
Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau 1912–1943
Fernande Saint-Martin 1927–
Jehanne Bietry Salinger 1897–1996
Jack Shadbolt 1909–1998

Françoise Sullivan 1925–
F.B. Taylor (Frederick B. Taylor) 1906–1987
Jacques de Tonnancour 1917–2005
Frank Underhill 1889–1971
Guy Viau 1920–1971
Kenneth Wells (Kenneth McNeill Wells) 1905–1988
Elizabeth Wyn Wood 1903–1966

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to friends and colleagues who read much or all of the book at various stages and offered important advice: Jane Abray, Modris Eksteins, the late K.M. Graham, Allan Hepburn, Janis Hoogstraten, Paul Thompson, and Linda Spalding. For splendid advice and support as I was finishing the manuscript, many thanks to Julia Carney and Marlene Goldman.

Thanks to the excellent staff at the University of Toronto Scarborough Library, especially Elizabeth Seres, Jenny Mendelsohn, and Adriana Sgro. Thanks to the staff of a great many Canadian librarians and archivists, in particular those at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, especially France Hamel; Library and Archives Canada, especially Kayley Kimball; British Columbia Archives and Records Service; Toronto Reference Library; the University of Toronto Department of Art Library, especially Margaret English, and also at the University of Toronto, the staff of the E.J. Pratt Library, the John M. Kelly Library, Robarts Library, and the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library; the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, especially Phillip Dombowsky; the Canadian Women Artists History Archive, especially Brenda Dionne and Janice Anderson; the Art Gallery of Ontario Research Library and Archives, especially Amy Furness; The Robert McLaughlin Gallery; the Museum for Textiles, Toronto; the University of Manitoba Library, Archives and Special Collections; the Toronto Public Library; Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University; the Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives; Queen's University Archives; and Concordia University Archives.

For information and suggestions on individual critics, artists, and writings and for other essential support over the years, I am grateful to Alicia Boutilier, Qenefer Brown, Bob Carney, Louise Dennys, Louise Dompierre, Brian Foss, Robert Fyfe, Dominic Hardy, Charles Hill, Kristina Huneault, Franca Iacovetta, Lynda Jessup, Alan Klinkhoff, Denise Leclerc, Loren R. Lerner, Diane Martin, Kerry Mason-Morton, Tom Mathien, the late Doris McCarthy, the late Joan McInnes, Jennifer McLeod, David Milne Jr, the late Kathleen Milne, Gerta Moray, Joan Murray, John O'Brian, Denise Oleksijczuk, Kim Ondaatje, Michael Ondaatje, the late P.K. Page, Larry Pfaff, François Ricard, Pierre Salinger, Julia Scalzo, the late Carl Schaefer, Hélène Sicotte, the late Frances K. Smith, Tom Smart, Matt Snell, Joan Stebbins, Mrs A. Walters, and Joyce Zemans. Thanks to Katarzyna Rogalska and Marilyn McKay, excellent research assistants in the book's early stages; to Ersy Contogouris, for outstanding help in the final stages; and to Ray Ellenwood, for welcoming me into his archives and for allowing me to borrow translations of two Automatiste texts.

Thanks to the many copyright holders and their representatives who permitted me to include the documents and images found in this book. I feel especially grateful, for their cordiality and generosity, to the families of Robert Bruce, Paraskeva Clark, Alex Colville, Charles Comfort, Lawren Stewart Harris, Laurence Hyde, Fernand Leduc and Thérèse Renaud, Alexandra Luke, Harry Mayerovitch, Louis Muhlstock, Kathleen Munn, Paul Petroff (Nathan Petroff), Carl Schaefer, Marian Scott, F.B. Taylor, and Ina D.D. Uhthoff; to Melanie Johnson; to James Lorimer; to Tom Smart; to Ken Stofer; to Danielle Currie at the Vancouver Art Gallery; to Lina Doyon of the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec; to Christina Hedlund at the Simon Fraser University Galleries; to Lisa Bouraly of the Fondadion Guido Molinari; to Meghan Hansen at the Manitoba Legislative Library; to Lois Eames-Valliant; to Janice Anderson at CWAHI, to Tracy Mallon-Jensen at the Art Gallery of Ontario; to Chelsea Shriver at the UBC Library; to Linda Jansma and Alessandra Cirelli of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery; to Stephen Topfer of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; to Niamh O'Laoghaire and Rachel Brodie of the Varley Gallery; to Marnee Gamble of University of Toronto Archives and Records Service; to Nicole Fletcher and Andrew Kear of the Winnipeg Art Gallery; to Christina Hedlund at Simon Fraser University; and to Travis Lutley and Kellie Moynihan at the Glenbow Museum.

Thanks to Jonathan Crago at McGill-Queen's University Press for being a wise, creative, and helpful editorial presence from the first phone call onward, and to the series editors, Martha Langford and Sandra Paikowsky, for their support and ideas. I am grateful also to the anonymous reviewers, whose advice proved to be immensely important. My thanks to McGill-Queen's University Press and the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program.

This book owes something to a great many historians of Canadian art, but special thanks go to Dennis Reid for initial advice and support, and to Charles Hill and Esther Trépanier, who set a precedent in Canadian art history in their contextual approach and their invaluable writings on the thirties.

Every effort has been made to find copyright holders, to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material, and to credit them appropriately. I will welcome any notice of errors or omissions in this regard so that I can make corrections in subsequent editions.

A Note on the Text

With a very few exceptions, the endnotes in this book are used only for the citation of sources. The endnotes reflect the vastness of my debt to art scholars who have studied aspects of this period and its artists.

The footnotes scattered throughout the book identify terms and names and provide details not commonly known or easily found in other books on art. I have assumed that readers have a basic familiarity with the best-known Western artists and artistic movements, or can easily look them up.

A WORD ON TRANSLATIONS FROM THE FRENCH

The translations of brief quotes are mine. The translators of the documents in each chapter are acknowledged in footnotes to the document titles. Most translations are by Lola Lemire Tostevin; others are by Ray Ellenwood and Ersy Contogouris. I owe them all many thanks.

Preface

This book is an exploration of the writings of Canadian artists and their critics as seen against three turbulent decades. It is a gathering of evidence of their perspectives on the issues that mattered to them, and of specific connections among art, politics, and society.

For this project, which grew out of a fascination with artists' and critics' writings that long preceded my career as an art historian, I read thousands of letters, private journals, Canadian newspaper and magazine articles and reviews, and other published and unpublished texts from the mid-twenties to the mid-fifties. My study of these writings was an attempt both to see from within an author's field of vision and to step outside it and take a critical position. Wherever possible I read the published texts in their original periodicals rather than among clippings in artists' files, since it was useful to know the periodicals' ideological bents, obvious or subtle. The periodicals were usually intended for particular audiences, and a writer will naturally say certain things to some audiences and not to others. This part of the exercise also led to a search for as much information as I could find about the periodicals and their editors. The annotated list of periodicals in the bibliography is a partial outcome of this search.

Studying the documents I had gathered, I looked for the major themes, the most significant debates, the especially powerful and far-reaching statements.

As I read I discovered two striking shifts of perspective: one in 1939, when the Depression ended and the Second World War began, and the other in the late forties with the onset of the postwar economic boom, the Cold War, and the settling into people's consciousness of the presence of the atomic bomb. These two shifts were anything but complete, but they stood out enough to require a structure that reflected them. I chose clusters of artists' and critics' writings that, in addressing important themes, were at least sometimes directly related to these shifts. For each cluster of writings I constructed for myself long timelines, detailing all the relevant facts I had about the artists and critics involved and about related writings, local contexts, and world events. These timelines in turn opened up new connections and correspondences. Certain narrative lines emerged, and among them I looked for the ones that best captured the fundamental points made by the artists and critics. I wrote the narratives, combined them with the clusters of documents, and arrived at eight quite separate "chapters" of an unusual but satisfying character. I finished off each chapter with a sort of road map that precedes the documents and explains my choices.

The use of narrative allowed me to put each of the writings into its own *moment*, and to show how ideas changed as contexts changed. It provided a strong structure

for lacing together whole networks of detail about the artists' lives, their supporters and opponents, and the events in their worlds. In turn, these networks of detail reach across the chapters and join with the work of a great many other art historians in constructing a larger history of Canadian art during these decades of conflict and crisis.

Of course, no history is objective. The literary theorist Ondřej Sládek observed that writers of historical narratives construct worlds "filled with places, objects, characters and relations between and among them" just like writers of fiction; and although the historian tries to tell the truth, every historical world is "*incomplete* and *full of gaps* – just like fiction."[1] But within those limits, I have done my best to represent fairly the artists and critics and their lives and writings.

Although almost all of the authors of the documents I studied identified themselves as modern in one way or another, my intent has not been to define "modern" or "modernism" within Canadian art history or to apply contemporary theory to those terms, any more than it has been to do a detailed study of paintings. My interest is to understand the specific ways in which artists and critics used the terms in their own contexts.

The business of context is a complex one. As the cultural studies scholar Nikos Papastergiadis reminds us, we can no longer define context "as if it possessed a singular set of national traits that are forged in an exclusive setting over a sustained period of time, nor is it sufficient to identify the primacy of formal concerns. Rather, the concept of context is more meaningful if it includes a multi-temporal engagement with the past and the present, a cosmopolitan vision of the cultural horizon, and a specific engagement with social realities."[2] That is what I have attempted. I look at the writings as reflections of a fast-moving modern world and its crises, and the ideas behind the writings as never merely derivative of Europe in spite of self-conscious ties to European artistic currents.

There were many forms of modernism in Canada as elsewhere, and, as you will see, each form tended to construct its own history; that is an aspect of its specificity. It must be said that in constructing such a history, the production of other cultures was often appropriated without acknowledgment or understanding of its meanings, and in Canada, this amounted to a form of colonialism in relation to Native cultures. The writers of the late twenties and thirties did not provide a critique of that practice. They generally wrote from a primitivist perspective: Native cultures were said to be disappearing and could thus be situated in a timeless past, to be used as desired to give a sense of a national heritage or to show that academic education and "professionalism" were irrelevant to great art.[3] As Gerta Moray noted so aptly, Emily Carr's work has "provided the flashpoint for recurring controversies"[4] in this respect, especially in relation to the 1927 National Gallery *Exhibition of West Coast Art – Native and Modern*, and in the chapter on Carr you will find citations for that literature. Louise Vigneault shows that French Canadian as well as English Canadian art writers joined the primitivist discourse: "Primi-

tivism then has the advantage of defining a certain dimension of French Canadian modernity, nevertheless without proposing models that are too experimental and without sacrificing local imperatives … In fact it responds to the double need to be rooted in a distant past and to be part of a universalist philosophy."[5]

There were of course other, more positive aspects to the construction of modernist histories. While European artists in varying configurations were central to these constructions, artists from elsewhere, together with music, literature, and a great variety of theories of art, were brought in. So, the specific creative ancestries of artists as they and their critics constructed them differed greatly, and in ways that said much about them, as you will see.

The first few chapters of the book show how, in the late twenties and early thirties, the isolation felt earlier in the century by Canadian artists with modernist convictions began to be replaced by an atmosphere of support, however thin. Although this began to happen in a number of cities, it was true especially in Toronto and Montreal, which were very much the centres of art and publishing until after the Second World War. The cultural historian Andrew Nurse explains the change in sociological terms, using the concept of an "artistic field," which he based on his reading of the German sociologist-philosopher Jürgen Habermas. An artistic field is a set of ideological and institutional relations that establishes and upholds "specific value structures and the social relations that follow from them,"[6] with constantly shifting connections to a larger social context. The modern artistic field "increasingly linked art to a self-referential aesthetic," and competed with an earlier field that "linked art to 'elevated' elite pursuits."[7] The modern artistic field, Nurse says, rose in Canada in the twenties when government institutions began to supplant free market practices with their own privileging of the nationalist Group of Seven painters, and as a consequence "aesthetics – as opposed to the market – became a key to value."[8] Nurse's overarching framework may only interpret history to a certain point, but it is a useful thing to keep in mind since the valuing of aesthetics went on to become a force far beyond the influence of state institutions as new exhibiting societies, new critics, and new artistic practices became established. All of this affected the question of how, or whether, an artist should address the extreme political, economic, and social realities of the era.

In 1930, the artist-writer Bertram Brooker remarked in his newspaper column "The Seven Arts" that Canadian art was beginning to "bear a closer relationship to the modern movement in other countries" because a growing group of artists was now emphasizing "form." This emphasis on form is exactly what the modernist critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell regarded as the legacy Cézanne left in carrying out his famous wish to make something solid and enduring out of impressionism, like the

art of the museums. Since Brooker offers such a useful distinction between the nationalistic Group of Seven landscape painting of the twenties and a growing "third movement" – a "movement" far more open to the larger world and its social and political realities – I take you into the book with an excerpt from his column:

> The change … signifies a break with the landscape obsession that has dominated un-academic painting for ten or fifteen years, and academic painting for forty or fifty years before that. The human figure, so long neglected, except by a few orthodox portrait painters, will again become a subject – has already done so, in fact – of interest to Canadian artists. This will mean, more, I think, than the mere multiplication of figure paintings. It should produce an approach to every kind of subject, landscape included, that will be different from either the academic or the Group approach. In a word, by placing emphasis on "form" instead of on "atmosphere" (which was the academic obsession) or on "rhythm" (which was the Group of Seven obsession) the third movement in Canadian painting will inevitably bear a closer relationship to the modern movement in other countries.[9]

Canadian Painters in a Modern World, 1925–1955

1

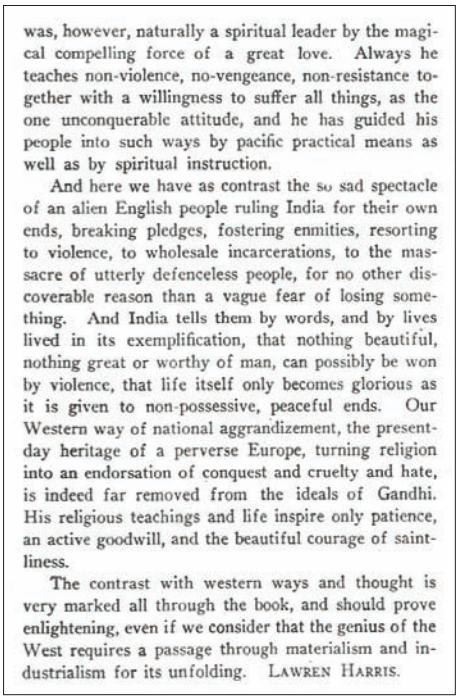
Lawren Stewart Harris, Europe, and the Bodhisattva in the Next Room

> As a Canadian almost ferociously patriotic, with a great feeling for the country, which has been greatly bolstered by Whitman, hesitating to go to Europe or even New York for fear of being seduced from his utterly native viewpoint. Everything new is going to happen in this country ... He feels himself in the vanguard of the movement and is looking for every sign ... He hates Europe and is impatient with slavish admiration of anything that emanates from there.
>
> Bertram Brooker

In 1925 when the artist-writer Bertram Brooker made these notes on a fictional character "something like" his friend Lawren Stewart Harris, Harris was in the prime of his career, painting mostly northern Ontario and Rocky Mountain landscapes and spending three months or more each year camping in those regions.[1] He exhibited with the Group of Seven, who by this time had national and international critical support, and he was known as their unofficial leader. In Toronto, where he lived in wealth and high society with his family, he had recently given his first solo exhibition, published what has been described as "Canada's first book of urban modernist free verse,"[2] written articles and reviews for the *Canadian Forum* and the *Canadian Bookman*, and joined the *Forum*'s editorial committee.

Scholars have shown with thoroughness and insight that in the complicated and sometimes contradictory essays that Lawren Harris wrote and published, he wove together nationalism, art, and spiritual progress in ways that involved distancing Canada and sometimes all of North America from Europe.[3] In the interest of adding a new perspective, I am focusing on what *exactly* Harris was saying about Europe, and on a striking change in his attitude toward Europe. This not only reveals something about the ideas of an English Canadian cultural leader who was central to a romantic tradition in English Canadian art: on a much broader level, it reflects the momentous shifts in relations among countries in these years.

I begin with Harris's review, published in the April 1925 *Canadian Forum*, of the book *Mahatma Gandhi* by Romain Rolland, the French pacifist and Nobel Prize–winning novelist and essayist. Harris started by praising Gandhi's spirituality and non-violent policies and comparing Gandhi to Christ, probably to draw in the magazine's mostly Protestant English Canadian readers. But then he contrasted Gandhi's policies provocatively with "our Western way of national aggrandizement, the present-day heritage of a perverse Europe, turning religion into an endorsation of conquest and cruelty and hate." In setting Gandhi and Europe as moral opposites in this way, Harris actually took some of the nuances out of Rolland's argument and



was, however, naturally a spiritual leader by the magical compelling force of a great love. Always he teaches non-violence, no-vengeance, non-resistance together with a willingness to suffer all things, as the one unconquerable attitude, and he has guided his people into such ways by pacific practical means as well as by spiritual instruction.

And here we have as contrast the so sad spectacle of an alien English people ruling India for their own ends, breaking pledges, fostering enmities, resorting to violence, to wholesale incarcerations, to the massacre of utterly defenceless people, for no other discoverable reason than a vague fear of losing something. And India tells them by words, and by lives lived in its exemplification, that nothing beautiful, nothing great or worthy of man, can possibly be won by violence, that life itself only becomes glorious as it is given to non-possessive, peaceful ends. Our Western way of national aggrandizement, the present-day heritage of a perverse Europe, turning religion into an endorsation of conquest and cruelty and hate, is indeed far removed from the ideals of Gandhi. His religious teachings and life inspire only patience, an active goodwill, and the beautiful courage of saintliness.

The contrast with western ways and thought is very marked all through the book, and should prove enlightening, even if we consider that the genius of the West requires a passage through materialism and industrialism for its unfolding. LAWREN HARRIS.

Fig. 1.1
Excerpt from Lawren S. Harris's review of Romain Roland's book *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Canadian Forum* 5, no. 25 (April 1925): 213.

made the contrast even starker. Not surprisingly, the review got at least one angry response. John D. Sinclair of Toronto, formerly with the Scottish Churches College in Calcutta (Kolkata), sent a letter to the *Forum* expressing his disappointment that the magazine would publish such a damning and indiscriminate judgment of "the Imperial Government in its greatest and most momentous and most difficult task." The writer evidently had no idea what a British departure would mean, "especially for the politically dumb and helpless masses of India." This arrogance gave Harris another opportunity to speak out, and his response is a further denouncement of Europe's oppressive colonial policies.

Harris had by this time devoted himself to Theosophy, an international movement founded half a century earlier on teachings drawn from Eastern and Western spiritual and philosophical writings, and on the belief that it held the key to all religions.* For Theosophists, the divine is the eternal, universal aspect of the human being, and one must endlessly struggle toward it. Theosophy led Harris to what Northrop Frye called "a commitment to painting as a way of life, or, perhaps better, as a sacramental activity expressing a faith, and so analogous to the practicing of a religion" – a romantic pursuit, in Frye's view.[4] There is a connection here to the philosopher Charles Taylor's ideas on the romantic, which he sees not as a period but as the development of a "social imaginary" that goes back centuries, and continues forward to the present. To Taylor, the romantic search for an "ethic of authenticity"[5] required those who had abandoned orthodoxy to fall back on their own internal resources and accept both the vulnerability and the freedom that result. When Taylor says that the "modern cosmic imaginary" opened up "a space in which people can wander between and around" all kinds of spirituality and/or materialism, he speaks of just such movements as Theosophy.[6] In fact, of those who followed alternate religions, Theosophists were especially free to wander: it was their task to find their own ways through the movement's vast writings, since it had no official priests or

* The religious studies scholar Gillian McCann has pointed out in "A Pilgrim Forever: The Life and Thought of Albert Smythe" (185–6) that Theosophy was far from being an oddity in pre–Second World War Canada and certain other countries; rather, it was one of several alternative spiritual practices that, taken together, were quite widespread, enough so that scholars no longer see modernity quite so simply as a turn toward the secular. These alternative practices provided an influential critique of industrial civilization and its dependence on the rational for solutions to twentieth-century problems.

gurus. Lawren Harris chose to read every day from a version of the Bhagavad Gita with commentary by William Quan Judge, a founder of the Theosophical Society and a hero to Harris.[7]

A year after his review of the Romain Roland book, Harris published "Revelation of Art in Canada" as the lead article for the 15 July 1926 issue of the *Canadian Theosophist*, and here as in the review, though less sharply, he distanced himself from Europe. In an often-quoted passage – and it is important to remember that he wrote this for Theosophists, who were used to such language – he declared that the "clear, replenishing, virgin north," which apparently meant everything above the border cities,* provided a "spiritual flow that will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America."[8] This reflects a Theosophical belief that in North America a new "race" would develop (a spiritual race, though on this point some scholars interpret the writings otherwise,[9] and some of the writings are ambiguous). Harris argued that Canadian artists understood the North better than anyone else and that their work was a result of having absorbed it; this gave them the courage to fight off "the insistent, distracting superficial emanations from older growths," particularly from Europe, with its "weariness and consequent doubts and melancholy."[10] Harris does not suggest ignoring the great work of "all peoples," since studying it can allow one to "turn to account here and now what we find will help us." The point is rather to avoid *clinging* to it out of a sense of inferiority, for then "even the glory of the art of the ages gets between us and the creative life here and now."[11] And, clinging to "superficial emanations" – the second-rate European art and artifacts and habits brought into Canada – was to Harris an even worse and more persistent problem. So, this essay was not a simplistic dismissal of Europe. On the other hand, he doesn't mention Canadian artists' enormous debt to Scandinavian painting, to impressionism in general, and to other European sources.[12] In his eagerness for an authentically Canadian art, those roots vanish.

"Revelation of Art in Canada" and Harris's earlier review and letter in the *Forum* reflect the fact that he was, like Theosophists in general[13] and certainly like those in Ireland and India, a promoter of the cultural autonomy of countries. His diction in "Revelation of Art in Canada" recalls the "anti-imperial geography" of the Irish Theosophist poet J.H. Cousins, who had moved to India to help with the Theosophical Society's project of freeing the Indian educational system of its pervasively Eurocentric cultural biases.[14] Cousins said in 1919 that education must constantly encourage "the declaration of one's own temperamental and racial identity as a nation or individual," even while recognizing the "universal Brotherhood"

* The North is whatever one imagines it to be, and it has been imagined a great many ways in Canadian arts and literature, as Sherrill Grace shows in her book *Canada and the Idea of North*, and Eric Kaufmann in his article "'Naturalizing the Nation.'" Lawren Harris never defines it, and we can only imagine what his sense of North is by considering the places where he travelled and painted.