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**Creating Room: Canadian Women's Mural Painting and
Rereadings of the Public and the Private**

Janice Anderson

A Thesis

in

The Special

Individualized Program

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ABSTRACT

Creating Room: Canadian Women's Mural Painting and Rereadings of the Public and the Private

**Janice Anderson, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2002**

Feminist theorists have used the literal and symbolic meanings of public and private spaces as a framework for understanding the marginalization of women within social structures. Interpreting mural paintings by Canadian women as incursions into a space that is commonly seen and understood as having a limited availability allows for the explication of those works as confounding simplistic understandings of the relationships between women and space. Stringent definitions of the public necessarily cast women as victims of a system within which their experiences are, in fact, marginalized, but that also may be reread to acknowledge their contributions. Like women themselves, mural paintings hover uneasily on the boundaries of the mainstream - neither completely integrated into the art history canon, nor absolutely excluded. In addition, women have often chosen as their subjects the epic topics to which murals are customarily dedicated and which symbolize the social discourses wherein women's contributions are habitually disregarded. By choosing to participate in the construction of those discourses, women have insisted on the incorporation of their experiences. At the intersection of women/murals/public I will seek a more inclusive Canadian art history with the structure of exclusion dismantled, reexamined and reconstructed to acknowledge the contributions of women artists.

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INTRODUCTION

High Culture plays a specifiable part in the reproduction of women's oppression, in the circulation of relative values and meanings for the ideological constructs of masculinity and femininity. Representing creativity as masculine and Woman as the beautiful image for the desiring male gaze, High Culture systematically denies knowledge of women as producers of culture and meanings. Indeed, High Culture is decisively positioned against feminism. Not only does it exclude the knowledge of women artists produced within feminism, but it works in a phallogentric signifying system in which woman is a sign within discourses on masculinity.¹

Throughout time humans have designated the spaces they occupy with naturally formed or artificially constructed walls. The walls have had, and continue to have, multiple purposes; they provide shelter and protection, they designate space for different uses, they might be decorative or forbidding, they direct traffic, and in today's world they fundamentally design the spaces of modern city dwelling. Ancient peoples drew pictures on them, among the most famous being the ones surviving from the Palaeolithic Age at Lascaux in France. The tradition of defining space using walls and decorating those walls with paintings has continued until today. Painting on walls could be described as one of the most enduring art forms we know in the history of humankind.

Walls are composed of inert materials but they are not ideologically neutral. Physical factors such as the distance between them, their height and their location delimit their purposes and help to define the social positions of the individuals who pass beside and between them. As symbolic controls on human behaviour, space and human

¹ Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, "Patriarchal Power and the PreRaphaelites," *Art History* 4 (1984): 494, cited in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 17.

participation within it delineate the hierarchies of gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical appearance that govern human movement. In Western societies the most freedom of movement and access to spaces goes to the persons at the top of the hierarchy - most frequently men of Western European descent belonging to the middle and upper classes. Other groups are restricted in passage by various aspects of their marginality. In some places, and at some times, for example, wealthy women would have more access to greater varieties of space than working-class men. In other locations at other times, the opposite would be true. But at no place and at no time would any member of any combination of marginalized peoples have the same access to the totality of space as men of privileged status. Walls, therefore, embody an ideological weight as signifiers of social mores, specifying where a human can or should be. The space they define is political.²

Working from the idea of space as a politically discursive field, within which meaning is both constructed and reiterated, this dissertation will address three fundamental, interdependent topics. My first and primary concern will be to consider the literal and symbolic meanings of public and private spaces, addressing particularly the trope by which men are assigned “by nature” to the public and women are similarly relegated to the private. I will explore the ways in which women’s art practices can be mapped across those meanings to reveal, but also to confound, definitions of women’s “proper” roles as artists. Interpreting women’s art production as work, and subsequently as a challenge to the relegation to the private, and looking specifically at the painting of walls – that is, at mural painting - will provide a perspective from which the history of

² My discussion of space as a politically discursive field is drawn from the writings of Gillian Rose, Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Nancy Duncan Bodyspace (London: Routledge, 1996); Doreen Massey, Space, Place and Gender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

women's art in Canada might be rethought. I will suggest that stringent definitions of public and private necessarily cast women as victims of a system that has, in fact, suppressed their identities, but that also may be re-read to reveal what history has kept silent - that women, like men, engage in the practice of making art. By examining the lives of women who painted murals I hope to reveal their stories and simultaneously to propose that the very existence of their work precludes a homogeneous definition of "woman," or a simple understanding of the public and private divisions that have come to be accepted as definitively separating men's and women's experiences. Used often as a tool not only to define the marginalization of women's histories, but also to explain that marginalization, the issue of women's confinement to the private sphere has served a feminist purpose in the search for an understanding of the unequal divisions between men and women. This makes the walls that define the (sometimes abstract) spaces between "inside" and "outside," "public" and "private," particularly symbolic, and has a great deal to do with my interest in them. I will interpret murals painted by women as political acts, the making of which has marked women's presence in public both in the literal interpretation of the word, and in the symbolic sense in which incursions into the public arena signify an insistence upon inclusion.

My second concern will focus on one of the reasons that I initially selected mural paintings as a forum for investigation. Murals provide a position from which to examine and criticize the way art has been hierarchized, frequently to the detriment of women's production. Historically valorized in the canon of Western art history, but often excluded from Canadian survey texts where the focus tends to be on easel painting, murals simultaneously have a series of qualities that sets them apart from the standards by which

art is normatively valued and defined. Questions arise concerning whether or not their site-specificity defines them, or whether a more portable work might also, under certain circumstances, be considered a mural painting.³ In addition, the combination and complexity of definitive issues results in an artwork that poses some questions for an art market based on the commodity value of work that can be identified as that of one “hand” and work that is more readily transportable. Murals sit uneasily inside and outside this commodity structure. What can be done, for example, with the belief in the genius of the solitary (male) artist when murals are often designed by one person and painted by others, painted by groups of people, or commissioned by individuals who demand input into the subject, design or execution? Although these features of mural painting can also apply to a variety of other media (for example, sculpture, computer art or Renaissance and Baroque painting - although they are often conveniently ignored when easel work is under discussion), they are more consistent in murals and might, in fact, be considered to some extent defining characteristics. Nevertheless, murals do not lend themselves to clear definition. Canadian artists have opted, for the most part, to create their murals in *toile marouflée* (oil on canvas affixed to the wall), rather than the fresco techniques (*buon fresco* or *fresco secco*), historically more common in Europe and Mexico. While most sources agree that *toile marouflée* constitutes a medium acceptable to the definition of a mural, when other media enter the question, ceramics, for example, or glass, or three-dimensional works in multi-media formats, the definition becomes more debatable. In conjunction with the issues of site-specificity or medium, other questions might be: “Is a

³ Folding screens, for example, popular in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth United States could be considered “portable walls.” Whether or not their decoration would then fit the description “mural painting” is an example of one of the defining difficulties.

mural ever framed - beyond, that is, the framing provided by architectural detail?" or "Must a work be of large dimensions before it can be defined as a mural?" For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I will define a mural as a large-format painting, framed or unframed, worked either directly on a wall surface or painted on canvas and at some point affixed. It is often, but not necessarily, commissioned, sometimes, but not essentially, collaborative, and it habitually resides - at least in its original incarnation - in a location other than a standard museum venue. My main concern will focus on the public nature of mural painting and its appearance in a variety of locations, including public sites. Regardless of the gender of the painter the problematics posed by mural paintings confront standard readings in the history of art, and murals therefore provide a point or space of intervention.

My third concern will involve consideration of a subject that elaborates and perhaps focuses the first two issues. When women have chosen to paint murals, they have often selected (or been commissioned to address) the epic topics generally considered appropriate to large works of art. These topics frequently parallel important signifiers for the control and propagation of knowledge - for instance the writing of history, religious discourses, the construction of social and cultural identities and the availability of access to education; these topics, upon which I will elaborate later in this introduction, provide the chapter headings for this dissertation. Women's experiences are frequently excluded from these important and formative issues in the construction of Western society, and in this sense murals by women that address these subjects represent the ways that women have contributed to the formation of social discourses. As mural painters women have generally (although not exclusively) used the same signifiers in their works as have men.

This has meant first that work by women muralists has met a norm of acceptability that has generally guaranteed its inclusion and acceptance by various mural commissioners and the viewing public (although women themselves have not often been solicited for mural commissions). It has also meant, however, that women have contributed to the very systems that have denied them subjectivity by mimicking those systems and thereby repeating and reinforcing the convictions that define them.

As a feminist writer, it has been of some importance to me to create a document that would not function as a chronological narrative. In other words, I do not wish simply to begin with the earliest records of women mural painters and discuss them in the order in which they executed their paintings. My goal is to sidestep the tenet of art history that traditionally has seen one school of painting as developing from the school that preceded it. Since women have typically been left out of writings on art, and the art history canon has been very much constructed on the linear progression of schools of art through the ages, my hope is to group the murals in a way that would not follow that outline but rather would have a thematic organization. I have been guided here by Michel Foucault's description of his own methodology:

I adopt the methodological precaution and the radical but unaggressive [sic] scepticism which makes it a principle not to regard the point in time where we are now standing as the outcome of a teleological progression which it would be one's business to reconstruct historically: that scepticism regarding ourselves and what we are, our here and now, which prevents one from assuming that what we have is better than - or more than - in the past.⁴

⁴ Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 Trans. Colin Gordon et al. Ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 49. Cited by Terry Goldie, Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures (Kingston, Montreal, London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 7.

My specific intention in using such a schematic is to suggest theoretically a different way of examining the history of art, relying consciously on themes rather than chronology. My more general intention is to seek a different organizational structure that would create room for the inclusion of women's productions. "Creating room" provides the title for this dissertation and is intended as a metaphor for the objective of the research: to conflate concepts of literal, physical space with the search for an ideological space in which women and others can move.

The study is organized around a time frame that includes work dating from the late nineteenth century to about 1960. I chose 1960 as the closing date because it seemed to mark a time when there was a change both in the locations where murals appeared and in the subjects chosen for representation - many more works appeared in exterior spaces after that date, for instance, and much of the work became abstract. The large-scale commissioning after 1960 of public murals by women artists funded by governments and corporations is a significant topic for feminist research - the dimensions of the project, however, constitute a separate study and could not be included here. In addition, I restricted the research for this dissertation almost entirely to those murals painted by women in Ontario and Quebec, along with one Maritime mural by Pegi Nicol MacLeod. This allowed me to focus on works that I was able to see - an essential component of the dissertation since so many of the murals were little documented and reproductions of them - where they existed at all - were often of poor quality. The mural work of many, if not most, of the artists I was planning to discuss had not been researched in detail before, and because some of the artists were unknown to Canadian art history each would require extensive primary research in order for their stories to be assembled. As a result of the

far-ranging research that would be required in order to discuss each of the murals, I knew limits would have to be placed on the number of artists and their works that I would be able to study in sufficient depth to make their inclusion productive to the aims of the dissertation.

Although the history of mural painting in Canada is not particularly well-documented, this does not mean that no Canadian murals exist; in fact, scores of Canadian artists, both historical and contemporary, have created murals. Many late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canadian artists and critics had been exposed to mural decoration in Europe and the United States and returned to Canada with the intention of initiating a similar tradition. They were often interested in the ability of mural painting to promote nationalist thinking, and they published articles on the subject in attempts to solicit support for mural projects.⁵ In spite of efforts to initiate and promote a mural tradition, most particularly by George Agnew Reid (1860-1947), however, mural painting in Canada never would become the phenomenon it became in Mexico or the United States. Published articles dating from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1950s bemoaned Canada's lack of a mural tradition. Yet there had been a consistent sense in the early years of the twentieth century that Canadian art was on the verge of a mural epoch. The *Toronto Daily Star*, for example, headlined a 1913 article about Gustav Hahn (1866-

⁵ See, for example, J.W. Beatty, "A Canadian Painter and his Work," *Canadian Magazine* 26 (April, 1906): 546-551; Albert Carman, "Wall Paintings in Europe," *Canadian Magazine* 26 (February, 1906): 307-312; F.S. Challoner [sic], "Mural Decoration," *The Canadian Architect and Builder* (May, 1904): 90-92; Arthur Lismer, "Mural Painting," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July 1933): 127-135; George Reid, "Mural Decoration," *Canadian Magazine* 10 (1897-1898): 501-508; Ramsay Traquair, "Mural Decoration," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (September/October 1926): 183-184.

1962) with the words “Easel Picture To-day, Mural Vogue Coming.”⁶ Another example comes from *Toronto Saturday Night*, also in 1913, when an article about art in Winnipeg included the following: “A special aim of the [Winnipeg School of Art] will be the preparing of students as decorative artists, capable of designing and executing good artistic work for the embellishment of buildings. This art of mural decoration is generally recognized as the great field for artists in the immediate future.”⁷ In spite of the smaller numbers of Canadian murals, however, many well-known Canadian artists were feted for their work. Among the works singled out for praise were George Reid’s murals for the Toronto Municipal Buildings (1897-99), Charles Comfort’s (1900-94) Dominion Bank, Vancouver mural (1950), Arthur Crisp’s (1881-1966) murals for Toronto’s Bank of Commerce (1931), and F.S. Challener’s (1869-1959) murals in the King Edward Hotel, Toronto (c.1906 – no longer extant) - that series being only one of Challener’s numerous mural commissions. In Quebec, both Ozias Leduc (1864-1955) and Napoleon Bourassa (1827-1916) were engaged in executing many mural commissions for the decoration of churches. Canadian murals were also painted by Charles Huot (1855-1930), Robert Pilot (1898-1967), C.W. Simpson (1878-1942), R. York Wilson (1907-84), and many others. The tradition may never have flourished, but it did not die out, either. More recent artists such as Takao Tanabe (b.1926) and Jack Shadbolt (1909-98), for example, have painted many murals in Canadian venues and mural painting continues today to be a frequently selected mode of expression. (For a lengthier discussion of the history of Canadian mural painting, and the mural painting of Mexico and the United States, please see Appendix I.)

⁶ “Easel Picture To-day, Mural Vogue Coming,” *Toronto Daily Star* 19 March, 1913, 27.

⁷ “Art in Winnipeg,” *Toronto Saturday Night* (6 September 1913): 31.

In addition, regardless of the stereotyping of expectations for women's art that might be presumed to have prevented women from working in public, and in spite of the additional reality that women have not participated in the painting of murals to the same extent as men, there have been, and continue to be, significant numbers of women who have made contributions to the mural tradition in a Canadian context.⁸ Referencing in this introduction the work of one particular mural painter, Yvonne McKague Housser (1897-1996), as paradigmatic of the issues the dissertation as a whole will address, I will present the discussion that will outline the conceptual base for the balance of the study. I will begin, however, by outlining briefly the history of feminist discourses surrounding definitions of space.

The designation of public space as masculine and private space as feminine is speculated to have originated at the end of the Middle Ages with the beginnings of the spread of technology and the subsequent divorcing of the concepts of "home" and "work," a division that continues today.⁹ There might be little significance to the idea of separate spaces for men and for women were it not for the fact that the gendering of space is a major component in a larger matrix of control, that of men over women. In fact, the constraints that have aligned women with the private sphere have not simultaneously granted them control of either space, public or private. In other words,

⁸ Colin MacDonald's *Dictionary of Canadian Artists* (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1972), covering only artists whose names begin with A through S, for example, lists dozens of women as painters of murals, including Bobs Coghill Haworth, Yvonne McKague Housser, Rita Letendre, Sylvia Lefkowitz, Daphne Odjig, and Sarah Robertson.

⁹ Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986), 39. There are some authors, however, who consider that the notion that women are uniquely fashioned for the private sphere dates back to the time of Aristotle. See Amanda Vickery, "Historiographical Review: Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 383.

although private space is referred to as space that “belongs” to women, the idea of ownership is something of a misrepresentation since the designation has not paralleled the control by women of private spaces. Women may have been consigned to the private, but men have controlled all spaces, public certainly, but private as well, regardless of the reiteration of the concept that women rule in the home. In fact, much interior space, particularly in the Victorian era, was specifically designed for exclusive male use. As Annmarie Adams has noted, even though much of the focus of the architectural history of the home has centred on rooms associated with women’s experience – the parlour, the kitchen or the nursery – an equal number of rooms were designated for men’s use. The dining room, for example, was left exclusively to the use of men after women vacated it following a meal. Victorian furniture in dining rooms was often dark and heavy to suit a masculine aesthetic, and “in larger houses, the library, study, smoking room, and billiards room were designed especially for the man of the house.”¹⁰ According to nineteenth-century British interior decorators Rhoda and Agnes Garrett, the masculine designation of interior space functioned to “remind one of the British boast that every Englishman’s house is his castle, and that he wishes neither to observe nor to be observed when he retires into [its] dignified seclusion....”¹¹ Thus the “gaze” that the male owner of the home presumes as his right both in public and in private is denied to the woman not only in the public arena, where she is the object of that gaze, but also in private. The home as a space designed first and foremost to provide seclusion for its male owner elides the role

¹⁰ Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), 77. Adams notes here that the issue of the designation of some interior, private space as masculine has been little explored.

¹¹ Rhoda Garrett and Agnes Garrett, *Suggestions for House Decoration* (London: Macmillan, 1876), 28. Cited by Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, 77.

played by women in the maintenance of that sanctuary and assigns to them the secondary role of caregiver. Women did not discover within the private realm designated as most suitable to their “natures” a place where their own lives and experiences would be more highly valued.

In addition to the complexity governing the meaning of “private” as it relates to issues of control, some spaces designated as “private” are put to a public use. In Victorian and Edwardian homes, for example, the parlour within the “private” home was designated as a public space where visitors were greeted and public interactions took place. On the other hand, one might consider a public facility such as a hospital to be a “public” space wherein very private rituals take place. In other words, there are spaces that function as both public and private and space as absolutely public or private is never ultimately clearly defined. Its meaning within discourses of power shifts continuously.

The matrix of control that operates to designate the meanings of public and private spaces can be understood as both overt and covert. There are many historical examples of overt protests by both men and women against, for example, women’s struggle to move from their domestic confinement into the public arena by demanding the right to vote, or, as another example, to attain the necessary educational credentials to participate in professional careers. But there are also more indirect ways to keep people in their respective places. One simple way that women have subtly been kept from using public forums in the past, for example, has been a failure to include women’s washrooms in public buildings.¹² Women would consequently be unable to work in these buildings or

¹² Abigail A. Van Slyck, “The Lady and the Library Loafer: Gender and Public Space in Victorian America,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31 (Winter, 1996): 237-238; Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, 167; Lynne Walker, “Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-

otherwise use them for anything more than cursory purposes. There is no implication here of a necessarily overt attempt to prevent women from using buildings constructed for public purposes. Rather, the thinking would follow the lines of “Since women don’t use these buildings, then they don’t need washrooms.” But the corollary is also true; lacking these simple facilities, women would not be able to participate, except in token ways, in the public activities the buildings housed.

On a larger scale, one successful means of generally keeping historical women from transgressing their confinement to the private has been through the association of licentious or profligate behaviour with women’s appearances in public places. In nineteenth-century Canada, for example, a woman walking alone at night on a public street, outside the private sphere considered proper to her, might be required by the authorities to “give a satisfactory account of herself” or risk being labeled a “streetwalker.”¹³ That the particular word “streetwalker” is a synonym for a female prostitute is particularly telling, since a man might also be a “streetwalker” if the meaning were to refer merely to the act of walking on the street. However, a man would not generally be designated immoral simply for doing so. The parallel between walking in a public space and dissolute behaviour was almost always applied specifically to women. This was a direct result of the definition of public space as a place where “nice” women did not appear unaccompanied.

1900,” Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed. *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 77.

¹³ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 79.

In more contemporary understandings of space the affiliation between public streets and prostitution remains intact, although women are generally no longer in danger of being kept off the streets by being accused of immorality by the police or by the censure of other citizens simply for appearing there alone. Theorists such as geographer Gillian Rose have argued that in the late-twentieth (and, I should add, early-twenty-first) centuries men use the threat of physical violence rather than the threat of moral disapprobation to prevent women and other marginalized groups from entering public spaces.¹⁴ However, the origins of violent threats to women's public safety date back at least a century. As Judith Walkowitz notes, the London murderer Jack the Ripper in the autumn of 1888, and the sensationalist press reporting of his crimes, combined to send a message to British women that "the city is a dangerous place...when they transgress the narrow boundaries of home and hearth and dare to enter public space." Walkowitz goes on to observe that the nineteenth-century fears aroused by these violent crimes persist today and that "the Ripper story has continued to provide a common vocabulary of male violence against women."¹⁵ This would certainly seem to be true if the frequency with which contemporary women are told to "be careful" after dark and in certain locations, and to assume the responsibility if violence results, are any indication. Other theorists agree with Rose's assessment that women of more recent times continue to be kept out of public space. Doreen Massey writes, "Almost from the beginning, the presence of women in cities, and particularly in city streets, has been questioned, and the controlling

¹⁴ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 34.

¹⁵ Judith R. Walkowitz, "Jack the Ripper and the Myth of Male Violence," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Fall 1982): 544; 569. For a more extensive investigation of the construction of "Jack the Ripper," see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

and surveillance aspects of city life have always been directed particularly at women. Urban life potentially challenged patriarchal systems.”¹⁶

Beginning in the 1970s, women began a systematic attempt to seek out explanations for their depreciated status within both public and private spaces. In 1974, anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo hypothesized that it was not biology or reproduction but the denial of access to public space that was the basic tenet of women’s marginalization.¹⁷ Since the time of her writing, the theory that space has been separated into public for men and private for women has provided a model that has been widely used by many feminist theorists both to explain women’s subordination in social hierarchies and to reiterate their marginal social position, particularly as manifested in the nineteenth century and continuing to today.¹⁸ For women, appearance in public has meant much more than simply an unaccompanied walk through a park. Public space has meant and still means not only literal, physical space in venues opposed specifically and diametrically to “private” (meaning “home”), but also the more abstract spaces of, for example, political thought, higher education, access to publication, enforced modes of dress, or working for wages.

The strongly entrenched social mores that have persuaded women to remain within the private domain for what can now be thought of in terms of centuries have been

¹⁶ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*. 167.

¹⁷ Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, “Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview,” in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1974), 23-42.

¹⁸ For example, Shirley Ardener, *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (London: Croom Hill, 1981); Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90.

historically understood as “natural,” and have been didactically reinforced as something that women have been told they prefer. How such a system has been held in place over such vast periods of time is somewhat puzzling. Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony proposes a way of understanding how this might have functioned. He suggested that systems of power do not necessarily function through violence or aggression but can also work by making marginalized groups agree by consent to the interests of groups in power; that is, by getting the disenfranchised to agree that hierarchies of control are based on concepts that are either “natural” or “common sense.”¹⁹ A good example in the context of this dissertation would be the acceptance of the idea that few women have created great works of art. Such a concept is reiterated, for instance, in the teaching of art history courses that focus on a relatively small number of male painters who have been defined as “geniuses.” The notion is not often seriously challenged, and is accepted as obvious - something that most people embrace without question. Similarly, the suggestion that women belong in the private because they are by nature attracted to it serves a power structure and is a cultural construction rather than an innate truth. In other words, the restriction of women to the private does not find its roots in the shape of the individual’s body, but is a discourse with hidden agendas disguised as a natural phenomenon. By accepting descriptions of themselves as uniquely suited to confinement in the home, women have contributed to their own suppression and participated in its maintenance. In return, the self-fulfilling prophecy of their helplessness has been supported and reinforced by a social system that has defined their worth according to the degree of their

¹⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. I, Joseph A. Buttigieg, ed., Joseph A Buttigieg and Antonio Callari, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 155-156.

“femininity.” The extent to which this “femininity” was developed would define their ability to achieve what every woman was presumed to want most - marriage and family. To rebel would mean living the life of an outcast; to acquiesce meant acceptance and approval within family and more widely-based social systems.

The limitations placed on women who are directed to live their lives and perform their gender identities in a private sphere are limitations on their mobility. Limiting their mobility simultaneously limits their identities.²⁰ In the words of Doreen Massey, “mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power.”²¹ By limiting women’s mobility and forcing the performance of their gender identities inside a limited space, social mores have ensured that women’s activities in private have assumed a far smaller worth than those activities performed by men in public spaces. One of the complex results of this limitation is a devaluation of the worth of women’s histories, including - significantly for this dissertation - the histories of women artists. Those histories have remained largely unrecorded, considered not valid or important enough to the larger schema of events to warrant registering. Subsequently, contemporary women have only limited access to the histories of women’s lives, and strategies to repair that loss are difficult to devise. Simple re-insertions do little to destabilize the original causes for exclusion and in many, perhaps even most, cases the data on which a history might be built have been lost. Methodologies that address some of the fundamental problems are essential and the solutions chosen can be diverse.

²⁰ David Bell, Jon Binnie, Julia Cream, and Gill Valentine, “All Hyped Up and No Place to Go,” Joan B. Landes, ed., Feminism: The Public and the Private (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 360.

²¹ Massey, Space, Place and Gender, 150.

Leonore Davidoff, for example, argues that the public/private divide “has played a dual role as both an *explanation* of women’s subordinate position and as an *ideology* that constructed that position.” The public and the private as dichotomous, she continues, is a notion that has come under attack from feminist theorists who wish to stress “multiplicity, plurality and the blurring of boundaries.”²² She goes on to cite theorist Ludmilla Jordanova, who argues that we might begin with the suggestion that “public and private are not (and have never been) ‘conceptual absolutes,’ but a minefield of ‘huge rhetorical potential.’”²³ Other theorists agree that the divisions between the public and the private are overly simplified when constructed as discrete entities. Nancy Duncan writes that while it is clear that “the public-private distinction is gendered...both private and public spaces are heterogeneous and not all space is clearly private or public.”²⁴ Didactic literature available to Canadian women of the past consistently reiterated the normalcy of positioning women in the private sphere. However, as author Amanda Vickery has noted, we should not take for granted that didactic literature necessarily dictated behaviour to which all women acquiesced.²⁵ While some women might participate in prescribed patterns of movement, others would simultaneously act against them. Some women would work against suffrage, for example, but others would continue to lobby in favour

²² Leonore Davidoff, “Regarding Some Old Husband’s Tales’: Public and Private in Feminist History,” in Landes, ed. *Feminism: The Public and the Private*, 165.

²³ Ludmilla Jordanova, “Women’s Testimonies on ‘Public’ and ‘Private’ in Eighteenth-Century England,” paper delivered at the conference on the public and private spheres in early modern Europe, University of Exeter, March 1993. Cited by Davidoff, “Regarding Some ‘Old Husbands’ Tales’,” 165.

²⁴ Duncan, *BodySpace*, 128, 129.

²⁵ Vickery, “Golden Age to Separate Spheres?,” 383, 408.

of it. Lynne Walker provides a paradigm for a more complex understanding of public space with a series of questions designed to problematize an overly simple public/private division. Addressing the understanding of urban space in the latter half of the nineteenth century in London, England, she asks,

How did women use public spaces...in the second half of the nineteenth century? Did they use space differently from men? If they were excluded, how was their presence controlled and regulated? What were the contemporary discussions concerning women's use of urban space? What were the effects of class, race, age, time of day, week or season? What structures and institutions facilitated and/or limited women's activities? To what extent did lived experience challenge and erode ideology?²⁶

She goes on to note, however, that regardless of questions that create a more complex understanding of women's relationships to the public, this does not change the fundamental obstacle that male occupants of public venues have sometimes been perturbed by the presence of women in public. She adds that even when we begin to see that late-nineteenth-century women made many more incursions into the public than their predecessors earlier in the century, women in public spaces were not the norm.²⁷ Griselda Pollock has made the same assertion, noting that women "were never positioned as the *normal* occupants of the public realm."²⁸ However, as Clarissa Orr writes, "we should be less surprised to see women in the public sphere in the first place, instead of trying to account for how such women had somehow escaped from the private sphere into a more public world. This might help temper the uncritical use of the public/private dichotomy

²⁶ Walker, "Vistas of Pleasure," 70.

²⁷ Walker, "Vistas of Pleasure," 79.

²⁸ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 50. Cited by Walker, "Vistas of Pleasure," 79. (Walker's italics).

which is invoked only to be explained away....”²⁹ In particular, it is important to note that all the constraints placed on women’s public presence were aimed at the middle classes. No-one was suggesting that working-class women should not appear on the street, but the fact of public appearances by working women simultaneously contributed to the suppression of their social status. The negotiation between the didactic insistence on women’s proper role, repeated and reinforced both implicitly and overtly with remarkable consistency over the century between the late 1800s and the late 1900s, and women’s lived experiences, creates a metaphorical space of some ambiguity.

WOMEN AS MURAL PAINTERS

While the history of mural painting in Canada reveals scores of murals painted by male artists, articles written about historical mural painting virtually never mention women as artists, nor do they comment on their absence. The lack of inclusion of women artists in the history of mural painting parallels their absence from the history of art in general. Silent histories, however, should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that women were actually absent. As Janice Helland observes in writing about nineteenth-century women artists as working women:

Writers of history far too often have accepted [the]...ideology of the female occupied separate sphere as a confining, restrictive space; even though monographs and narratives of independent, adventurous women abound, the myth of domestic place and private space haunts historical women just as it does contemporary women, by “exoticizing” those who “make it” into the record and ignoring so many others.³⁰

²⁹ Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, 9.

³⁰ Janice Helland, “Public and Private/Studio and Venue,” in C. Bischoff and C. Threuter, eds., *Um-Ordnung: Angewandte Künste und Geschlecht in der Moderne* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1999), 153.

Her understanding of women artists as middle-class workers can readily be applied to Canadian mural painters who were women. Intricately connected to the conflation of definitions of “woman” and “home,” women’s art production generally has been stereotyped to make mural production by women unlikely, or at least infrequent, both ideologically and in reality. Certainly up until the mid-twentieth century, most art critics espoused understandings of women’s artwork such as that defined by Augustus Bridle in 1947: “Women, so expert in home knackeries, should out-paint men in fruit, flowers, furniture, fabrics, children, too, and casual figure-studies...but for most landscapes, street scenes and epics of work, men generally do better.”³¹ Critics such as Bridle seemed content to accept the validity of their thinking and the stereotypes upon which it was based regardless of the fact that empirical evidence did not support their conclusions. In other words many men were successful painters of the subjects he ascribed to women and, conversely, many women were equally successful at those subjects he assigned to men.

The experiences of each woman muralist working in public, however, were unique to the individual artist and shaped by such factors as location, era, the influence of the commissioner or commissioning body, and the distinct personality and personal circumstances of each painter. The compilation of their stories suggests that there is no homogeneous way to understand how any specific woman might have negotiated public space. Case studies of individual women’s experiences coalesce to form a model that

³¹ Augustus Bridle, “Select Best Works of Women Artists,” Toronto Daily Star, March 28, 1947. Cited by Alicia Boutilier, 4 Women Who Painted in the 1930s and 1940s: Rody Kenny Courtice, Bobs Cogill Haworth, Yvonne McKague Housser, Isabel McLaughlin (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 1998), 33.

suggests that women, both consciously and unconsciously, devised a variety of strategies that permitted their public appearances to go uncriticized. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter One, but for the time being I simply want to emphasize the idea that discussing women as painters of murals is not intended to imply continuity to their histories. Although certain generalities might have some applicability - most of the women coming from the middle classes, for example - I am cautious about viewing this type of information as a defining feature in understanding the individual woman, preferring instead to emphasize difference. In other words, I am not arguing that a particular type of woman would be more likely to become a mural painter, but rather the opposite: that women living in diverse circumstances and in significantly different eras have found their own methods for inserting their art practice into the public domain.

In my attempt to write a more inclusive history of women I am aware of having created a text that, although I use the word "inclusive" to describe it nevertheless focuses on women's production and essentially ignores men's. I am particularly cognizant of Sandy Flitterman's and Judith Barry's admonition that the danger of creating parallel systems to describe the work of men and of women "is the ghettoization of women's art in an alternative tradition."³² By focusing only on women's production I have in some ways recreated a binary structure, substituting women's work for men's. I acknowledge the problem and hope that, although this dissertation is dedicated to women's work, its ultimate goal would be to be non-existent, or at least non-existent in its current form. That is to say, I see this dissertation as a stepping stone to a more inclusive history of art, no longer focused on a single group and inclusive also of a wider variety of media, rather

³² Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, "Textual Strategies: The Politics of Art-Making," *Screen* 21 (Summer 1980): 42.

then as an end in itself. I am also aware that by writing only about women I might be accused of creating a unitary category in which I see “woman” as a universal. I have tried to emphasize throughout the dissertation that women who have painted murals are more easily distinguished by their differences than by their shared gender.

The attempt to assemble information about the women who form the substance of my research proved difficult. Like most research on Canada’s women artists, the writing of this dissertation has been constructed, for the most part, on threads of information. Every individual who has tried to delve into the history of Canadian women is confronted with the same problem. Virtually empty artists’ files and non-existent archives, the often total loss of personal papers in the form of letters or diaries, missing works of art, and the lack of a written record both within academia and within more general media all contribute to the difficulty of reconstructing many women’s histories. Eventually the threads of information coalesce into a more complete picture, but research into historical women’s lives cannot hope to parallel the extensive documentation that more often survives about men. In addition, a great deal of feminist writing within art history focuses on the ways in which women have been represented by men as opposed to the artistic productions of women themselves. In Norma Broude’s and Mary D. Garrard’s second compilation of feminist essays, *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (1992), for example, sixteen of the twenty-nine articles were dedicated to feminist readings of work by “great male artists,” including among others, Botticelli, Titian, Rubens, Degas, Renoir and Gauguin.³³ These explorations of the ways in which male artists have chosen to represent women make an important contribution to the

³³ Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York, NY: IconEditions, 1992).

understanding of women's relationships to society in general and culture in particular. I deliberately chose in this dissertation, however, to focus on what women artists in Canada have produced themselves, rather than on how they have themselves been produced.³⁴ In addition to the difficulties inherent in researching women artist's lives, this emphasis on women's production has contributed to the complexity of the project. Work by male artists tends generally to exist in much larger quantities and is more clearly and extensively documented than work by women, making work by women artists, even when the artists are relatively well-known, often difficult to find. This is particularly true of the work of Canada's historical women artists, whose works have frequently either found their way into the hands of private collectors, thus becoming difficult to locate, or have disappeared altogether.

The difficulties that are often associated with reassembling the work of women artists, in particular historical women, has meant for feminist theorists that traditional art historical discourse, based primarily on formal analysis, does not always function well when women's work is under discussion.³⁵ As a result, I have not focused in particular on the aesthetic qualities of the works under discussion in this dissertation. Instead, my emphasis is on the conditions of production, the biographies of the artists, the narratives surrounding the commission and execution of each of the works and the way I interpret each work within a feminist discourse. I have deliberately minimized the use of formal

³⁴ The importance of researching women as producers of art has derived particularly from the teaching and writing of Janice Helland. I would like to thank her for the many different ideas she has given me concerning ways to think about women artists.

³⁵ That is not to say, however, that there are not significant numbers of historical women artists on a world-wide scale whose work is not only well-known, but who have been the subjects of formal analysis by feminist writers.

analysis - although not ignored it altogether - partly to avoid the pitfall of making comparisons between men's and women's work, a trap that has stereotypically compared men's production to women's, almost exclusively to women's detriment. In addition I wished to insist on a focus on the social construction of gender rather than to compare art works. Finally, I hoped to sidestep the tenet of art history that searches for superlatives in a competitive field. I am guided here by my belief that art cannot be separated from the discourses that form its context, and that content, medium, size, framing, location and a thousand other factors - including large issues such as the gendering of art and art history - all contribute to the construction of a politically active narrative about society, constituting its production and consumption. In reference to writers who disagree with, or dislike this notion of art as constitutive of meaning, Douglas Crimp writes that, for them,

Politics is what art must deny. For them art is gentle and discrete, it is autonomous, and it exists in an ivory tower. Art is, after all, only a matter of taste. To this endeavor politics is a threat. But what of their politics? Is there not also a politics of exhibition? Is it not a politics that...invites only one woman to participate in an exhibition of forty-three artists [referring to the 1982 international exhibition in Germany, *Zeitgeist*]? Can we not recognize a politics that would limit a discussion of repression and liberation to matters of style?³⁶

Following Crimp's suggestion that art discourses have political agendas, I would like to argue for a politics that addresses the very problem he refers to here - that is, the exclusion of women from participation in arts communities. Their exclusion is a political issue, the ramifications of which are far-reaching and the solutions to which have not necessarily been found.

³⁶ Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," *October* 30 (February 1984): 63.

The writing of this work is guided, then, first and foremost by feminism, in particular by the thinking of materialist feminist theorists. I have been most influenced by Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham (eds), *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives*. Although Hennessy and Ingraham see their feminist agenda fundamentally as “a class war over resources, knowledge and power,”³⁷ an anti-capitalist position that is too extreme to parallel my own thinking, it is the emphasis on the importance of historical materialism that I find most useful in their thinking. In addition, the materialist feminist focus on the interrelated nature of all socially-produced differences allows the incorporation of what has, for me, been the liberating thinking associated with postmodernist and poststructuralist discourses, most particularly as developed by the French theorist Michel Foucault. My rereadings of the history of art, then, and my use of feminist art histories will be particularly informed by poststructuralism. I will also make use of studies in feminist geography, feminist rewritings of history, and to a lesser extent, feminist studies in architecture. Of course I am most strongly influenced by writings in feminist art history. In particular, I would single out three texts (although there are dozens that would merit inclusion) - Rozsika Parker's and Griselda Pollock's *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (1981), Whitney Chadwick's *Women, Art, and Society* (1991), and Deborah Cherry's *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (1993). These three have profoundly influenced my thinking about women artists. Parker's and Pollock's *Old Mistresses* is an early feminist art history text, and it is a text that is still considered relevant twenty years after publication. In it they posed the question that feminist art historians continue to ask

³⁷ Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

today: “Why has the loss of women’s history happened?” Examining the lives of women artists from the Middle Ages to the 1970s, Parker and Pollock argue that only an analysis of the discourses surrounding women’s art production can account for women’s exclusion from the art-historical narrative.³⁸ It is the base defined by Parker and Pollock that I have taken up in this dissertation.

In *Women, Art, and Society*, Whitney Chadwick discusses what she describes as “a general introduction to the history of women’s involvement with the visual arts.”³⁹ Chadwick’s general theme is the foregrounding of women artists whom she considers to be of equal talent to their male counterparts. She posits a variety of reasons, covering art history - as Parker and Pollock did - from the Middle Ages to the 1970s, to explain the marginalization of women. Most importantly, Chadwick acknowledges that it is impossible to generalize about women’s exclusion from art history. Her text is positioned around the understanding of women’s art production as particular to the moment of its creation, and that the moment can only be understood within its own historical framework. Although Chadwick’s book could be accused of creating a history that simply parallels the dominant male narrative and that therefore does not intervene in the prevailing discourse, her understanding of art history as a complex set of intersecting agendas contributes a great deal to the need to read women as active contributors to the history of art.

In *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists*, Deborah Cherry broadens the unitary category “woman artist,” and points out that such categories, while claiming

³⁸ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

³⁹ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 13.

universality, marginalize the contributions of, for example, Black women. Cherry's concerns focus on conditions of production, on how women represented femininity, and particularly on viewing women not as victims of a dominant patriarchal culture, but as active participants in cultural practices.⁴⁰ It is Cherry's insistence on women as subjects of their own histories that has most shaped my thinking on this issue.

Working from the point where these feminist texts intersect with poststructuralist theories, I would like particularly to argue for, as Doreen Massey puts it, "the reinstatement of societies as sets of relationships between individuals (and things) in order to undermine the deeply ingrained habit of seeing societies in terms of hierarchies, pyramids, diamonds, heaps, layer cakes, jellies, blancmanges and other party pieces of social stratification."⁴¹ Massey's description of societies as structured in ways that force the assessment of the fixed component parts *as compared* each to the other, as opposed to social structures seen in terms of fluid relationships of infinite and complex meanings, is a poignant synopsis of the theoretical issues I will attempt to address. In discussing the work of Canadian women artists I have tried to resist the temptation to "prove" that women have produced work that can be judged in such terms as "the first," "the best," or "the largest." Nor have I had anything invested in "proving" that women and men are equally talented as artists. Instead, I have tried to focus not only on the discourses that have surrounded the production of women's art, but also on the larger social framework within which those discourses were constructed. In so doing, I have tried to envision women's art practices not so much as an "add-on" to men's production, but as an integral

⁴⁰ Deborah Cherry, Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

⁴¹ Massey, Space, Place and Gender, 86-7.

and important part of Canadian cultural history. I will begin with the examination of a series of three murals painted by Yvonne McKague Housser (1897-1996).

YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSER

A more public arena could scarcely have been found for the murals painted by Yvonne McKague Housser as part of a series commissioned in the 1950s by CP Rail for its dome cars in a train, *The Canadian*, which traveled regularly across Canada. Not only were Housser's murals installed in a public venue, the venue itself toured the country.⁴² Eighteen artists were each asked to create a set of three mural paintings for the train cars to promote rail travel. In order to achieve its goals, the work had to be "positive in tone, engaging and inoffensive"⁴³ The mural commission was tightly controlled to ensure that these requirements would be met.⁴⁴ The artists chosen were well-known Canadian painters solicited from recommendations made by the President of the Royal Canadian Academy, Robert Pilot (1898-1967). Pilot's list included himself and other muralists such as Charles Comfort (1900-1994), but also fifteen other men, including Group of Seven members Lawren S. Harris (1885-1970), A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974), and A. J. Casson (1898-1992). Housser was the only woman given an assignment, and represents in this

⁴² Throughout the dissertation I have used the surname of the artists to whom I am referring. In order to clarify some sections where I am talking about an artist and her husband with the same surname, I have used the husband's full name when referring to him.

⁴³ Ian Thom, *Murals from a Great Canadian Train* (Montreal: Art Global/Libre Expression, 1986), 28.

⁴⁴ Charles Comfort's initial submission of a parody of Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (with the nude clothed) was rejected, for example, and he replaced the figures with a rendition of the Banff Springs Hotel in his final version. The commissioning body dictated the appearance of the murals even to the extent of requiring that the work "match the sofa," by providing upholstery samples that the artists were to work from in selecting colours.

context the far smaller numbers of women generally solicited as painters for mural commissions.⁴⁵

As the sole woman chosen for inclusion in a project otherwise undertaken by seventeen men, we might expect to find records of specific comments on Housser's gender - but there appear to be none. In other words, Housser's inclusion in and of itself was not considered unusual, but neither was the fact that only one woman was included in a field of eighteen artists considered problematic. The factors that led to Housser's solicitation for the mural commission were most likely founded in the first place on her reputation as an artist, teacher and art activist. She had become a student at the Ontario College of Art in 1914 when she was only sixteen years old. She also studied in Europe (in 1921, 1924 and 1930). At the Ontario College of Art she took classes with George Reid, Fred Varley, and J.W. Beatty, and between 1918 and 1946 she taught at the College with such colleagues as Arthur Lismer, A.Y. Jackson and J.E.H. MacDonald.⁴⁶ The right to work as a teacher did not come to her easily. In one of a series of interviews, she said, "I felt I was discriminated against in the teaching field. I had to fight for a position.... I didn't receive the same salary as the men, although I was doing far more work."⁴⁷ When she retired from teaching she remarked that "it took three men to take my place. Jock

⁴⁵ The number of women working as practicing artists as compared to the number of men is difficult to establish. Certainly women in the final decades of the nineteenth century "dominated the ranks of every major art school in the country.... Yet they were conspicuous as students, not as teachers of art," a trend that would continue throughout the twentieth century. Maria Tippett, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), 28.

⁴⁶ Helen Kemp Frye, "Yvonne McKague Housser," *The Canadian Forum* 18 (September 1938): 176.

⁴⁷ Janice Cameron et al, *Eclectic Eye* (Toronto: Ontario College of Art, 1974), unpaginated.

[Macdonald] and two others....”⁴⁸ However, while she may have felt discriminated against in terms of working conditions, she did not feel similarly unacknowledged as an artist, stating in an interview that, “Even when I was on a jury, I did not feel that the men were prejudiced because the painting was done by a woman.”⁴⁹ Housser was a founding member (1933) and president (1955-56) of the Canadian Group of Painters and a founding member of the Federation of Canadian Artists (1942). She belonged to the Ontario Society of Artists (1927) and was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy (Associate, 1942; Academician, 1950). In 1926, she was instrumental in the formation of the Art Students League of Toronto. Modeled on the Art Students League of New York, the Toronto League offered free, informal classes with well-known artists such as Arthur Lismer and Lawren Harris. By the late 1920s Housser was a noted landscape painter with a well-developed reputation. Along with her husband, art writer Fred Housser (they were married for only a few months in 1935-36 before he died), she was greatly involved with a large number of the institutions and individuals that had defined and shaped Canadian art prior to the time she accepted the mural commission.⁵⁰ Like many of the artists in the chapters to follow, Housser was experienced and competent, well-known during her lifetime, and her work was included in the mainstream during her productive years. It is only in the later telling of the history of art that her accomplishments and the narrative of

⁴⁸ Yvonne McKague Housser and Joan Murray. Interview 18 May 1977. Published in Jennifer Watson, *Alexandra Luke: A Tribute* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1977), 14.

⁴⁹ Cameron, et al, *Eclectic Eve*. Cited by Boutilier, *4 Women Who Painted*, 32.

⁵⁰ For additional biographical information, and to see reproductions of Housser’s work, see Joan Murray, *The Art of Yvonne McKague Housser* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1995). For additional information on Housser’s writing, her relationship with the Group of Seven, her women friends and her approaches to other classes and races see Alicia Boutilier, “Mapping Artistic Identity: The Life, Work and Writing of Yvonne McKague Housser,” M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1998.

her life, along with the accomplishments and narratives of her female peers, have been progressively marginalized.

In addition to the reputation Housser had built upon her artistic and teaching practices, more subtle reasons for her inclusion in the mural commission can be proposed. One suggestion might be that Housser was thought of as a painter who “painted like a man.” Conflating two separate arguments constructed by Fred Housser illustrates this point. First, Fred Housser had himself described the requirements for membership in the Group of Seven as rigorously masculine, claiming that the new Canadian painting,

[d]emands a new type of artist; one who divests himself of the velvet coat and flowing tie of his caste, puts on the outfit of the bushwhacker and prospector; closes with his environment, paddles, portages and makes camp; sleeps in the out-of doors under the stars; climbs mountains with his sketch box on his back. Possibly never before have such physical demands been made on the artist....⁵¹

I will return to the issue of the definition of the Group of Seven as exclusively masculine in greater detail in Chapter Three. For now it is sufficient to note that although Fred Housser constructed the discourse of a Canadian art based on masculinist athleticism, he did not exclude his future wife’s work from this otherwise predominantly masculine aesthetic. By describing her art as having a “masculine strength and intellectuality,”⁵² he suggested a rationale for understanding how and why Yvonne McKague Housser was included in the forefront of the Canadian art scene beyond the rigours of her own production. Although her work stood easily, and was readily accepted, on its own merits,

⁵¹ Frederick Housser, A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), 15.

⁵² Frederick B. Housser, “Amateur Movement in Painting,” in Bertram Brooker, ed. Yearbook of the Arts in Canada (Toronto: MacMillan and Co., 1929), 89.

the most enduring writing surrounding her creative output elided her gender so that her work could fit more readily into the understanding of the professional artist as a male figure, thus allowing her inclusion in an otherwise male-dominated project. The trope of explaining women's inclusion in otherwise male-dominated art hierarchies by ascribing stereotyped masculine characteristics to their work will prove to apply to a number of the artists that I will discuss in this dissertation. The general process of searching for ways that women's artistic production could be understood and included within the context of the male-dominated art world, while social discourses simultaneously held women themselves at arms length, will be one of the complex questions that my exploration of women artists in the chapters to follow will address.

Each artist working for the CP Rail mural project was assigned a federal or provincial park to represent. A.Y. Jackson described the goal of the commission as being "to make people aware of the large number of recreation grounds all over Canada, and also of the need of creating many more, of setting aside large tracts of at present uninhabited country and preserving them against exploitation for all time."⁵³ The artists were provided with photographs of similar murals already installed in the cars of another train known as the *California Zephyr*, a train that served as the prototype for *The Canadian* and that was built by the same manufacturer, Budd. In addition, the artists were given colour schemes for the cars (based on the upholstery fabric), detailed plans of the walls of the train car showing dimensions and shape, and descriptive literature, a map, and photographs of the park they had been assigned to paint.⁵⁴ The three murals requested

⁵³ A. Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1958), 150.

⁵⁴ Thom, *Murals from a Great Canadian Train*, 17.

from each artist were to be produced for specific locations, one for behind the bar, one to surround the windows and a third to be a map of the park, illustrating local flora and fauna. A “definitely Canadian” colour scheme was suggested, using the colours from the Canadian flag (the Red Ensign at the time), the Union Jack, and the heraldic colours of the coats-of-arms of Canada and the ten provinces, as well as “Banff Blue, Chalet Evergreen and Deer Fawn drawn from Canada’s scenery.”⁵⁵ By promoting Canada in this way, the agencies involved with the project were marketing to the Canadian public (and international tourists) a vision of “Canadianness” that will be the subject of Chapter Three of this dissertation. The artists did not receive written contracts for the commission from the CPR but they were each paid \$1400. The entire project was completed within a year.

The park assigned to Housser was Sibley Park, near Fort William (now half of Thunder Bay), Ontario. The finished piece very much fits the mould adopted by the other artists, showing an idealized landscape emphasizing the grandeur of the land but in an unthreatening way (fig. 1). All the works, Housser’s included, invited the viewer to enter a very safe scene and participate in the enjoyment of the landscape, in accordance with the goals of the commission (compare Housser’s work to the similar mural by A.J. Casson of Algonquin Park, fig. 2). None of the paintings was intended as a photographically accurate reproduction. The mountain (the “Sleeping Giant”) shown in Housser’s mural, for instance, is not in reality visible from Sibley Park. In Gil Courtemanche’s fictionalized account of traveler crossing Canada on *The Canadian*, the bartender on the train refers to Housser’s work, focusing on what he sees as its lack of

⁵⁵ Proposed Treatment of The Canadian Pacific Coast to Coast Trains 19 June 1953, unpaginated. Cited in Thom, Murals from a Great Canadian Train, 25.

authenticity, saying “ La montagne grise au fond, c’est Le géant endormi, juste en arrière de Thunder Bay.... Impossible de la voir du parc provincial Sibley. Et tous ces feuillus, un autre mensonge. Regardez autour de vous. Que des forêts de conifères et quelques bouleaux frileux.... Tous des menteurs, ces peintres.”⁵⁶ Housser herself expressed the great enjoyment she experienced in fulfilling the commission, claiming to have been “emotionally involved...because I love the subject...Lake Superior.”⁵⁷ If she considered the fact that she was included in the otherwise-male enterprise in the first place to be remarkable, however, she did not publicly comment.

Housser’s murals and their commissioning are paradigmatic of key aspects of mural painting in general, and mural painting by women artists in particular, and these aspects will be discussed at greater length in the subsequent chapters. Most importantly, the inclusion in this dissertation of these three murals by Housser is premised on the basis of the artist’s gender. The number of Canadian men who have painted murals as compared to the number of women is reflected in the number of men selected as painters for the CPR project compared to the one woman. The location of the murals in the train car positioned them in an unambiguously public venue, likely to be viewed by a large number and variety of people. Site-specific and moving through space at the same time, as well as functioning both as art and as a support for the tourism industry, Housser’s murals balance on the interstices between art and commerce, and between art and decoration, that typify mural production. Installed in their initial incarnation as a commercial and decorative enterprise, it might be argued that the murals became more

⁵⁶ Gil Courtemanche, *Trente Artistes dans un Train* (Montreal: Art Global, 1989), 39.

⁵⁷ T. Gray, *Biography of Yvonne McKague Housser* Unpublished typescript, National Archives of Canada, MG30 D305, vol. 1: 25.

clearly defined as “art” when they were later taken down and donated to the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa. That they could exist within both frameworks typifies the paradigmatic ambiguity of mural definition.

Between 1954 and 1984 the CPR murals rode the rails, subjected to the vibrations of the trains and to direct physical contact with a public that did not hesitate to lean against them. By the mid-1980s they were in dire need of restoration. All were removed from the train cars in 1984, restored, and donated to the Science and Technology Museum. Once removed from the setting that gave them their original meaning, the murals no longer functioned as promoters of tourism, and joined the ranks of many other Canadian murals that have, like them, been removed from their original installations, with the concomitant change in their original meaning. Since their removal from the walls of the train, the CPR murals have toured to Canada House in London and Canada House in Paris. They were replaced in the trains (now owned by Via Rail Canada), by a series of sixteen more contemporary works, five of them by women.³⁸ The increase in the ratio of women to men in the later mural project parallels the more equitable representation in public art commissions that women would achieve over the course of the twentieth century.

Yvonne McKague Housser lived at a time when women’s primary goals were most often considered to be marriage and motherhood. Housser did marry, but did not have any children. During the brief course of her marriage she worked outside her home, both as an artist and as a teacher. She was by no means an isolated example of women’s incursions into public space. Within the literal and symbolic space that is the public arena

³⁸ The new series of murals included a work by the artist Mary Filer (b.1920). Filer’s earlier work as a mural painter will appear in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

I hope to explore the ways in which the reading and inclusion of women's histories, in their complexity and interconnectedness with other social structures, will provide a more complete impression of how women have acted. The defining trope of gender might supply a clear path by which "woman" can be defined, but women have by no means behaved in homogeneous or monolithic ways. Female experience has, however, been systematically elided from human history, not through some conspiracy, but through the abiding belief that what women have done has not been worth recording. The marks made by women's hands on the wrong side of walls will stand not simply as my metaphor for the complexity of women's art production, but also as the window onto their silent histories.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: THE EPIC SUBJECTS OF MURAL PAINTINGS

As symbols of some of the larger social discourses that have marginalized women, the epic subjects of mural paintings are identified in the titles of the subsequent chapters. Chapter One will introduce the suggestion that, although many women have painted murals both for private and for public venues, they cannot simultaneously be viewed homogeneously as "women." By exploring in detail the lives and artistic production of three of Canada's historical women artists, Harriet Ford (1859-1938), Mary Hiester Reid (1854-1921), and Elizabeth Annie Birnie (1851-1921), I will suggest that, throughout Canadian history, women, depending on their particular circumstances, have sought different strategies to assure their acceptance in the public sphere.

In Chapter Two I will look more specifically at a particular discourse that has shaped Western society in general and women in particular: the tenets and practices of

Christianity. By examining murals that cover a relatively wide time frame - from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century - I will suggest that this type of painting can provide a visual record of the diversity of constraints that women have experienced at different times and in different locations. Referencing the mural work of Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion (1854-1939), Madeleine Delfosse (1909-85), Marian Scott (1906-93) and Otilie Palm Jost (1868-1961), I will suggest that the women with the most freedom of movement at any point within the parameters of the study were also the most likely to subvert standard Christian iconography, and the women with the least freedom would similarly be the most conforming.

Chapter Three will be devoted to a discussion of the construction of Canadian identity and women artists' roles in, and relationships to, that construction. I will suggest that ideas of "Canadianness" have often been rooted in what Canadians are *not*, rather than what they *are*. This "not" meaning has, at various times, also meant that women were excluded from the general signification of the idea of being Canadian. In spite of women's marginalization from the formation of Canadian identity women mural painters generally paralleled male painters in the tropes they used to define "Canadianness," specifically characterizing the understanding of Canada as defined through its landscape and against its Native populations. Working from mural paintings by Anne Savage (1896-1971), Lorna Claire (active 1928-30), Jane Lippert Birchall (b.1924), Edith Grace Coombs (1890-1986), and Jori Smith (b.1907), I will argue that women have contributed to the construction of an identity - at least in the past - that excluded their contributions. My purpose here, however, will not be to accuse women of collaborating in their own repression, but instead to suggest that the poststructuralist understanding of the self as a

construct shaped by cultural discourse must be seriously considered when attempts are made at the deconstruction of that self. I will suggest that the manipulation of the self to suit the purposes of groups in power has functioned as a hidden discourse masquerading as a “natural” phenomenon. Additionally, I will argue that while women may have contributed to the system that marginalized their histories they were not simply victims of culture, but rather that they simultaneously insisted on their presence in the very systems from which they were excluded.

The final major chapter will explore the issue of education and the ways in which women’s relationships to educational discourses are reflected in mural paintings. Beginning with two murals, one painted in the 1940s by Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904–49) and the second in the 1950s by Rosemary Kilbourn (b.1931), I will examine the means by which both works construct and reflect the most highly valued aspects of education as a male prerogative. I will argue that the stereotypical gendering of the tasks performed by the figures in the earlier mural function as a precursor to the educational outcome in the second painting created a decade later. In the second work the sole female university graduate, an Arts student, reinforces the stereotype of women as suited to the study of the humanities and as excluded from the sciences in particular. Working from two murals - one by Mary Filer (b.1920) devoted to medical research and one by Marian Scott (1906–93) devoted to scientific research - to elaborate women’s relationships to the two fields, I will then argue that the knowledge that has been created within the institutions that dominate the public sphere has traditionally been given a higher status than knowledge generated within the home. This preference for public knowledge, combined with the marginalization of women from institutions of higher education, has functioned to

construct them as “lesser” than their more highly educated, and therefore more highly valued, male counterparts.

The conclusion to my dissertation will, by introducing a number of murals that were not discussed in the main text, serve to emphasize the concept that there have been many mural painters who were women. The fact that the conclusion will discuss a significant number of works that were not included in the central chapters highlights the fact that murals have not been uncommon in women’s art practice in Canada. The concluding list of muralists, Martha Greening Jamieson (b.1918), Marion Long (1882-1970), Elizabeth Sutherland (1920-84), Ghitta Caiserman-Roth (b.1923), Sylvia Hahn (1911-2001), Isabel McLaughlin (b.1903), Eva Prager (b.1912), Dorothy Cole Ruddick (b. 1925), Mrs. R.J. Haslett and Mrs. Robert Forsyth (the latter two identified in the press only by their husband’s names) includes women from a variety of backgrounds. I will emphasize the complex problems associated with defining the artist and situating the artwork within a workable context. Perhaps more importantly, however, I will celebrate the work that these women - and, metaphorically, all women - have created through their different circumstances and in all their own ways. In addition, I have included a history of mural painting in Canada, Mexico and the United States as an appendix.

WRITINGS ON CANADIAN MURALS

To date there has been only a handful of writings devoted to the topic of Canadian mural painting, and no writing that I have discovered about murals that predate 1960 and were painted by women has been approached from a feminist perspective. In spite of the mural revival in Canada at the turn of the last century, and the number of Canadian

artists, male artists in particular, who have painted murals, their production has not occasioned a great many specific articles or texts on the meaning of those works within a broader understanding of Canadian art history.⁵⁹ This is in direct comparison to the writings on the Mexican muralists between the early 1920s and the 1970s and the mural painters of the United States, most particularly those of the Depression era, both groups having large numbers of books and articles devoted to them.⁶⁰ In spite of the fact that few of the murals in this dissertation have been examined in any great depth prior to this writing, however, almost all of them were reviewed in newspaper articles contemporaneous with their production, and a few were also reviewed in journals. Some Canadian critics - notably Robert Ayre in articles published in the *Montreal Star* between 1953 and 1971 - had an interest in mural painting, and wrote a number of times on the topic of mural paintings by women.⁶¹ Only two of the women within the time frame of my study, Yvonne McKague Houser and Marian Scott, have had their mural paintings discussed in books.⁶²

⁵⁹ See, however, the forthcoming book by Marilyn McKay, *A National Soul* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ See on the topic of Mexican mural painting, for example, Leonard Folgarait, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the New Order* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Laurance P. Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); Antonio Rodriguez, *A History of Mexican Mural Painting* (New York: Putnam, 1969). On the topic of mural painting in the United States, see, for example, Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Francis V. O'Connor, *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973).

⁶¹ For more information on Robert Ayre's career as an art critic, see Lois Valliant "Robert Hugh Ayre (1900-1980), Art - A Place in the Community: Reviews at *The Gazette*, Montreal (1935-1937) and *The Standard*, Montreal (1938-1942)" M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1991.

⁶² Houser's mural is discussed in Thom, *Murals from a Great Canadian Train*; Scott's two murals are discussed in Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 2000).

On the subject of Canadian mural painting from a more general perspective, equally little of a critical nature has been written. Although “murals” are indexed in some survey texts on Canadian art, notably William Colgate’s *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development* (1943) and Donald Buchanan’s *The Growth of Canadian Painting* (1950),⁶³ the writing tends to be brief and focuses mainly on the loss of opportunity occasioned by the Canadian government’s failure to support the painting of more mural works. In *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art* (1974), Barry Lord writes little about mural painting in general, dismissing the form by commenting that “in colonial Canada the few mural commissions available were mainly offered by hotels like Ottawa’s Chateau Laurier, or occasionally by universities; they were mainly for lounges, playgrounds of the rich, where a strictly decorative treatment was required.”⁶⁴ Lord focuses instead on a mural that was never painted - Miller Brittain’s project for the Saint John Hospital. He laments what he identifies as the lack of financial support that would have allowed for the completion of the work, since its content paralleled his own political beliefs in a socialist approach to the history of art. The most widely-used survey texts in Canadian art, Dennis Reid’s *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (1988) and J. Russell Harper’s *Painting in Canada: A History* (1977), mention mural painting only in passing. The more recent *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian*

⁶³ William Colgate, *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development* 2nd edition (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1967); Donald Buchanan, *The Growth of Canadian Painting* (London: Collins, 1950).

⁶⁴ Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), 186-88.

Women (1992), a book devoted solely to work by women, makes no mention at all of mural painting.⁶⁵ The focus of all three of these texts is easel painting.

Although Canadian mural paintings have not been considered in much detail in survey texts, there are a small number of studies that focus on the subject. Devoted to a mural series painted for a Nova Scotia parlour between 1846 and 1848, for example, *The Croscups' Painted Parlour* (1990) tells the history of the family that commissioned the paintings and describes both the Croscups' murals and a number of similar works from the same area of Canada. Painted by an unknown artist, the Croscup murals were part of a tradition that began in the eighteenth century and was particularly popular in the first half of the nineteenth.⁶⁶

Two exhibitions at the National Gallery of Canada, one in 1969 and the second in 1990, were devoted to the murals painted for James MacCallum's cottage on Georgian Bay by Tom Thomson and some members of the Group of Seven (J.E.H. MacDonald, A.Y. Jackson, and Arthur Lismer). MacCallum was a dedicated and early supporter of the Group, and he commissioned the mural series for his cottage as part of his sponsorship of the members' work. The murals were removed from the cottage and donated to the National Gallery of Canada by the Jackman family, later owners of the cottage, in 1968. Both exhibitions were accompanied by catalogues of an essentially descriptive nature, but the later one, by Pierre Landry, focuses more heavily on descriptions of the murals

⁶⁵ Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988); J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Tippett, *By a Lady*.

⁶⁶ Victoria Baker, *The Croscups' Painted Parlour* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1990), 21.

themselves, while Dennis Reid's earlier text concentrates on the story of James McCallum and his support for the Group of Seven.⁶⁷

The murals by Yvonne McKague Housser already discussed in this introduction, along with all the other murals that were installed in *The Canadian*, were the subject of a 1986 text by Ian Thom. Thom outlines the details surrounding the commission and describes each of the works, provides reproductions, and devotes several pages to each of the eighteen artists (including Housser). As noted above, in 1989, Gil Courtemanche took the story of both the 1954 murals and a second set created in 1984 and wove around them a fictional tale of a train traveler journeying between Montreal and Vancouver.⁶⁸

Although Courtemanche's book is a work of fiction, and the 1954 and 1984 mural sets never co-existed in the train cars, the story provides descriptions and reproductions of all the works and an entertaining narrative of the long journey across Canada.

Courtemanche's story is the only document of any length that refers to the set of murals installed in the train cars in 1984.

A text devoted to more contemporary work, *Women On Site* (1987), describes the work of six women mural painters (Buseji Bailey, Grace Channer, Margaret Chen, Sarah Denison, Banakonda Kennedy-Kish, and Megan Vun Wong) whose work is specifically devoted to feminist issues. The writing, however, is problematic. It claims for the artwork, for example, that it is "proposing a new structure which incorporates the needs

⁶⁷ Dennis Reid, *The MacCallum Bequest of Paintings by Tom Thomson and Other Canadian Painters* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969); Pierre B. Landry, *The MacCallum-Jackman Cottage Mural Paintings* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1990).

⁶⁸ Gil Courtemanche, *Trente Artistes dans un Train* (Montreal: Art Global, 1989).

and perspectives of all people,”⁶⁹ a rather broad claim. Throughout the text, generalizing and inflated claims for the murals’ potential influences undermine the intrinsic power of the works themselves. The authors (the introduction and three essays were written by Sarah Denison, Connie Eckhert, Himani Bannerji and Margaret Chen, and each of the six artists included an artist’s statement) seek a unifying “femaleness” in the work, discussing the relationship between “these symbolic images and their relationships to the feminine principle or essence.”⁷⁰ Answers are sought in the cosmos: “From archaic times, in myths and legends [sic], the moon has represented the woman’s deity - the feminine principle; much as the sun with its heroes symbolises the masculine principle.... Our modern twentieth century attitude seems to be the result of [a] shift in emphasis from the values symbolized by the moon to those represented by the sun.”⁷¹ Unfortunately, the text has taken the work of six talented and powerful artists and has, in my opinion, trivialized it by associating it with the differences between the influences of the moon and the sun as parallel to gender issues.

Devoted to the topic of mural painting on exterior walls, Victor Pilon’s *Murs & Murales* includes two texts, the first by Louise Poissant on the history of mural painting in the Western world, and the second by Louise Letocha debating the rationale for Montreal as a significant site for this type of work.⁷² Acknowledging the socialist history of mural painting in Mexico and the United States, Poissant argues that the public venues

⁶⁹ *Women on Site* Toronto: A. Space, 1987, 4.

⁷⁰ *Women on Site*, 22.

⁷¹ *Women on Site*, 24.

⁷² Victor Pilon, *Murs et Murales* (Saint-Laurent, Québec: Editions du Trécaré, 1988).

in which murals are commonly shown disrupt the elitist relationship between the easel painter and the wealthy. She suggests that Montreal, with its lively street life conducive to the vitality of murals, was the earliest Canadian city to develop the art of exterior mural painting. Letocha develops Poissant's theme, discussing the history of dynamic exterior mural painting in Montreal since 1971. Illustrating murals painted between 1972 and 1988 from seven provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and Newfoundland), *Murs & Murales* is one of only a handful of writings that include more detailed approaches to mural painting in Canada. Pilon provides an excellent series of close to one hundred full-page photographs of the mural works in urban settings as discussed in the two essays by Poissant and Letocha.

The preliminary drawings for Arthur Lismer's mural for HumberSide Collegiate Institute, Toronto were the subject of an exhibition at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in 1992. The catalogue, written by Ian Hodkinson, outlines in some detail Lismer's development of the theme and his preliminary thoughts and drawings for the murals.⁷³ Hodkinson links Lismer's works for HumberSide to an art historical tradition, referring to such painters as Botticelli and Millet, and to such Canadian precedents as J.E.H. MacDonald's murals for the MacCallum cottage, as inspirations for Lismer's works. Also included in Hodkinson's text is a section devoted to the history of mural painting in Canada - possibly the only assembling of this information that exists in any detail and compressed here into a page-and-a-half of text. Hodkinson's well-researched and clearly-written catalogue, with its emphasis on mural-painting precedents and links to historical events and their recording, represents a significant document in Canadian art

⁷³ Ian Hodkinson, Arthur Lismer's Drawings for the HumberSide Mural: Development of a Grandiose Patriotic Theme (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1992).

history. I have relied in the pages that follow in particular on its outline of the rise and fall of interest in mural painting in Canada between the late-nineteenth century and the late-1920s.

Murals also played a prominent role at the 1941 Conference of Canadian Artists (the Kingston Conference) and in the subsequent publication of its proceedings, in particular as to the question of the social value of mural painting.⁷⁴ The question of whether or not art, and, in particular, mural painting should be put to a social purpose, particularly in the sense that purpose had been used in both Mexico and the United States, was an issue that was debated among Canadian artists and intellectuals in general, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s.⁷⁵ Invited to speak at the 1941 Conference was Edward Rowan, an administrator of the U.S. Treasury Board's Public Works of Art project, a project that ran in tandem with the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. During the Depression in the United States both the Public Works of Art Project and the Federal Art Project had provided employment for thousands of American artists. However, any hope that the Canadian government would follow the direction established by American leaders and design programmes to support mural-painting projects was short-lived. By 1953 the leading sentence in an article in *Canadian Art* would read, "No one can accuse the Canadian government of spending money foolishly on mural painting." "In fact," the author continued, "it practically never appropriates

⁷⁴ The Kingston Conference Proceedings (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1991 [1941]).

⁷⁵ "One of the key questions debated during the thirties at the Scotts', at the Lymans', at the Samovar Restaurant on Peel Street, was 'Should Art be art or should art be put to a social purpose?'" Sandra Djwa, The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F.R. Scott (Vancouver: MacIntyre, 1989), 133. Cited by Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada," Introduction to the reprint of The Kingston Conference Proceedings, xxi-xxii.

money, either foolishly or wisely, for any such purpose.”⁷⁶ The successes of the two American projects were a source of envy for the one hundred and fifty artists, art historians, and museum directors who gathered in Kingston to attend the conference.⁷⁷

In many ways, the pivotal moment encapsulated in Canada by the Kingston Conference is paradigmatic of the ambivalent relationships between Canadian artists and Canadian identity. Unclear as to whether they wished to include or exclude politics, the Conference attendees were additionally irresolute (although not overtly so) about the relationship between Canadian art and women artists. Several women, including Paraskeva Clark, Rody Kenny Courtice, Julia Crawford, Prudence Heward, Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Yvonne McKague Housser attended. In spite of the obvious presence of the women artists, however, none of them addressed the conference in any significant way. The male participants almost exclusively conducted the speeches, presentations and debates. Women artists assumed an in-between position - present in body but never in positions of control or influence. It is in this “in-between” space that I will search in this dissertation for a way of understanding women’s relationships to broader cultural structures as manifested in their artistic productions, in this case their mural paintings.

⁷⁶ “New Murals in Canada,” *Canadian Art* 10 (Winter, 1953): 64.

⁷⁷ Bell, “The Welfare of Art in Canada,” vi.

CHAPTER ONE: STRATEGIES OF NEGOTIATION

When attempts are made to understand the actions and occupations of women across such divisions as time, location, race and class, it becomes immediately obvious that the conclusions are more contradictory than homogeneous. The temptation is to conflate the experiences of all women as “woman’s” in order to diagnose problems and prescribe solutions. The resultant suggestion of homogeneity of experience elides the personal and can also fail finally to understand the processes and results of *particular* successes. The two, the general and the particular, must, in my opinion, work in concert to create a more inclusive and more satisfactory history. In this sense, the individual woman’s life must be examined as it both fit with and contradicted the didactically reiterated mores of its own time, and also how it fit with and contradicted the way its history has been told. That being said, generalizations about women’s experiences do have a certain validity and provide a useful framework for examination of the individual biography. The historical environment within which the individual mural painter worked provides the framework for understanding how each woman both used the status quo to her particular benefit and challenged it to promote change. The public/private dichotomy, while it may be overly simplistic, has provided a model for the negotiation strategies women have developed and deployed to gain access to systems of control operating in public.

Working from the perspective that artistic production is intricately connected to, influences, and is influenced by the discursive field in which it is practised, this chapter will discuss the work of three Ontario women mural painters whose birth and death dates

are similar and traverse the turn of the twentieth century: Harriet Ford (1859-1938), Mary Hiester Reid (1854-1921) and Elizabeth Annie Birnie (1851-1921). I will seek to examine how their individual strategies for appearing in public might have mirrored or contradicted other behaviours by women in other endeavours. Specifically referencing the struggle to achieve the right of suffrage as a paradigm for ways women advocated change while simultaneously claiming to maintain the status quo, I will suggest that a parallel model was used by artists such as Mary Hiester Reid, for example, to negotiate her appearances in public. I will argue that, although other mural painters such as Harriet Ford and Elizabeth Annie Birnie lived in Ontario during approximately the same time as Reid, their different circumstances did not necessarily encourage them to employ the same strategies as Reid to negotiate a path into the public domain.

THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

The nineteenth century in Toronto was a time of much change in social structures and individual relationships to them. Women's connections to public enterprises altered as the century progressed. Dramatic social change and upheaval created a period of transition, as the predominantly rural-agricultural society of eastern Canada was transformed, particularly into the first decades of the twentieth century, to one with a rapidly expanding industrial economy.¹ Immigrants crowded into the cities and the unregulated growth of commerce created serious problems in areas such as labour

¹ Michael J. Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto - 1900-1921 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), 3.

relations and working conditions for women and men alike.²

As a result of the growth in the number of exploitative situations within the work force and the negative results, particularly alcoholism, that accompanied overcrowding within cities, women, particularly middle-class women, began a struggle for improvements, a struggle supported by many men. The social activism of late-nineteenth-century Canada was enacted for the most part by middle-class advocates, since working-class individuals, although they were directly affected by social injustices, were more concerned with day-to-day survival and could not generally devote their time and energies to the struggle for change.³ Women, however, did not have the right to vote, and lobbyists quickly realized that without the franchise their hands were tied in terms of creating fundamental social transformations.

The well-known humourist Stephen Leacock was one of many who spoke in strong terms against women voting. In a 1915 article in *Maclean's Magazine*, he described the suffragist as “An Awful Woman with Spectacles.” He continued, “she came as a new thing, a hatchet in her hand, breaking glass. But in reality she was no new thing at all, and has her lineal descent in history from age to age. The Romans knew her as a sybil and shuddered at her. The Middle Ages called her a witch and burnt her. The

² Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), 179. In 1880, Canada was 75% rural. By 1900 that number had dropped to 62.5% and by 1921 to 50%. Carol Lee Bacchi, Liberation Deferred: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 9.

³ Strong-Boag and Fellman, Rethinking Canada, 180. The assertion that suffrage was a middle-class issue was not true in Great Britain, however, where working-class women were actively involved in the campaign. See, for example, Deborah Cherry, “Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism, 1850-1900” in Clarissa Orr, ed. Women in the Victorian Art World (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 49-69.

ancient law of England named her a scold and ducked her in a pond.”⁴ Leacock summarized the position held in general by anti-suffragist men and women in Canada, who saw the woman suffragist as an affront to the characteristics, appearance, goals and personality that defined women. A decade after the end of the Edwardian era, in the 1920s, women’s intrinsic relationship with the private sphere continued to be taken for granted. Publications such as *The Beaver*, for example, written for employees of the Hudson Bay Company, printed articles with assertions such as, “Whether she admit it or even believe it - the ambition of every business girl is - what the destiny of all normal women is - *to find a husband that will tally to the measure of her ideal*, provide a home for her and make her life really complete. The intent to marry is in the back of the girl employee’s head. Modesty demands no denial.”⁵ From Leacock’s hyperbole to the more gentle assertions made in *The Beaver*, the importance of maintaining the dichotomous relationship between men and women predominated. The attainment of suffrage for women relied fundamentally on the understanding that the domestic ideal would not be tampered with and that women with the right to vote were not women who denied their “normal” roles as homemakers and mothers.

The majority of women and men involved in the suffrage movement did not see the attainment of the franchise as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end. The struggle for women’s suffrage was a campaign that intersected with, among other things, fights for prohibition, but also for factory laws for women, compulsory education, prison

⁴ Stephen Leacock, “The Woman Question,” *Maclean’s Magazine* 28 (October 1915): 8. Leacock’s rather dramatic description was, of course, intended to be humorous. Nevertheless, the article fundamentally mocked women’s struggle for the right to vote, and its humour was particularly barbed.

⁵ “To H.B.C. Girls,” *The Beaver*, 1 (November 1920): 11.

reform and changes to many other laws that affected women and children, in particular those laws governing divorce.⁶ The right to vote was sought as a way to bolster the impact of the family by doubling its representation, thereby creating a means to achieve these other social reforms.⁷ This intersection of campaigns was the predominant feature of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century suffrage movement and defines the complexity of the effort by suffragists to achieve the franchise.

The reforms that intersected with demands for suffrage for women had other, less admirable goals that also, by drawing upon assumptions about the suitability of the family as an ideal, emphasized the multi-faceted, conflicted nature of the suffrage movement. One of these was the social entrenchment of exclusionary Christian religious doctrines. More problematic - but still ideologically connected to Christian teachings - were the support for the continued supremacy of the white race, movements favouring social (racial, sexual) purity, and eugenic goals such as sterilization to prevent the “feeble-minded” from reproducing. Increased immigration of people from countries other than Great Britain had created a climate of fear in which men and women of British origin were apprehensive of a decline in their numbers, a decline that they equated with the increasing numbers of social problems experienced in the growing urban areas. The notion that more fertile “races” might overrun Anglo-Saxons was elaborated in the belief that darker (and hence “lower”) races were not in control of their sexual desires.⁸ Many

⁶ Alison Prentice, et al., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), 195.

⁷ Bacchi, Liberation Deferred, 3.

⁸ Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 32.

turn-of-the-century Canadians believed that the “race” was degenerating.⁹ The race threatened was not the human race, but “the Anglo-Saxon Protestant ruling bloc, with other groups (from the Irish of Manchester to the Zulus of South Africa) being regarded as human only by analogy.”¹⁰ The commitment to a regeneration or expansion of the British race placed Anglo-Saxon women’s traditional roles as “Mothers of the Race” at a premium. Women were constructed as having a responsibility to reproduce; the race they were to reproduce was the morally-preferred (this meant most specifically in control of sexual desires) white race. As Mariana Valverde notes, “As this nurturing was perceived as involving the reproduction not of human beings in general but of their race in particular, racism and feminism were integral parts of a single whole.”¹¹

In addition to what might seem today to be contradictory objectives (i.e., the struggle for the right to vote coupled with the marginalization of non-white groups and the intellectually handicapped), other contradictions characterized the effort to achieve suffrage. The social changes included in suffrage agendas, for example, were not opposed to the understanding of women as intrinsically suited to a private life, and most suffragists specifically excluded from their platforms any notion of dismantling the separate spheres. In fact, not only did most proponents of suffrage not challenge the position of women as intrinsically tied to the private sphere, they embraced it. The majority of suffragists saw women’s strengths and responsibilities as maternal, and they

⁹ Angus McLaren, Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 11.

¹⁰ Mariana Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free,” in Franca Lacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds., Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press), 5.

¹¹ Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap and Water, 28.

drew on housekeeping metaphors as ways to describe the roles women would play in a cautious introduction to the public arena. Women like Nellie McClung saw their entry into the public sphere as an extension of their housekeeping tasks, although McClung included within those responsibilities her belief that women were additionally responsible for other, more abstract, problems such as ignorance, isolation and loneliness.¹² The field of politics was compared to a house in need of a spring-cleaning. McClung proclaimed, “Women have cleaned up every phase of life they have entered so far. Give them the vote and you will hear the carpet sweepers throughout the land.”¹³ Since housekeeping was traditionally women’s work, the cleaning metaphor created an aura of safety around the issue of suffrage by linking it to an unthreatening division of labour already in place.

Ironically, this insistence on the status quo in terms of gendered space was one of the factors that enabled the struggle for suffrage to succeed, and Canadian women achieved the right to vote at the federal level in 1918.¹⁴ By offering assurances that they were not advocating fundamental changes in the relationships between men and women, suffragists offered a relatively palatable platform. Yet, although the suffrage movement was grounded and justified partly in terms of what might seem like regressive assumptions about women, this could not negate the fact that the movement also responded to a desire amongst many women for a larger place in the public sphere. While the didactic literature of the Victorian and Edwardian eras may have dictated women’s

¹² Nellie McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast: My Own Story* (Toronto: Thomas Allen and Son, Ltd., 1965 [1945]), 27.

¹³ Nellie McClung, “Call in the Women to Clean Things Up,” *Globe* (Toronto) 6 November 1915.

¹⁴ Women achieved the right to vote at provincial levels between 1916 and 1922, with the exception of Quebec, where women had to wait until 1940 to be granted the provincial franchise. The winning of women’s right to vote was also strongly influenced by the effects of the First World War.

natural association with the private, women's circumstances and opportunities at the turn of the century were actually more multiple. Women were moving more and more into public view. They often traveled, for example, as did Sara Jeannette Duncan (Mrs. Everard Cotes) who, accompanied by her friend Orthodoxia (journalist Lily Lewis) went around the world in 1888. Duncan recorded their adventures in *A Social Departure: How Orthodoxia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves*. In describing their leaving and the protests of family and friends she notes, "Naturally you will think of matrimony first, which casualty would have enabled Orthodoxia to go to the planet Mars alone, I believe, with the full approval of all her friends and acquaintances."¹⁵ Although Duncan is acknowledging the difficulties that the two women faced in extracting themselves from the well-meaning concern of their milieu, the point is that the two women embarked on their journey regardless. Other women demonstrated their independence in other ways. There were those who did not "have to" work, for example, who held significant positions within the community and were remunerated for doing so. In order for Victorian and Edwardian women to move out of the confinement of the private sphere, however, some negotiation was required, just as the suffrage movement itself depended, to a significant degree, upon a certain level of gender-inflected negotiation. As the nineteenth century wore on, women developed strategies that allowed them to appear in public places – strategies aimed at, for example, making themselves inconspicuous when working to attract the least amount of attention. Books of manners of the time described an era in which everyone's behaviour, particularly women's, was carefully monitored and controlled, possibly as a result of the belief that transitions were taking place too rapidly.

¹⁵ Mrs. Everard Cotes (Sara Jeannette Duncan), *A Social Departure: How Orthodoxia and I Went Round the World by Ourselves* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), 2.

Working women wore conservative clothes, preferably black, minimized body and eye contact, and studiously ignored offences.¹⁶ Discipline of the emotions was the watchword of the day, and women were particularly cautioned to avoid any public displays of affection, anger or laughter. Similarly forbidden were speaking in a loud voice, telling jokes, yawning, or any other physical act that would draw attention to the self. To make an error would bring immediate censure. By treading a fine line between gaining access to the public domain and simultaneously guarding stereotypical traits of womanhood, women negotiated inroads into previously prohibited areas of public venture.

HARRIET FORD

The concept of negotiation strategies that would allow women's integration into the public sphere was not limited to the attainment of the right to vote. Other social discourses can be read in the same way - including the ways in which women would negotiate their right to participate in the public forums of art production. I will begin an examination of the ways women's integration into the art world paralleled their strategies for the attainment of suffrage with a discussion of the artist Harriet Ford. Ford is a prime example of an artist and writer whose history promises much of interest to Canadian art, but whose work as a mural painter is essentially unknown, in spite of the fact that she was listed in the 1900 publication, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work* (written for distribution at the Paris International Exhibition), as a specialist in mural decoration.¹⁷

¹⁶ John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 130.

¹⁷ National Council of Women of Canada, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work* (Montreal: National Council of Women of Canada, 1898 [1975]), 223.

Ford was also known as a writer and critic on the Toronto scene in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁸ She gave public lectures, such as the one delivered to the Ontario Society of Artists on “Giotto and his Followers” in March of 1895, a second in the same venue in April of the same year on “The Renaissance” and a third in the same month on “The Venetians.” Also in 1895, she presented a paper titled “Mural Decoration” to the Toronto Branch of the Women’s Art Association of Canada. Along with George Reid and Carl Ahrens, Ford also edited the short-lived magazine *Tarot*, devoted to the Arts and Crafts Movement. The magazine existed only through two issues, published in 1896, but it had some importance to Canadian magazine history in that “in the simplicity of its design and sketches... it foreshadowed the layout of the *Canadian Forum* in the 1920s.”¹⁹ Ford was, in addition to her activities as a writer, a founding member of the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators. (For more information about the activities of the Society, please see Appendix I.)

Born in Brockville, Ontario in 1859, Ford was the youngest of five children. Her father, David Ogden Ford (1804-1861) was a barrister and owner of a grist mill. Ford inherited money and property from several of her family members, suggesting that her financial position was most likely such that she was able to support herself.²⁰ She studied at the Central Ontario School of Art in Toronto in c.1881, and while a student there she

¹⁸ See, for example, Harriet Ford, “The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts,” *Canadian Magazine* 3 (May 1894): 45-50; “Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy,” *The Week* 26 April 1895, 521; “Mr. L.R. O’Brien’s Watercolours,” *The Week* 22 November 1895, 1241; “The New President of the Royal Academy,” *Massey’s Magazine* 1 (June 1896): 363-372.

¹⁹ Karen McKenzie and Mary F. Williamson, *The Art and Pictorial Press in Canada: Two Centuries of Art Magazines* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), 18.

²⁰ Elizabeth Cobb Stewart Eastwood, *The Descendants of Andrew Ford of Weymouth Massachusetts: Part II: The Seventh Generation* (Cleveland, 1982), 5-6.

won a gold medal for drawing from the Antique. She spent many of her artistically active years in England beginning in 1896, and she studied there at the St. John's Wood Art School and at the Royal Academy. She was a member of the Women's International Art Club (London)²¹ and the Palette Club (c.1894-99, 1911). She also studied in Paris in the studio of Luc Olivier Merson and at the Académie Colarossi, and travelled to Italy (c.1892), Spain (1907) and Venice (1913-14), gaining wide exposure to the art of Europe. Ford was elected an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy in 1895 and was twice a member of the Ontario Society of Artists (1895 and 1911). She showed her work widely, including at such venues as the Paris Salon, the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts and the Royal Society of British Artists, London, the Art Association of Montreal, the Royal Canadian Academy, the Toronto Industrial Exhibition and the Palette Club.²² Ford supported herself as a professional artist, engaging with the major art societies of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and contributing to the discourse of art education through her public lectures and her editing and publishing activities.

Ford most probably painted a number of murals in Canada that were known to the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century public but that no longer appear to be extant. There are tantalizing references to them in the press. *Toronto Saturday Night*, for example, made reference in 1895 to a now-unknown work (or works) by Ford, writing "Miss Ford's portrait of herself and mural decoration are already familiar to the art public of Toronto."²³ A second reference in the *Toronto Star* of 1920 reads, "Miss Harriet Ford

²¹ Ford lived in Toronto 1894-1896, 1911-1917, and 1920-1921. She lived in Newlyn, Cornwall, England 1896-1899, Great Marlow, Bucks, England, 1899-c.1911 and 1918-1920 and from 1922 until her death. Charles C. Hill and Pierre Landry, eds. *Canadian Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1988), 374.

²² *Harriet Ford* (Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2001).

²³ *Toronto Saturday Night* 9 (4 April 1896): 15.

has returned from England and has settled in her new studio on Huron Street. Those who knew Miss Ford in the old days [when she lived in Toronto before moving to England] will recall her ‘Madonna,’ a large mural decoration, which was bought by Professor Mavor [James Mavor]....”²⁴ We also read in *The Week* of 1894, “Miss Ford has also a decoration intended for one of our Toronto houses, a simple out-of-door arrangement.”²⁵ Whether or not this reference is to a mural is not clear, but the use of the word “decoration” suggests that it certainly could be. It is not unreasonable to suppose, taking into consideration the few reviews of her work that are available, that, unlike the mural work of the majority of the male members of the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators, most, if not all, of Ford’s mural paintings were completed for private homes. Since the Society was founded with the goal of decorating public buildings, we can presume that Ford wished to do public murals. But unlike other Society members such as George Reid and Fred Challener, Ford does not seem to have had any opportunities after the Society disbanded to paint any public commissions, at least in Canada. If she did receive any such commissions while living in England, they do not seem to have been recorded in the Canadian press. This may be taken as evidence of Ford’s need to adopt strategies that would allow her to fit social expectations of the public performance of her gender. In any event, the murals that she seems to have painted for a number of private venues are no longer extant. Many presumably disappeared in later decorating schemes, and this has contributed to the difficulty of identifying her work.

Ford’s one mural still known to exist is an over-mantle piece in the dining room

²⁴ *Toronto Star*, 30 October 1920.

²⁵ “Canadian Artists Soon to Return from Onteora,” *The Week* (12 October 1894), 1096.

of the Charles Porteous House on Ile d'Orléans, Quebec²⁶ (fig. 3). Porteous (1849-1926) was a wealthy banker who went on to direct public transport and electricity enterprises. Although he conducted his business in Toronto, the Porteous family lived in Montreal, and Porteous began the construction of his summer home, *Homewood*, on Ile d'Orléans in 1894.²⁷ Ile d'Orléans attracted a number of Canadian artists at the turn of the century. The location of Porteous's house on the northern end of the island, for example, was across the road from the home of Horatio Walker.²⁸

Ford's mural is titled *La Moisson*, and its attribution to her is based primarily on an undated letter sent by her to Porteous.²⁹ In the letter, Ford refers to a space "5 ft 3 by 3 ft," the precise dimensions of the extant piece, remarking that Porteous got a good deal from a business point of view in paying only \$75 for a panel, presumably by herself, to fit it.³⁰ In 1896 Ford showed a work "for mural decoration" at the seventeenth annual exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy. The work was briefly reviewed, and described as "full of sunshine."³¹ Although there is no certainty that the reference is to Ford's mural for Porteous's home, it certainly could be. In addition, Ford was on Ile d'Orléans during the summer following the Academy exhibition. An 1896 issue of

²⁶ Charles Porteous House is located at 253 chemin Royal on Ile d'Orléans. Today it is the Foyer de Charité Notre-Dame-d'Orléans.

²⁷ Ginette Laroche, "Décor intérieur de la maison Porteous," in Commission des Biens Culturels, *Les chemins de la mémoire* (Quebec: Les Publications du Quebec, 1999), 245.

²⁸ Janet Grace Mills Braide, "William Brymner (1855-1925): The Artist in Retrospect," M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1979, 69.

²⁹ Laroche, "Décor intérieur de la maison Porteous," 250.

³⁰ Harriet Ford to Charles Porteous. Undated, National Archives of Canada, MG 29, A 32, vol. 4.

³¹ "Canadian Art: The R.C.A. of A. Opens its Seventeenth Exhibition," *Montreal Daily Herald* 13 March 1896, 8.

Toronto Saturday Night clearly places her in the locale stating, “Miss Harriet Ford left this week for a summer’s sketching tour on and about the Island of Orleans. An important piece of decorative work will also occupy much of her time.”³² If either of the two references is to Ford’s mural painting for Porteous’s house, then the mural can be dated to c.1896, predating the work done by William Brymner in 1899-1900 in the rest of the Porteous dining-room.³³

Brymner’s murals appear distinctly different from the work by Ford, making Ford’s over-mantle mural and Brymner’s paintings in the room readily identifiable as the work of different artists. The use by Ford of a dominant yellow and a loosely painted, lively surface contrasts with Brymner’s more subdued palette and the more careful rendering of his surfaces. Brymner’s “good taste” and the “good taste” of Porteous in the selection of the subject for his murals were commended,³⁴ and his painting was described as “well-balanced and decorative.”³⁵ The juxtaposition of the work of two different artists in the same room, however, did not have any jarring effect. It is also clear that the paintings were not stereotypically gendered in any way. Ford’s representation of a harvesting scene fit thematically with the works Brymner would paint (or had painted) for the room, of activities particular to the four seasons, the whole creating an idyllic representation of life on Ile d’Orléans. Indeed, the charm of Ile d’Orléans lay in what was

³² *Saturday Night* 9 (4 July 1896): 9.

³³ Note, however, that Ginette Laroche writes that Ford’s painting was “la dernière oeuvre à s’ajouter au décor de la pièce,” which suggests that it might have been painted after Brymner’s work, not before. Laroche “Décor intérieur de la maison Porteous,” 249.

³⁴ *Herald* (Montreal) 17 February 1900. The article asked “Will that owner [i.e. Porteous] allow us to get a peep before finally placing the frieze in position?” Brymner exhibited the murals for Porteous’s house at the Exhibition, prior to their installation.

³⁵ “Among the Pictures: the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association,” *Star* (Montreal) 17 March 1900.

considered to be its quaint character, and residents like Porteous's neighbour Horatio Walker tried hard to preserve its rural nature by working to prevent the arrival of cars and other technologies.³⁶

The murals painted by Ford and Brymner were therefore suited both to the location of Porteous's house in its rural setting and to the ideologies espoused by the summer visitors to Ile d'Orléans. The desire to maintain a mythic, unchanging haven that would function in contrast to what was seen as the chaos of transformation that characterized the contemporary urban environment was embodied in the mural painting commissions. Speaking of the same desire to maintain a hold on a static past in nineteenth-century French painting, Maureen Ryan has noted that paintings invoking the belief in an idyllic and enduring past "occupied an important place in the official Salons that displayed French art in the second half of the century. Repeatedly picturing rural life through reference to its traditional forms, such imagery relied upon the exclusion of any signs of change and modernity."³⁷ Ford's mural shows just such a reference to the past. The two field workers at the picture plane hold scythes, referring to the harvesting of crops by hand, and no indication of industrialized technology of any kind is present in the background. Ford's understanding of and participation in the construction of the worker as a trope rooted in stereotypes of an idyllic past demonstrated her own familiarity with the myth, and, more importantly, her ability to create for the commissioner of the mural a work that reflected his own beliefs. The mural functions as an attestation to Ford's

³⁶ For a discussion of Walker's attempts to preserve Ile d'Orléans as his personal paradise, see Dorothy Farr, *Horatio Walker 1858-1938* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1977), 19.

³⁷ Maureen Ryan, "The Peasant's Bonds to Gaul, God, Land and Nature: The Myth of the Rural and Jules Breton's *Le Chant de l'alouette*," *RACAR* XIX (1992): 79.

success as a professional artist, showing that a collector as knowledgeable and discerning as Charles Porteous anticipated her ability to respond to his requirements for the commission.

Although the mural's final venue was a private home it was Ford's public reputation as a professional practitioner that had led to the commission. It is the means she drew upon to negotiate her inclusion that will be focus of the rest of my exploration of Ford as a mural painter. As an unmarried woman in late-nineteenth century Canada, she trod a path that did not extend beyond those boundaries considered appropriate to her, but she was nevertheless able to perform her gender identity in the public sphere and develop a successful career in diverse media. In addition to her few mural paintings, Ford was known as a painter of town scenes such as *The Piazzetta* (1913, National Gallery of Canada) and figures such as *Boy Lying in Grass* (1891, Art Gallery of Ontario). Ford also did at least some work as a graphic designer. She designed at least one book cover,³⁸ and she is known to have entered and won a public competition for a poster to advertise an 1896 horse show. A review of the poster competition in *Toronto Saturday Night* noted that "Miss Ford's work is always more or less decorative and well adapted for certain phases in modern art."³⁹ She was also known as a maker of jewelry, and she is classified as a jeweler in some sources. Her work in this field was held in high regard, a 1920 review reading, "Her hand-wrought jewelry and quaint setting of Canadian

³⁸ At the 1900 Applied Art Exhibition, held under the auspices of the Ontario Society of Artists, book cover designs by Ford, George Reid and Rex Stovel for the publisher George N. Morang were included. Sybille Pantazzi, Book Illustration and Design by Canadian Artists 1890-1940 Bulletin 7 (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto), 1966.

³⁹ Toronto Saturday Night 9 (21 March 1896): 9.

semi-precious stones were eagerly sought and bought as soon as exhibited.”⁴⁰ Her reputation in the art of jewelry-making would have reiterated the idea that she was interested in fine and intricate detail, a trait that was seen to be stereotypically feminine. Work by Ford covered a range of media and diverse subjects and her reputation as an established contemporary artist was reviewed as successful and professional.

Like many turn-of-the-century Canadian women Ford left behind her little of a personal nature that might give insight into her political affiliations in terms of issues such as the status of women and women’s right to vote. However since she published a certain number of articles it is at least possible from her writings to extrapolate her thinking to some extent. Her reviews of art exhibitions, such as that of work by Lucius O’Brien, published in *The Week* in 1895, did not hesitate to offer some criticism. Ford wrote that O’Brien had “made a gallant leap for it, but he has not succeeded in getting over the wall.”⁴¹ She continues in a less critical vein, but her article can nevertheless be interpreted as displaying a certain amount of self-confidence in criticizing the work of the former (1880-1890) president of the Royal Canadian Academy. Other, and lengthier, reviews and articles display a similar assurance.⁴² In an article of several pages published in *The Canadian Magazine* in 1894, for example, Ford wrote confidently about the history of the Royal Canadian Academy, comparing it to the Royal Academy in England on which it was based, as well as to similar institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy. She also criticized the work hung in the current RCA show and recommended

⁴⁰ The Toronto Star, 30 October 1920.

⁴¹ Ford, “Mr. L.R. O’Brien’s Watercolours,” 1241.

⁴² See, for example, Ford, “Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy,” 521-522; Ford, “The New President of the Royal Academy,” 363-372.

methods for the development of an art that would be distinctly Canadian.⁴³ In other words, she held informed opinions about the potential of the Academy to support the development of Canadian art. At no point, however, did she comment on the fact that neither she nor any other woman at that time was, or could become, an Academician. The Royal Canadian Academy was an institution that embodied the relationship between women artists and professionalism in a rather literal way. Women were not permitted to participate in its decision-making processes and were affiliated only as Associates. After the early admission (1880) of Charlotte Schreiber (1834-1922) as a full member, the Academy did not admit a second woman until the 1934 election of Marion Long (1882-1970), a reflection of the male face of the art world. In spite of their exclusion from full membership in one of Canada's major art institutions, women represented between one-quarter and one-third of the participants at the annual exhibitions. Women may have been excluded from full participation in the Academy's affairs, but they certainly still made art, and their art was deemed of sufficiently significant quality to merit inclusion even while their input into administrative affairs was rejected. Ford's failure to mention the status of women artists in her Royal Canadian Academy article suggests that she felt no overriding concern for her position as a woman. Although it is possible to attribute her lack of criticism to a concern that faultfinding might have negative repercussions, her willingness to criticize in other areas does not support that theory. Her history suggests a confident, successful artist who had little difficulty negotiating her professional path and who, like Yvonne McKague Housser in later decades, did not consider her gender to be a handicap.

⁴³ Ford, "The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts," 45-50.

One of the ways in which Ford negotiated her successful path through turn-of-the-century cultural expectations of women was by choosing to remain unmarried and childless. It was a lifestyle selected by numbers of nineteenth- and twentieth-century women artists, including, for example, Sydney Strickland Tully (1860-1911), Helen McNicoll (1879-1915) and Emily Carr (1871-1945), for establishing a place in the professional art world. The constraints placed upon the potential to develop professional careers after marriage were perhaps sufficient grounds to eschew such an encumbrance, at least for some women. Later twentieth-century judgements of women's status after marriage at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries can be quite harsh. Margaret Gillett, for example, in deriding the status of married women in turn-of-the-century Canada, has written that "[u]pon marriage, women underwent 'civil death' - marriage meant a man and a woman became one, and he was the one. Married women lacked control over their own earnings, could not choose their domicile, could not legally sign papers, bear witness, manage property or vote. Their husbands owned their persons, their services and any income derived from their work outside the home."⁴⁴ To avoid this loss of autonomy, women such as Ford chose a single life and the potential to control their own professional careers. In spite of her single status, however, Ford required additional strategies of negotiation to allow for the acceptance of her vocation.

A mural-sized painting by Ford of a woman holding a child, entitled *Mother and Child*, reproduced in *Toronto Star Weekly* in 1911 and hanging today in Saint John's

⁴⁴ Margaret Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily: A History of Women at McGill*. (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1981), 2. Note also, however, that marriage partners were still sought by the majority of women, even women who were rebellious in other ways. I am thinking here of works such as *Hopes and Dreams: The Diary of Henriette Dessaulles 1874-1881* Liedewy Hawke, trans. (Willowdale, Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1971), in which Henriette recounts her love for and eventual marriage to Maurice Saint-Jacques.

Convalescent Hospital, Toronto (fig. 4⁴⁵), suggests some insight into those negotiation strategies. The work aligned her generally with changing turn-of-the-century attitudes towards children, and did so in spite of her unmarried status. The image is of a woman standing in the foreground holding a sleeping child. At the time, the relationships between mothers and children, and between children themselves, were acquiring a more romanticized meaning in the collective imaginary. Women with children in arms, images of a growing interest in *maternité*, became familiar themes in paintings by Canadian women such as Laura Muntz Lyall (1860-1930) and Sophie Pemberton (1869-1959), popularized by the fame of such artists as Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) and Berthe Morisot (1841-95).⁴⁶ Images of children engaged in their own activities also became more widespread – not only in women’s work, but also in the work of artists such as George Reid, as in his painting of a boy reading in a hayloft, *Forbidden Fruit* (1889, Art Gallery of Hamilton), for example.

One of the ways that Ford “fit” into the society in which she wished to participate was by creating works such as *Mother and Child* that matched the mores of the time. Her work was reviewed as suitably “feminine,” although it did not actually have any characteristics that might have defined the gender of the artist. When *Mother and Child* was reproduced, for example, the caption accompanying it read “Miss Ford has treated

⁴⁵ It is because of the relatively large dimensions of this work that I have included it here. It was not, however, a site-specific painting. It was left to the Art Gallery of Ontario by Ford in her will (1939), and was given by the Gallery to St. John’s Convalescent Hospital in 1952.

⁴⁶ Maria Tippett, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993), 33. For more information on Canadian images of mothers and children in the work of Laura Muntz Lyall, see Elizabeth Mulley, “Women and Children in Context: Laura Muntz and Representations of Maternity,” Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 2000.

her subject in a flat, decorative manner, which is very charming.”⁴⁷ Whether or not the use of the word “charming” to describe images of this nature could be seen as reductive is a matter for some debate. Certainly there is no public reference to Ford, or review of her work, that would lead to the conclusion that her work in general was held in anything but the highest regard, or that her professional identity was not admired and respected. Nor is there any particular reason to suspect that she herself saw her identity as anything other than that of a professional artist. Nevertheless, “charming” could be read as a word that had a specific applicability to subjects closely associated with women artists, being reserved to describe particularly the work of women. Although men’s work might be described in the same manner, “charming” designated not only women’s creative productions but also their ideal personalities. In this sense, “charming” could be seen as something that women’s art *ought* to be, which is not the same thing as saying that it is something that women’s art *may* be.

That being said, it is most likely that the characterization of Ford’s work as “charming,” whether or not the word could be applied consistently to all of her production, was a contributing factor in the acceptance of her as a professional artist. Indeed, although the use of “charming” might very well have been considered flattering to its recipient, its closer association with women’s art and personalities (as opposed to men’s art alone) functioned to maintain a hierarchy within the art world. Ford’s image might be described as a reinforcement of the very qualities a woman artist needed to overcome in order to succeed, even while she implicitly reinforced the value of other stereotypes in her artistic production - a sophisticated form of negotiation not unlike the

⁴⁷ Toronto Star Weekly (8 April 1911).

contemporary negotiation of Nellie McClung and other suffragists who lobbied for the vote while simultaneously stressing their belief in the domestic ideal. When combined with the fact that she never married, a picture is created of the way Ford negotiated her admittance to the field of professional artists of her day. As an unmarried woman, Ford entered the public world and was accepted without overt acts, on the condition that her work itself fit the boundaries of suitability for a woman's practice, while it could be assumed that her presence in the world of business was due entirely to financial necessity rather than to anything else such as masculine ambition. Her personality seems never to have been described. She fit the mould of a respectable, middle-class, public woman of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Canada, not only providing no cause for censure, but additionally contributing to her own success by making specific decisions about her lifestyle and artistic practice that did not challenge the expectations of unmarried women of the time. As a professional painter, she was an ideal candidate for the Porteous mural commission, in which her choice of subject matter - with its reference to an idyllic past - was, like her creation of works of jewelry, or her painting of a mother and child, of a "charming" nature that contributed to her success.

MARY HIESTER REID

Mary Hiester Reid was born in 1854 in Reading, Pennsylvania, in the same decade as Ford, but her history is notably different. Her father was Dr. John P. Hiester of Reading, a successful physician and naturalist. She was related to some significant figures in American history, including the founder of St. Luke's Hospital in New York, Dr. William Muhlenberg. Many men of both her mother's and her father's families were

physicians, clergymen, and representatives of Congress.⁴⁸ However, both her parents died when she was a young girl. She studied art at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women and, in 1883-85, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts with Thomas Eakins and Thomas Anschutz. In 1885, while still in Philadelphia, she met and married the Canadian artist George Agnew Reid. The couple came to live in Canada, and traveled (in 1885, 1888-89, 1896, 1902 and 1910) in Europe. Mary and George Reid also spent every summer between 1891 and 1916 at Onteora, an artistic and literary colony in New York State. Candace Wheeler (1827-1923), a designer of textiles and wallpaper and co-founder in 1879, with Louis Comfort Tiffany, of Associated Artists, an interior decorating firm, had co-founded (with her brother) the colony in 1883. George Reid designed a number of Arts and Crafts-style homes at Onteora, and he decorated several of the interiors with mural paintings. Mary Hiester Reid does not seem to have created any mural paintings at Onteora, but she shared her husband's interest in the practice and painted murals for both private and public venues in Canada, where both she and George Reid enjoyed successful and prolific careers.

Mary Hiester Reid was an artist held in high esteem during her lifetime.⁴⁹ The year after her death in 1921, a retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto was the first solo show for a woman ever held at the Gallery; over three hundred works were assembled. In a testament to the high opinion of her held by other artists, J.E.H MacDonald designed the catalogue and invitation to the show. The following year, Reid

⁴⁸ Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by Mary Hiester Reid, A.R.C.A., O.S.A. (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1922), unpaginated.

⁴⁹ For more information on Reid and to see reproductions of her work, see Brian Foss and Janice Anderson, Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2000).

was included by *The Canadian Annual Review* in a short list of Canada's most notable artists.⁵⁰ From the time she arrived in Canada in 1885 until her death in 1921, she exhibited her work virtually every year with the Royal Canadian Academy, the Ontario Society of Artists and, less regularly, at the Art Association of Montreal. She was an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy (1893) and a member of the Ontario Society of Artists (1887), the Canadian Society of Applied Art (1904), and the Allied Artists (London, England). Aside from her extensive exhibition history she enjoyed significant commercial success, especially with private collectors. For example, she and her husband held a joint show of their work in Toronto at Oliver, Coate and Company in the spring of 1892 and, according to George Reid's biographer, Muriel Miller, "at the close of this sale, they had sold practically every painting they possessed."⁵¹ Another documented example is of a joint sale in 1915 of the work of Mary Hiester Reid, George Reid and Mary Wrinch (1877-1969; in 1922 Mary Wrinch would become George Reid's second wife) at the Royal Ontario Museum. The exhibition sold out on its opening day.

Reid's prestigious career spanned thirty-five years in Canada, but after the 1922 memorial exhibition little more was heard of her. She was mentioned briefly in the handful of survey texts devoted to Canadian art, but beyond that her name was largely lost to the history of Canadian art. Like many women, Reid's papers were either destroyed by her or by her descendents. She left behind her virtually no documents of a personal nature such as letters or diaries, nor is there any record of her having given

⁵⁰ The list counted twenty-five artists of note, the only women being Mary Hiester Reid and Elizabeth McGillivray Knowles. The criterion for inclusion was the number of canvases that the National Gallery of Canada owned by the individual artist. J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (Toronto: The Canadian Review Co., Ltd., 1923), 319.

⁵¹ Muriel Miller, *George Reid: A Biography* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1987 [1946]), 64.

public addresses – beyond, that is, the giving of art classes, and these are poorly documented. In spite of the fact that Reid’s name was mentioned often in reviews of her work, there is little of her own voice in the public arena. She published only a series of three travel articles, illustrated by George Reid and published in *Massey’s Magazine*.⁵² Although she kept a low public profile and cultivated an eminently acceptable personality, her status as a married woman working for remuneration outside her home would have necessitated some strategy to allow her high-profile public image to go so notably unremarked.

Mary and George Reid did not have children, and this most likely made an enormous difference to her acceptance as a working woman in Victorian and Edwardian Canada. Nellie McClung, for example, was severely criticized for leaving her children in order to embark on her pro-suffrage lecture tours, and she often prefaced her lectures with assurances to her audience that her children were happy and well cared for.⁵³ While being childless doubtless helped her integration into public space, Reid additionally appears to have adopted the same tactics as those employed by the suffrage movement, succeeding by posing no challenge to the status quo of separate spheres. In other words, Reid attained success in working in public by cultivating an unthreatening identity. Compared to Ford’s integration into public life as an unmarried woman, Reid’s married status created a persona that was more problematic, and she nurtured and encouraged an understanding of herself as specifically unthreatening to a male-dominated society.

⁵² Mary Hiester Reid, “From Gibraltar to the Pyrenees,” *Massey’s Magazine* 1 (May 1896): 297-308; “From Gibraltar to the Pyrenees, Second Paper,” *Massey’s Magazine* 1 (June 1896): 373-384; “In Northern Spain” *Massey’s Magazine* 3 (June 1897): 375-383.

⁵³ Margaret Ziemann, “Nellie Was a Lady Terror,” *Maclean’s Magazine* 66 (1 October 1953): 21.

Thus, whereas the word “charming” was used by critics to describe Ford’s art, it was applied consistently to both Reid’s art and to her personality. By encouraging the understanding of herself as having stereotypically female traits, while simultaneously maintaining her professional status, the dominant feature of her “charming” personality provided a method by means of which she could be accepted into the mainstream. It was a mainstream that had clearly defined expectations of married women and the roles they would play caring for their homes and husbands. Reid was often personally described in the very numerous reviews of her work not only as “charming,” but also as “gracious,” “refined” and “gentle,”⁵⁴ and lengthier reviews tended to conflate the artist and her personality. Marjorie MacMurchy, for example, wrote of Reid in a *Globe* article in 1910, “A word picture cannot easily convey any idea of the attractiveness of the artist’s personality, yet it must be attempted, since the camera cannot portray the eager, gracious look, the soft coloring, the gentle grace of this lady of the brush and palette.”⁵⁵ Similarly, C.W. Jefferys observed that Reid’s work “stands firmly on its own purely aesthetic merits of power and distinction,” but “its particular value to Canadian art will be found to consist in that spirit of femininity, of maternity, of womanly strength and tenderness which pervades all that she has done.”⁵⁶ In addition to the emphasis put on Reid’s pleasing personality by a number of writers, she was also described as being a good artist

⁵⁴ “Mary Hiester Reid: The Passing of a Canadian Artist,” *Toronto Saturday Night* 15 October 1921: 35; Charles W. Jefferys, “The Art of Mary Hiester Reid,” Unpublished manuscript, Jefferys papers, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario; Robert Holmes, “The Passing of an Artist,” *Globe* 10 October 1921: 4.

⁵⁵ Marjorie MacMurchy, “Representative Women: Mrs. G.A. Reid, Painter,” *Globe Saturday Magazine* 16 July 1910: 5.

⁵⁶ Charles W. Jefferys, “The Art of Mary Hiester Reid,” in Foss and Anderson, *Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid*, 21.

*because she was a good housekeeper. In a 1922 review of her work in Canadian Farmer, G.C.M. White described Reid as “a woman who was not only an artist in form, in color, and in all the accepted mediums of art, but who was also a woman skilled in home-making, and was, therefore, the better able to give to the products of her pencil and her brush, that fine and subtle and elusive charm, that is the effluence of a rounded personality.”*⁵⁷ By sublimating Reid’s artistic talent within the notion that she remained a “true woman,” MacMurchy, Jefferys, White and others provided a model for understanding the way women like Reid might have tentatively entered public life.

In addition to cultivating an ultimately very acceptable personality, Reid as an artist complied for the most part with stereotypical productions. The best-known component of her work was flower painting, considered eminently suited to a female sensibility. Several critics and commentators praised Reid as Canada’s best painter of flowers.⁵⁸ At the time of her posthumous retrospective at the Art Gallery of Toronto, much surprise was expressed at the variety of other subjects – landscapes, interiors, moonlit scenes, gardens, figures and murals - that she had painted. Interestingly, this was in spite of the fact that Reid had shown most of these subjects on a regular basis at the Ontario Society of Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy exhibitions during her lifetime. By focusing on Reid’s production of flowers at the expense of her other subjects, critics suggested a persona for her as a perfect lady and an ideal woman artist. Although there were men who were noted as painters of flowers - James Griffiths (1825-96), for example, or Robert Holmes (1861-1930) - the floral still life and garden were

⁵⁷ G.C.M. White, “An Artist Who Loved Life’s Lovely Things,” *Canadian Farmer* (30 December 1922).

⁵⁸ Miller, *George Reid: A Biography*, 103.

considered most appropriate to women's "natural" affinity for the private sphere. With her reputation as a flower painter, Reid reinforced the understanding of herself as an ideal woman and deflected any criticism that might have arisen had she attempted a more "masculine" genre. Critics simultaneously encouraged the same construction of Reid as primarily a painter of flowers. Relentless floral imagery accompanied her death and her 1922 memorial exhibition. At the memorial exhibition, "flowers...were adopted as a leitmotif...The rooms of the Art Gallery of Toronto were copiously decorated with daisies, heleniums, marigolds, delphiniums, phlox, pansies, zinnias and other blooms."⁵⁹ Critics thus aided and abetted the creation of a feminine persona for Reid. This is not to suggest, however, that Reid's other subjects were considered inappropriate to her gender: she focused on lyrical, unassertive themes of contained, civilized landscapes, children, still-lives and interior views of her studio and home, all of which suggested the demure world of women. C.W. Jefferys and others admired the way her feminine empathy - what he called her "sympathetic self-expression" - permeated these subjects. Jefferys went so far as to explicitly contrast her with the Group of Seven, juxtaposing her womanliness to "the masculine silhouette [that] bulks large on the frontier." "We are in no danger today of missing such significance as the tempest and the earthquake may possess," he wrote, "but our ears are not infrequently deaf to the still small voice, whose message may be more pregnant with meanings."⁶⁰ Comments such as these, reinforcing the idea of Reid as having an innately feminine persona, assured the success of her artistic practice during

⁵⁹ Brian Foss, "'Sympathetic Self Expression': Mary Hiester Reid and Aesthetic Ideals," in Foss and Anderson, Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid, 54.

⁶⁰ C.W. Jefferys, "The Art of Mary Hiester Reid," in Foss and Anderson, Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid, 19.

her lifetime, while her gender simultaneously assured the loss of her history to future generations.

In addition to her smaller paintings of such subjects as flowers and gardens, Reid painted a number of murals. Of these, the only three extant are small, over-mantle works painted for private homes, all three being images of castles in landscapes.⁶¹ One of these murals still exists *in situ* in the house that was Mary and George Reid's home, Upland Cottage, in Wychwood Park, Toronto (fig. 5).⁶² It hangs over the fireplace in the dining room, but is in need of restoration since most of the image has been lost as a result of the accumulation of dirt over time (what little is seen in fig. 5 is revealed only by a camera flash and is not visible otherwise). The work is *toile marouflée*, and measures 20" x 57" - small in comparison with other mural paintings, but large when compared to most of Reid's other works.

A second mural by Reid, *Castles in Spain* (c.1896), is an oil on canvas, relatively small (21" x 54") and set in a tripartite frame that gives the work the feeling of a triptych, although it is one canvas (fig. 6). It also shows a castle on a hilltop in a landscape setting (possibly the same castle as in the previous mural for Upland Cottage). Owned today by the Art Gallery of Ontario, the mural was donated to the Gallery by the Gordon Conn and Mary E. Wrinch Trust in 1970, which suggests that it also came from the Reid's home.

⁶¹ The practice of decorating the over-mantle area of private homes was introduced to the United States and Canada in the second quarter of the eighteenth century from England. This form of mural painting was very much in vogue until the early-twentieth century. Robert L. McGrath, Early Vermont Wall Paintings 1790-1850 (Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1972), 18.

⁶² In the early twentieth century in Toronto, artists Marmaduke Matthews, George Reid, and Gustav Hahn, along with architect Eden Smith bought land and established Wychwood Park. Reid's experiences at Onteora, New York provided a model for Wychwood, and the two were constructed along the same lines. Reid designed many of the homes in both locations along Arts and Crafts principles. Like-minded persons, usually members of the arts community, were invited to join the communities. Wychwood Park (and Onteora) still exist today.

The AGO, significantly, has installed this work in a recreated inglenook, an architectural feature of turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts homes, an excellent example of which still survives in Upland Cottage. The work is thereby affiliated with a private setting even as it hangs in a public gallery. Reid established her own identification with the inglenook as a space to which she was devoted by making it the feature of a work entitled *The Inglenook in My Studio* (c.1910, Art Gallery of Ontario), as well as in a number of other paintings.⁶³ In addition, she was photographed in the same space holding her artist's palette (thus creating a symbiosis between herself, her career, and the interior of her home) in an undated portrait (Art Gallery of Ontario). Taking the dimensions of *Castles in Spain* into consideration, its original destination was most probably a private space, but in its current location it bridges private and public.

The third mural by Reid still in existence was painted for an Arts and Crafts exhibition at the Canadian National Exhibition, c.1912, where it was installed over a mantle and formed background decoration for a display of furniture, possibly made by George Reid for the Exhibition.⁶⁴ Once again it depicts a castle in a landscape setting, possibly the same castle as in the previous two, and is painted in oil on jute (fig. 7). In its current condition the work measures 24" x 30", but it has been cut from its original, now unknown, size. (A preliminary painting for this over-mantle mural is in a private collection in Toronto.) After the c.1912 exhibition, the mural was taken down and installed in a private home in Toronto, but it was lent to the 1922 retrospective, where it

⁶³ See works reproduced in Anderson, "Negotiating Gendered Spaces," in Foss and Anderson, Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid.

⁶⁴ Letter from private collector to Janice Anderson, April 16, 1999. George Reid's uncle, William Reid, owned a small furniture factory in Toronto called "Reid Bros. Manufacturing." It is possible that George Reid made the furniture in his workshop.

was shown under the title *The Enchanted Castle*. Additionally, in the catalogue of the same show, a list of “Paintings of Mural Decorations – From the Studio” included a number of sketches and studies for both known and unknown mural paintings, suggesting that Reid was relatively prolific in this genre.⁶⁵ Following the 1922 exhibition, *The Enchanted Castle* remained in the same private collection until the house was demolished in the mid-1980s. It is today in the private collection of a member of the family that originally acquired it. Like the mural now installed in the Art Gallery of Ontario, its meaning bridges public and private, except that in this case the work has gone from public to private, rather than vice versa. The public-private dichotomy is further complicated by the fact that the original intention of the mural at the Canadian National Exhibition was to decorate what was meant to be seen as a “private” room in a public venue. This repeated crossover between public and private acts as a synecdoche for Reid’s persona itself.

When Reid painted a larger piece, c.1912, for a clearly public setting, the Town Hall of Weston, Ontario, the subject did not include a castle. Instead, in keeping with the referential requirements of a public space, it showed a Canadian landscape: a view of the Humber River (fig. 8). Who made the choice of subject is not recorded, but in the year prior to the painting of the mural a number of photographs of scenes similar to the one Reid would subsequently paint appeared in the *Toronto Star Weekly*, and may conceivably have served as a partial source.⁶⁶ This does not suggest that Reid has here departed from the type of work for which she was well-known. The landscape is a

⁶⁵ Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by Mary Hiester Reid, A.R.C.A., O.S.A. unpaginated.

⁶⁶ Toronto Star Weekly, Illustrated Section, 27 May 1911: 1, 4; 17 June 1911: 2; 28 October 1911: 1.

domesticated natural scene, rather like an expanded garden painting of the sort she had already developed as part of the basis of her repertoire. The mural was the subject of much discussion at town meetings and was also reviewed in local newspapers, both at the time of its creation and years later. The *Mail and Empire* said of the work, “There are so many wretched pieces of mural decorations, done by Canadians, in and about Toronto that it will interest many persons to find that the Town of Weston possesses a really noteworthy painting of this type done by Mrs. Reid. It is pleasing in both colour and line.”⁶⁷ The mural was the largest known painting that Reid ever made, designed to fill the back of an auditorium stage. Although its actual dimensions are not recorded, it is possible to compare it to the size of the chairs in a surviving photograph, and extrapolate its size to approximately 8' x 20'.

Reid was almost certainly paid for the painting of the mural. The subject of money, however, is mentioned in only one source. In a review of Reid’s retrospective exhibition, the *Toronto Star* discussed the mural at some length and the writer noted that a “very advanced improvement association in Weston” had conceived the idea for its creation. The association considered several tapestries, but these proved unsatisfactory. Then, “a committee was entrusted with the money on hand to interview Mrs. Reid and find out whether a wall painting by herself would be within the bounds of possibility.”⁶⁸ Reid’s stature as an artist, in addition to the fact that she appeared to have no personal affiliation with Weston that might account for her giving the work as a gift, and the lack of many records of other acts of charity in the form of paintings donated in what is

⁶⁷ *Mail and Empire*, 14 October 1922.

⁶⁸ “Memorial Exhibition Tribute to Artist,” *Toronto Star*, 9 October 1922.

known of her personal history, all suggest that the mural was a commission and purchase, not a donation.⁶⁹

At the time of the 1922 retrospective exhibition of Reid's work at the Art Gallery of Toronto the Weston Town Hall mural was taken down and exhibited at the Gallery. The sole record of the work survives in the form of a photograph in the Archives of the Art Gallery of Ontario showing the mural as it appeared in the exhibition.⁷⁰ Following the retrospective, there was some debate about where in Weston the mural would be reinstalled, and correspondence was entered into between members of the Town Council and George Reid. Some people in the Town of Weston felt that the mural should be relocated to the Library. However, it would seem to have been reinstalled by George Reid in the Town Hall by March 10, 1924.⁷¹ Several decades later, in 1957, the Town Hall was demolished, and the mural most probably disappeared at that time. In any event, subsequent attempts to locate it have proved fruitless.

Reid's history as a successful vendor of her art (as evidenced in part by the large number of private collectors who loaned works to her memorial exhibition) contributes to the historical construction of her life as a flourishing practitioner working for remuneration in a public venue where she was the agent of her own success.

⁶⁹ Reid did contribute a painting to Jarvis Collegiate Institute during the First World War to support the War Memorial Fund. Half the profits from the sale of the work went to the artist, half to the fund. Harvey Medland, *Minerva's Diary, A History of Jarvis Collegiate Institute* (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Publishing Company, 1979), 97. She also participated in donating sketches (with George Reid and Mary Wrinch) to be sold to raise funds for "needy Belgians" in 1916. *The Courier* (Toronto) 19 February 1916.

⁷⁰ Mary Hiester Reid papers, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. In the same file, there also exists a postcard with the caption "The Spirit of the Humber: Fragment of Decoration in Weston Town Hall Painted by Mary Hiester Reid A.R.C.A." Although the image is very similar, it is not that of the mural.

⁷¹ Minute Book, Town of Weston, 8 November 1922, 8 October 1923, 19 November 1923, 10 March 1924. Archives of the City of York, Weston, Ontario.

Understanding the conditions under which she negotiated what seems to have been an unproblematic relationship with the public in Victorian and Edwardian Canada provides a model for potential understandings of many women's lives. Reid's mural production bridged public and private with the same decorum that provided a strategy for her working life. Painting a large-format mural did not conflict with her essential womanhood: the development and promotion of her unthreatening personality ensured that her professional career could co-exist harmoniously with her life as an ideal wife.

In addition, Reid's missing mural for the Weston Town Hall contributes in a concrete way to the silent history of Canada's women artists. It represents the largest piece of work, and one of only a few mural paintings, by one of Canada's most prestigious women artists, yet at some point in time, most probably 1957, it was no longer considered worth preserving. Between the time of Reid's death and the disappearance of the mural, her reputation had become obscured. The combination of a lack of value being attributed to women's work generally, and the tendency not to archive documents surrounding the lives of women like Reid frequently makes the history of women's artistic productions and actual artworks by women difficult to reassemble. The problem then becomes how to talk about such productions when they no longer seem to exist. In the absence of the work itself, conditions of production, by default, have to be foregrounded. Art by women cannot necessarily be spoken of in the traditional terms of art historical discourse, but must follow different paths towards inclusion. Reid's loss to Canadian art history can certainly be premised on changes in taste and the attribution of her work to an outmoded aesthetic. Her subdued palette and evocative, romantic paintings of still lifes, gardens and landscapes were very much of the nineteenth century.

Beginning about 1920, the rise in prominence of the Group of Seven and their particular way of representing the “new” Canadian landscape made work like Reid’s seem old-fashioned.⁷² Aesthetic considerations aside, however, the fate of Reid’s history is not dissimilar to the fates of the majority of Canada’s women artists. Her history, and the histories of women like her, is only now being reconstructed, and the silence that currently defines them is difficult to fill.

ELIZABETH ANNIE BIRNIE

As residents of a major Canadian city and participants in a competitive art market, Harriet Ford and Mary Hiester Reid adopted individual tactics to smooth their integration. Not all artists of the time, however, lived in such ambitious environments. Elizabeth Annie Birnie (1851-1921) was an unmarried woman working in the small Ontario town of Collingwood to support herself. Whether or not she “had to” work might be debated, since both her father and her brother were professional men - her father, John Birnie, and her brother, also John Birnie, were both solicitors - who presumably could have supported her. The exact circumstances of her life, however, have not been recorded, so there is no certainty to any conclusion about her motivations for deciding to work outside her home. In any case, Birnie did not work as a professional artist. Although she obviously took the pursuit of her artistic interests seriously, her full-time employment was as a schoolteacher. In the course of her teaching duties, she compiled a manual of lessons in moral and ethical teachings, used as a model series for teachers in Ontario public schools, evidence that she took her professional role seriously and attempted to

⁷² Foss, “Sympathetic Self Expression,” in Foss and Anderson, Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid, 51-85.

make a lasting contribution.⁷³ The major portion of her artistic production consisted of small-format landscapes in various media (see, for example, fig. 9). She also painted a large-format historical portrait of Lady Sarah Maitland with her three dogs (c.1875; oil on canvas; 43" x 61"; collection of Simcoe County Museum).⁷⁴ Particularly in light of the difficulties faced by the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators in the early years of attempting to revive a mural painting tradition in Canada, and the subsequent discouragement and abandonment of the effort (see Appendix I), the concurrent story of mural-painting successes by Birnie is a remarkable one. In the early years of the twentieth century she painted two large mural cycles for two public venues in northern Ontario – the libraries of the small towns of Collingwood and Penetanguishene.

Collingwood and Penetanguishene were both Carnegie Libraries, their construction supported through grants from the American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.⁷⁵ The monies donated for their construction, however, did not extend to the decoration of the library interiors. When the Penetanguishene Library Board requested an additional grant of \$2000 for a mural depicting historic events related to the area the request was refused. Whether or not the artist under consideration was Birnie is not clear, but the subjects for the proposed murals (as submitted to Carnegie) were the same as

⁷³ Emma Griesbach, "The Passing of Elizabeth Birnie: An Appreciation," Collingwood Bulletin 28 July 1921, C5.

⁷⁴ Lady Sarah Maitland, wife of Sir Peregrine Maitland, the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada 1818-1828, died in 1873, so the painting was most likely not a portrait. Birnie included Maitland's three Pekinese, Flos, Tiny and Tay in the painting. The three dogs' names were given to townships in Simcoe in 1829.

⁷⁵ Margaret Beckman et al, The Best Gift: A Record of the Carnegie Libraries in Ontario (Toronto and London: Dundurn Press, 1984).

those she would later paint.⁷⁶ The amount requested, however, does give some indication of the value placed on work of that nature. The Collingwood Library building was completed in 1904 and Birnie worked on the murals between 1908 and 1919.⁷⁷ The Penetanguishene Library was built in 1910, and Birnie had noted by 1914 (on her Art Gallery of Toronto - now the Art Gallery of Ontario - information form) that she had painted both mural cycles. Neither library has intact minute books. It is clear, however, that Birnie was paid for the work, although the amount of the payment is no longer recorded. When her will went to probate after her death in 1921, it was noted there were outstanding balances owing for both murals - \$350 from the Penetanguishene Library and \$200 from Collingwood. There is a certain irony in the chance preservation of Birnie's work for the Penetanguishene Library (the Collingwood Library, along with Birnie's murals, has been destroyed); so much Canadian mural painting by better-known artists of both genders - Harriet Ford and Mary Hiester Reid being prime examples - has been lost.

Annie Birnie, as she was known, was born in Barrie, Ontario and moved to Collingwood as a young child. As an artist she was a member of no societies, she exhibited in no public exhibitions, and she had very little formal training. As a result of her lack of contact with the art establishment, Birnie might well have vanished completely from the records of Canadian art history had she not sent the information form, on which she noted that she had painted the Collingwood and Penetanguishene murals, to the Art Gallery of Toronto in 1914.⁷⁸ That single sheet of paper attests to her

⁷⁶ Beckman et al, The Best Gift, 84, 86.

⁷⁷ "The Laurel Wreath Goes to the Public Library for the Most Unique and Successful Function Ever Held in Collingwood," The Messenger (Collingwood), 3 September 1919: 1.

⁷⁸ The Art Gallery of Toronto regularly sent out artist's information forms to working artists soliciting information but would have to have known of Birnie's existence in order to have made the request.

own opinion of herself as a practising artist and is the sole record in a mainstream Canadian public archive of this surprisingly large collection of canvases.

The Collingwood Library murals remained in existence until 1963, when they were destroyed by fire. A teenaged boy had forced open the back door of the library building during the night and stolen ten dollars from the petty cash drawer. During the course of the robbery the boy opened another drawer and set the contents on fire with his cigarette lighter.⁷⁹ The press reported that the fire department battled the ensuing blaze for eight hours before it was brought under control and the resultant damage was estimated at over \$100,000. Birnie's murals, affixed to the walls, were completely lost as a result of the blaze.⁸⁰

In spite of the fact that Birnie's murals from the Collingwood Library were destroyed in the fire, a relatively lengthy document describing the works most probably hung in the library alongside the murals and survived surprisingly intact, with damage to little more than its edges.⁸¹ The document was written by Birnie's "lifelong friend, Emma Griesbach," an art critic who wrote for *The Farmer's Sun*, the newspaper of the United Farm Workers of Ontario, under the nom-de-plume "Diana."⁸² Griesbach began her description of Birnie's murals by commenting that one could count on the fingers of one hand the number of libraries on the continent that contained "so unique and beautiful a decoration as that which the Collingwood Public Library possesses in its Mural

⁷⁹ "Local Youth has Arson Charge for Library Fire," The Enterprise-Bulletin (Collingwood) 9 May 1963, 1; "Youth Sentenced for Library Fire," The Enterprise-Bulletin (Collingwood) 30 May 1963, 6.

⁸⁰ "Loss is Heavy Following Fire in Public Library and the Huron Institute," The Enterprise-Bulletin (Collingwood) 18 April 1963, 1.

⁸¹ The document is kept today in the Archives of the Collingwood Museum, Collingwood, Ontario.

⁸² Charles Hill, The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 30.

Painting.” She divided the work into two groups: “exact representations,” and representations of “the spirit of the historic past.” Landmarks such as the “Old Elevator” and “Fisherman’s Point” were included in the first group. These portions of the work were said to have been based on old sketches and photographs recording different epochs in the history of the town.⁸³ The second group included the local Huron, eliminated from the area by the Iroquois in 1649, and images of European settlers who arrived in the area two hundred years later. The image of European pioneers showed scenes of logging, with oxen dragging the trees, and – according to Griesbach - the “charm of primitive woodland, in which one almost hears the rustling of the trees.”

Griesbach’s document continued with a description of the demanding nature of mural painting, which she described as more complicated and more exacting than that required by any other type of painting. The physical demands on the mural painter were not a topic of debate in Canadian mural painting, and no text that I have seen suggests that women were considered poor candidates for mural commissions because of the physical prowess necessary. Nevertheless, Annie Birnie would have been between fifty-seven and sixty-three at the time her library murals were completed, not elderly, but not young either. It is all the more interesting that her age and gender were not at issue - or at least not at issue in recorded sources. Griesbach additionally asserted that the structure of the mural work must be in harmony with the design of the room and perpendicularity must be preserved by means of vertical lines created by standing figures and tree trunks. In addition, groups of figures or objects must be equal in mass or weight. There must not, however, be repetition, but rather diversity in pose and individuality. Although the

⁸³ “Formal Opening of the Public Library: Unique Wall Decorations Admired,” Saturday News (Collingwood), 3 September 3 1910: 1.

Collingwood murals to which Birnie was allegedly applying these principles no longer exist, the requirements for a successful mural painting as described by Griesbach are evident in Birnie's murals in Penetanguishene.

The murals from the Penetanguishene Library are no longer *in situ* and no records were kept of when or why they were taken down. The paint looks faded, so the murals may have been removed to accommodate a renovation and not considered worthy of reinstallation.⁸⁴ They were, however, kept. Today they are unceremoniously rolled up, the plaster still stuck to the back of the canvas, and stored at Discovery Harbour, a heritage site in Penetanguishene, where an historic marine locale has been reconstructed as a tourist attraction. The murals are not connected with the current purposes of the site, and they are not available for viewing by the public.

The Penetanguishene series consisted of eight panels of various sizes, in oil on canvas. The two smallest panels (44" x 42" each) show the Latin texts "Excitari non Hebescere" (Diligence not Sloth) and "Salute Anime" (For the Health of the Soul). The remaining six canvases range from 13' x 5' to 26' x 5' in size. They relate stories from over a century of the history of the area called Huronia, surrounding Collingwood and Penetanguishene. The history includes images of Lord and Lady Simcoe and the signing of a 1798 land sale with the Chippewa of the region.⁸⁵ Simcoe, the first governor of

⁸⁴ Birnie was recorded, however, as having painted the murals in light colours, so the exact amount of fading is difficult to assess. The same document notes that Birnie did not use a strong chiaroscuro in her work and that a reposeful effect is the result. Emma Griesbach, "These Murals are from the Brush of Elizabeth [destroyed by fire]...Native of Collingwood, and Were Painted [destroyed by fire]," Archives of the Town of Collingwood, Collingwood Museum, Collingwood, Ontario.

⁸⁵ The interpretation of the narratives in Birnie's murals was done by Trish Foley at Discovery Harbour, Penetanguishene, Ontario, Rosemary Vyvyn at Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons at Midland, Ontario, and James Hunter at the Huronia Museum and Huron Ouendat Village. Their interpretations are based on known histories but are not necessarily definitive. I would like to thank them for giving me access to the murals and for their help and enthusiasm in interpreting the images.

Upper Canada and the founder of Toronto, traveled in Upper Canada with his wife, Lady Elizabeth Simcoe, between 1792 and 1796 (figs. 10 and 11). Another of the murals relates the narrative of Jesuit missionaries and Native Canadians in the late seventeenth century. A third large canvas shows explorer John Franklin on his second polar expedition in 1825, when he traveled as far as Penetanguishene and waited there for the ice conditions on Georgian Bay to clear so he could travel northward by canoe (fig. 12). The final large canvas that includes an identifiable historical narrative shows an American warship built in 1813 at Presqu'ile and captured by the British in 1814. The remaining murals do not appear to refer to specific stories, but are instead general scenes of dogsleds, deer, women with children, and men standing or running. Birnie signed every panel and each was cut to fit a particular space, including sections cut out to fit around door and window frames. Since the original Penetanguishene Library building still exists, it is possible to establish without much question where each mural was originally placed. Although some of the walls that would have been decorated are contiguous, the narrative in the murals is interrupted. Each wall featured a different story and a three-inch-wide strip of canvas, painted red and green, framed each canvas. This suggests that, most likely, Birnie painted the canvases in another location prior to their installation, and that they were installed upon completion.

No public reaction to the Penetanguishene Library murals seems to have survived, but the destroyed murals from Collingwood received a fair amount of press. The Collingwood community considered its library decorations to be important and valued works, not only in and of themselves but also in terms of a Canadian mural painting tradition. The *Collingwood Messenger*, for example, claimed that the library was “the

first in the Province to undertake anything in the way of encouraging decorative art and Canadian artists....”⁸⁶ Birnie’s murals were “worthy of the highest praise from an artistic viewpoint.”⁸⁷ The *Saturday News* (Collingwood) went even further in reacting to the paintings, writing that “[t]o most of us the result is a revelation; we have not before realized the fact that in our midst there dwells a genius.”⁸⁸ The unveiling of the Collingwood murals attracted no less a personage than art critic, collector and first president (1900-24) of the Art Gallery of Toronto, Sir Edmund Walker, who traveled from Toronto to attend the event. Walker had earlier (1902) confirmed his own interest in mural painting by commissioning George Reid to paint an allegorical mural of the cycle of life in his library in Toronto.⁸⁹

Annie Birnie seems an unlikely candidate to have painted these two mural series in the first place and then to have received such high acclaim for them. Nothing in her history suggested her as a candidate for the mural commissions and the final production, while certainly a testimonial to her enthusiasm and bravery in attacking a project of such major proportions, is nevertheless the work of a talented amateur without much formal training. In an “appreciation” written following Birnie’s death, her friend Emma Griesbach wrote that Birnie had “always wanted to paint but didn’t know where to begin,” since she had been “without the favoring opportunities for developing artistic expression” and had lost precious years before “finding herself.”⁹⁰ Her only formal

⁸⁶ “The Laurel Wreath,” 1.

⁸⁷ “The Laurel Wreath,” 1.

⁸⁸ “Formal Opening of the Public Library”: 1, 4.

⁸⁹ Katharine A. Jordan, *Sir Edmund Walker, Print Collector* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1974), 14.

⁹⁰ Emma Griesbach, “The Passing of Elizabeth Birnie: An Appreciation,” C5.

training consisted of some studies with Lucius O'Brien (1832-99).⁹¹ (Sir Edmund Walker also took Saturday classes with O'Brien,⁹² and perhaps met Birnie during the course of these lessons.) Lucius O'Brien moved to Toronto in 1869 when Birnie was only eighteen years old, so any studying she did with him was either before she reached adulthood, or during visits he made to Collingwood. It is certainly possible that Birnie studied with O'Brien in the years after he moved to Toronto. His parents' home was at Shanty Bay and he painted many views of the area, only a few miles from Collingwood, even after his move to Toronto, and he is known to have been in Collingwood in 1881 to begin sketching for the book *Picturesque Canada*.⁹³ He could certainly have conducted classes during those visits. O'Brien is not known to have painted any murals, however, and was not adept at historical subjects, and it is therefore unlikely that Birnie conceived the content of her two mural series from her studies with him.

In the absence of extended artistic training, Birnie explained to Griesbach, the method she devised for the creation of her landscape paintings consisted of taking advantage of opportunities to study the work of other artists and trying to replicate that work at home. She sought out local scenes similar in features and atmospheric conditions to those she had seen used by other artists and tried to reproduce them.⁹⁴ Considering this strategy for producing landscape paintings, Birnie most probably managed the murals in

⁹¹ Lucius O'Brien's sister lived in Collingwood and he himself lived in nearby Shanty Bay, in close enough proximity to make the classes a possibility. Author's interview with Ms. Marie Cruickshank, Archivist, Collingwood Public Library, Collingwood, 17 June 1997.

⁹² Jean Sutherland Boggs, The National Gallery of Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 12.

⁹³ For an in-depth study of the biography of Lucius O'Brien see Dennis Reid, Lucius R. O'Brien: Visions of Victorian Canada (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1990).

⁹⁴ Griesbach, "The Passing of Elizabeth Birnie: An Appreciation."

the same fashion. She is known to have traveled to both Boston and Washington, D.C., and would almost certainly have passed through Toronto to get there. She may well have seen the work by George Reid in the Toronto Municipal Buildings, the murals in the Boston Public Library by Puvis de Chavannes (1893-96), John Singer Sargent (1890-1919) and Edwin Austin Abbey (unveiled 1901), and the mural work by Edwin Blashfield (1895-96), Kenyon Cox (1890s), and others in Washington's Library of Congress. The composition used by Puvis de Chavannes in his Boston mural, *Les Muses inspiratrices*, and again by George Reid in his *Hail to the Pioneer* murals in the Toronto Municipal Buildings, was the same as that prescribed by Griesbach in the document that accompanied the lost Penetanguishene murals. Both Puvis de Chavannes' and George Reid's murals are intentionally frieze-like and decorative, with qualities of flatness, stillness, simplification and muted colour (the basic components of almost every mural painter's vocabulary), and these qualities very much anticipated Birnie's own techniques. The desire for flatness in particular was a general feature of most mural painting and was prescribed by Puvis de Chavannes and adopted by George Reid.⁹⁵ As with Puvis' work in Boston, Birnie's figures all occupy the front of the picture plane and the landscape background is not painted in great detail. In addition, George Reid's work documented a version of Canadian history, thus providing the subject that Birnie would subsequently choose for her own works.

As suggested above, Birnie relied on her ability to adopt the practices of other artists when she created her landscape paintings and it is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that she did the same in order to create the murals. In so doing, she employed her

⁹⁵ Rosalind Pepall, "The Murals in the Toronto Municipal Buildings: George Reid's Debt to Puvis de Chavannes." *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 9 (1986): 155.

own means to fit into and participate in the cultural productions of the early-twentieth century in small-town Ontario. Because Birnie lived and worked in a small community, she was most likely considered a local celebrity. By restricting her work to small, relatively isolated towns, she eliminated the need to devise a strategy that would have allowed her participation in the much more competitive art market of a centre such as Toronto. Because her work fell into the category of “local improvement,” and was definitely seen as a source of community pride, she would not have had to face the potential problems that a woman artist competing at a professional level in a larger community would have faced. Her unmarried state also precluded the possibility that she would have been challenged for neglecting her family. Birnie, therefore, did not have to focus on the negotiating strategies for visibility that would so clearly mark the public productions of female artists in more urban settings. Because she had no possibility (or at least no possibility without some solid art training) of establishing herself as a major artist (nor did she attempt to do so), Birnie was not forced to negotiate seriously to establish a professional place for herself. Nevertheless, her achievements in tackling the mural commissions in the first place and the acclaim they brought to her in her local environment are noteworthy comments on the potential for women in small-town Ontario in the early-twentieth century.

THE LOSS OF WOMEN’S PRODUCTION

It is perhaps ironic that the large-scale murals by a little-known artist such as Birnie have survived relatively intact, while so many works by more well-known painters such as Harriet Ford and Mary Hiester Reid have been lost. Murals, particularly secular

murals, whether painted by men or by women, are frequently treated as being more transient than other works of art, especially when the buildings where they are housed are threatened with demolition. There are many Canadian women who painted murals that have vanished. Mabel May (1884-1971) and Anne Savage (1896-1971), for example, were two of six artists selected from sixty applicants in a competition mounted by the Royal Canadian Academy in 1923 to provide designs on canvas for a mural.⁹⁶ The Academy had staged the competition to encourage and develop the art of mural painting in Canada. The locations of the canvases (May's was entitled *Early Settlers to the Banks of the St. Lawrence* and Savage's was *Fortis et Veritas*⁹⁷) are not known now, and whether or not the actual murals were painted was not recorded. In addition, Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904-49) refers often to her mural painting in her collected letters, but the mural she executed in Norman Bethune's home in Montreal no longer exists; the building it was in has been demolished. In the same collection of letters she refers to two other murals that were almost certainly painted during the time that she worked for René Cera, who had been brought by Lady Eaton from the Galerie Lafayette in Paris around 1929 to decorate the windows of the new Eaton's College Street store in Toronto.⁹⁸ MacLeod and other artists such as Caven Atkins and Paraskeva Clark painted large murals for the store's windows and restaurant. In 1936, MacLeod wrote to Harry McCurry, "I am doing a mural like a cameo of Greekie figures going around a red and white dining room in

⁹⁶ "In Race for Prizes in Mural Decoration: Toronto Artists in Final Stage of Royal Canadian Academy Competition," *Mail and Empire* (Toronto), 21 May 1923, 41.

⁹⁷ *Catalogue of the Forty-Fifth Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts* 22 November 1923 to 2 January 1924 (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1923), 20.

⁹⁸ Joan Murray, ed. *Daffodils in Winter: The Life and Letters of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904-1949* (Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1984), 124.

wedgewood [sic] blue and white.”⁹⁹ And in 1937, she wrote to Marian Scott, “I am making a big mural of Phoebus going to town in a big chariot plus some aeroplanes and Diana coming home from the hunt.”¹⁰⁰ The two references almost certainly are to the “Wedgwood blue-and-white Greek figures in the red and white dining-room, and, in 1937, one of Phoebus and Diana,” identified as MacLeod’s work by Caven Atkins.¹⁰¹ Neither work exists today. Additionally, MacLeod’s mural at Fisher Vocational School in Woodstock, New Brunswick (1941) has been dismantled and exists now only in fragments (see Chapter Four). Likewise, Sarah Robertson’s (1891-1948) murals painted over a ten-year period in private homes in Montreal no longer seem to be extant.¹⁰²

Certainly there is also a long list of mural paintings by male painters in Canada that have either been destroyed or are in imminent danger of removal. George Reid’s murals in EarlsCourt Library in Toronto, for example, were destroyed when the building was demolished; R. York Wilson’s Salvation Army murals in Toronto have been destroyed; and even J.E.H. MacDonald’s decorations in the Concourse Building in Toronto are threatened by the impending destruction of the building that houses them unless plans are made to relocate them. The difference in losses between those murals painted by men and those painted by women resides in the difference in original numbers. Because women have painted fewer murals than have men, the loss of those

⁹⁹ Murray, Daffodils in Winter, 124.

¹⁰⁰ Murray, Daffodils in Winter, 131.

¹⁰¹ Cavin Atkins to Joan Murray, 3 June 1983, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives. Cited by Murray, Daffodils in Winter, 31.

¹⁰² Robertson noted that she had painted the murals on the information form that she sent to the National Gallery of Canada in 1945.

that do exist is felt more profoundly. Additionally, women's murals may be lost for different reasons than are those by men. Although commercial concerns might attempt to demolish the building that houses, for example, MacDonald's decorative works, there is no doubt within the art historical community that the loss, based on MacDonald's reputation, would be considered a great shame by some, and devastating by others, and there has been a correspondingly vocal campaign waged in the press against the proposed demolition.¹⁰³ Women, with their lesser-known histories and the lack of emphasis on the value of their production to Canadian art history, might not receive the same consideration. When the artist is unknown, the motivation within the community to lobby in favour of protecting the work does not achieve the same intensity. Works of some significance are not protected and disappear, as did Mary Hiester Reid's mural for the Weston Town Hall.

As another example, one of Canada's largest murals was designed by artist Nancy Burden Phillips (b.1923) in 1944 as a war memorial and was installed prominently in Union Station in Toronto. It has similarly disappeared, and reproductions of it exist only in newspaper articles from the time of the commission (fig. 13). Although Phillips is still alive the fate of the mural is unknown and attempts to locate it have proved futile.¹⁰⁴ Trained at the Ontario College of Art as a commercial artist, Phillips did not pursue a career as a painter beyond the designing of the mural, and has instead worked as a copywriter, fashion illustrator, account executive, staff columnist, and playwright in

¹⁰³ See, for example, Karen Palmer, "Edifice Complex: Treasure or Tower?: Council Set to Vote on Fate of 16-Storey Art Deco Building," *The Toronto Star* 8 May 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Neither the current administration of Union Station, the Canadian War Museum, the Royal Canadian Airforce Museum, The R.C.A.F. Memorial Museum, the National Archives of Canada, the Archives of the City of Toronto, Veteran's Affairs, the Toronto Historical Society, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Michael Forster, nor the artist herself have any idea what happened to this mural.

Toronto, New York, and Sao Paulo. The mural was commissioned in 1943 by the Writers', Artists', Broadcasters' and Musicians' Council of Toronto to publicize the achievements of the RCAF during the Second World War. The Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways provided wall space on the north wall of the main hall above the ticket counters in Union Station for the installation. A competition was held for the mural design, with thirteen artists, including Paraskeva Clark, participating. The contest was won by Phillips, then twenty years old and a commercial artist with Simpson's, where she had worked since 1941.¹⁰⁵ Phillips submitted a preliminary design, 2' x 4' in gouache, and she received \$150 as the prizewinner. Perhaps confused by the unusual circumstance of such a young person, and a woman no less, winning such a prestigious contest, the *Toronto Telegram* explained that other commitments (to the War) had narrowed the field of participants. Nevertheless, Phillips's design was "impressively proportioned" and she "has managed to meet all the requirements of detail [the mural had to give all branches of the RCAF proportionate consideration], while keeping her design simple, uncluttered."¹⁰⁶ The *Toronto Daily Star* had similar praise for the design. Reviewer Augustus Bridle noted that Phillip's work was "splendidly varied in figures, action, masses, planes and color distribution [making] this composite scene not a landscape nor a surrealist presentation nor an epic of engineering - but an absolutely 'bona fide' mural."¹⁰⁷ Phillips was unable to participate in the actual painting of the mural

¹⁰⁵ The press reported Burden's age as twenty-one at the time of the competition, but she was only twenty. Interview with Nancy Burden Phillips, 18 March 2000.

¹⁰⁶ "First Prize-Winning Mural Won by Airman's Daughter," *Toronto Telegram* 23 July 1943. Nancy Burden Phillips was the daughter of Henry John Burden, a professor of architecture at the University of Toronto and during the Second World War he was a Wing Commander with the RCAF.

¹⁰⁷ Augustus Bridle, "Simpson Girl Ad. Artist Wins R.C.A.F Mural Award," *Toronto Daily Star* 24 July 1943.

because some time elapsed between the competition and the execution (the mural was intended for completion in September 1943, but was not unveiled until March 1944), and during that time she became pregnant. The execution of the work was originally organized under the guidance of Michael Forster and later, after Forster was posted overseas as a war artist before the work had begun, William McCrow. A team of volunteer artists, Helen Faed, George Angliss, Joy Bain and Allan Wargon, donated their time to complete the painting as part of a co-operative war effort by Toronto artists.

It seems almost impossible to believe that a mural of such proportions that received such media attention at the time of its original design and also at its unveiling could have so definitively disappeared. It is possible that it was destroyed when it was removed, but its original medium was described as canvas stretched on a frame attached to the wall, implying that it was never *maroufléed*. This could be erroneous, of course, since a canvas of such large dimensions would have been difficult to prevent from stretching, and gluing it to the wall surface would have eliminated that problem. Regardless of the mural's actual fate, no record appears to have been kept, in any venue, of when, why or how it was taken down, or what its fate after removal was.

It is thus that the histories of Canadian women artists become self-fulfilling prophecies. Their reputations decline and their work is not protected. The work disappears and their reputations decline further. Decades later, in the face of missing personal biographies, almost empty artists' files, lack of personal documentation and even lost works of art, the reconstruction of these women's lives may become speculative. Nevertheless, when the information that is available is assembled, artists such as Harriet Ford and Mary Hiester Reid and Elizabeth Annie Birnie, when compared,

make evident the assertion that not every woman born in the nineteenth-century behaved in the same way. Their lives and experiences had similarities certainly, but the three women also appear to have behaved quite differently. It is a measure of their successes that apparently none of them ever was publicly criticized from the perspective that she was somehow betraying her gender (in Ford's or Birnie's case), or betraying her husband (in Reid's) by appearing in the public arena and earning money. They were not alone as women in their choice of profession; they had a significant number of contemporaries who became successful, practising artists. While the diversity of their histories precludes "lump sum" recoveries, the homogeneous loss of their artistic productions provides a platform for the insistence that such recoveries are essential to the understanding of Canada's past. While men's history is reported as mimetic of history - that is, the history of men *is* history - the need by women to devise negotiating strategies so they too might be included reinforces the idea that women are less central than men. In other words, men are integrated into social structures metonymically - they *are* the social structures. Women, on the other hand, are integrated as "other," their presence requiring some manipulation in order to guarantee acceptability. It follows from this that women's artworks are more expendable since they do not form the core or essence of cultural history. The various strategies women have employed in order that their art practices receive recognition have ended ultimately in even the best-known of them being relegated, until recently, to historical obscurity.

CHAPTER TWO: CANADIAN WOMEN AND RELIGION

While women of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, such as the artists discussed in Chapter One, created decorative murals for the most part in a landscape tradition, other women who were their close contemporaries painted religious murals for the ornamentation of churches. This chapter will discuss four women mural painters whose work not only still exists, but also exists *in situ*. The four, Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion (1854-1939), Madeleine Delfosse (1909-85), Marian Dale Scott (1906-93), and Otilie Palm Jost (1868-1961), a very diverse group of Ontario and Quebec artists, all painted murals devoted to religious themes. Soeur Véronique and Madeleine Delfosse worked within a conservative Catholic tradition in Quebec, while Marian Scott, also working in Quebec, professed no religious affiliation. Otilie Palm Jost worked in Ontario, her mural created for a Protestant Church in Hamilton. I will explore the relationships between women and religion, focusing particularly on Christianity as a defining trope in Canadian society. I will suggest that religion has been among the most influential discourses to have shaped Western lives, and that the exclusion of women from its power structures has functioned as a reflection of their social position generally. Nevertheless, women such as the four above-named painters have created incursions in different ways into the male domain defined both by claims to the fundamental definition of the person as male within Christianity, and by the definition of genius as a male prerogative in the history of art. It is where these two, religion and art, intersect that the women of this chapter have marked, in both its literal and figurative senses, the male body that is the Christian Church.

Of all the purposes that mural painting has served throughout the history of human creative achievement, none can equal the monumental dominance of the representation of religious themes, especially those themes particular to Christianity. But religion has played a major role as the topic for wall paintings and murals in the Western world for far longer than the two thousand years since the birth of Christ. Most archaeologists and art historians attribute religious significance to the oldest known Paleolithic wall paintings in caves in France and Spain. Ancient Greek artists revered their gods and goddesses in murals that exist today only in fragments; ancient Romans did the same. It was the spread of Christianity, however, that provided the Western world with its most dominant subject for murals. Reaching the peak of their prominence at the time of the Italian Renaissance, little could compare today to the veneration accorded the great murals painted by such artists as Giotto, Leonardo and Michelangelo. Idolized as icons in the history of Western art, the mural works of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy have consistently stood among the canonizing representations of the finest artistic production in human history.

Mural paintings incorporating Christian iconography and subjects have also played a significant role in the history of Canadian art. A great deal of the mural painting of nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries in Canada, most frequently in the province of Quebec and particularly by male artists such as Napoléon Bourassa (1827-1916) and Ozias Leduc (1864-1955), was devoted to the painting of religious iconography for church decoration (see Appendix I for further information on this topic). Even an artist as well-known for his later abstract canvases as Paul-Emile Borduas worked as a church decorator until he was almost thirty years old. Canadian women artists, on the other hand,

have played a much less dominant role. In Ontario, the painting of murals was an activity undertaken by secular women in small numbers (only one such early work has been found) beginning in the early-twentieth century. French-speaking, secular women of Quebec, on the other hand, seem to have produced only small numbers of paintings of any kind, including murals, prior to about 1930.¹ I will argue that the insistence on a conservative social milieu in Quebec ensured that the women who lived there would have had ties with home and family that were more deeply rooted than those of many women in English Canada. Large families, rural lives, and lack of access to professional art training combined to prevent secular women in Quebec from participating in public enterprises, and it was nuns who painted any mural work by women that predated the 1930s. Even they were much more likely to have produced works of elaborate embroidery than paintings.² On the other hand, the lesser influence of the Catholic Church in Ontario meant that fewer murals devoted to religious themes appeared in that province. In general, secular women painted few church murals, including later in the twentieth century in Ontario and Quebec, making the murals that do exist even more significant.

¹ Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1976), 2.

² Farr and Luckyj, 2. I want to emphasize here that I am not participating in a hierarchical ordering of painting and embroidery and that I would consider such an ordering to be contrary to a feminist project. A number of nuns are known to have painted murals in Quebec. For example, Ozias Leduc advised Sister Albina Lanthier for the Stations of the Cross in the Chapel of Hôtel-Dieu, Sainte-Hyacinthe, 1925. Laurier Lacroix, *Ozias Leduc: An Art of Love and Reverie* (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), 302; Soeur Jérôme de la Croix painted a mural cycle for the Church at St-Esprit-de-Montcalm, advised by Guido Nincheri, who sent her to Italy to study murals. Soeur Jérôme painted over six hundred easel paintings between 1910 and 1950, most of them copies but some original compositions. Author's correspondence with Pierluccio Pellissier, December 13, 1999; Fifteen artists active between 1860 and 1960 at the Convent of Bon-Pasteur in Quebec painted some 400 works for Church decoration. Ginette Laroche, *Les chemins de la mémoire* (Quebec: Les publications du Québec, 1999), 72. See also Lise Drolet "L'atelier des soeurs du Bon-Pasteur de Québec: cent ans de peinture religieuse," *Questions d'art Québécois* Cahiers du CELAT, no. 6, February 1987, 189-220.

These works emphasize the insubstantial documentation of women's production that makes it difficult even to locate work by women, and doubly difficult to contextualize that work when it is found. In addition, the small numbers of religious murals (and murals in general) painted by women reiterate the insistence that certain subjects were deemed more suited to a woman's hand and to her position in the private sphere. Most importantly for what I wish to focus on here, the small numbers of murals painted by women as compared to the numbers painted by men highlight the inverse relationship between women and the monumental productions and events that dictate the content of our written records. Our history (and I use the word "history" rather than "histories" very deliberately to reflect its narrow field) focuses on the narratives associated with grand events and institutions – wars, dramatic achievements, political intrigue, religious dogma, etc. – all tropes that have not traditionally included in much detail either the experiences of "ordinary" men or the experiences of very many women at all. For women, the consequence of missing histories is a loss of definition; the absence of models from the past to define possibilities for women's potential has suggested the stasis of relegation to the private as the normal condition of women's lives. That is, the reiteration of standard beliefs about women's proper place in the world, combined with the failure to provide a record of historical models for different behaviours, has resulted in a lack of change in women's lives and careers over a great span of time. It is only recently, in the last third of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, that we begin to see more extensively experienced and diverse possibilities.

These changes have come about very slowly, and some feminists would argue that, although women have made many changes in the acceptability of their appearances in public, they are still broadly excluded, except in token ways, from most high positions of power. In spite of the variety of ways in which women have behaved within Western history, in different places and at different times, expectations of gendered behaviours have remained remarkably consistent, and this is as true in Canada as it is elsewhere.³ Expectations for men have almost continuously insisted (with some temporal modulations) on their “aggressiveness, independence, rational thinking, athletic prowess, having a career and being the protector of the family.” On the other hand, being female has implied “passivity, dependence, emotionality, intuition, child nurturing and home making.”⁴ Since the distinctive expectations of men’s personalities and behaviour patterns parallel the characteristics required for the continuation of the iconic structures that direct society and are reported as constituting its history, the meagre recording of women’s relationships to those structures is not surprising.

WOMEN AND CHRISTIANITY

Of all the structures and discourses that have shaped gender differences in Western societies over the past two thousand years, few have been more clearly dominant than the insistent hierarchy of the Christian religion. At the turn of the current millennium, religion continues to hold a significant place in Canadian society. Although

³ Veronica Strong-Boag, The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 3; Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1986), 2.

⁴ Lucille Marr, “Hierarchy, Gender and the Goals of the Religious Educators in the Canadian Presbyterian, Methodist and United Churches, 1919-39, Studies in Religion 20 (1991): 65.

the number of Canadians who claim to have no religious affiliation rose dramatically in the decade between the 1981 and 1991 censuses (from 7.4 percent to 12.5 percent), the majority of Canadians continue to identify themselves with a religion. Of the believers, 90 percent are followers of Christianity, with the balance divided between Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, other smaller religions, and para-religious sects.⁵ Christian churches are well represented in our urban landscapes.

Women, however, do not hold positions of power within the Christian Church. The most prestigious and important offices in the churches of Canada were (and continue to be) held almost exclusively by men (although some denominations do allow the ordination of women ministers, especially today). Although women have played numerous and diverse roles within the life and activities of the Church, as professional church workers, for example, or as missionaries, or as members of religious communities, they have “found that the work they did was ignored, devalued, and trivialized.”⁶ The low regard for the importance of women’s contributions has been additionally exacerbated by the lack of historical documentation of the activities that were originated and led by the religious women of Canada. In writings about the Canadian history of religion, women are, to quote historian Elizabeth Smyth, “remarkably absent, minimally represented or identified as an area for much-needed research.”⁷

⁵ Statistics Canada, 1991 census. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo32.html>.

⁶ Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley, *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 8.

⁷ Elizabeth Smyth, “Christian Perfection and Service to Neighbours: The Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph, Toronto, 1851-1920.” Cited in Muir and Whiteley, *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada*, 42.

There is additionally an inherent contradiction, originating at the end of the nineteenth century, to consider when trying to understand the relationships between the Christian denominations, women, and public and private worlds. Although the Church itself might be thought of as an institution that operates in public, the clearly delineated gender roles assigned to women and men at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth in fact subsumed religion under the banner of the private sphere, placing it squarely within women's field of responsibilities. Some authors have suggested that the assigning to women of the moral superiority associated with religious beliefs, and of the responsibility for the maintenance of Christian teachings in the home, were part of the need by nineteenth-century men to redefine masculinity in the wake of industrialization. That is to say, as it became more difficult to define masculine behaviour on the basis of physical work (as work became less physical and more office-oriented for the middle classes) men relied more heavily on defining themselves against what they were not – i.e., they were not women.⁸ Part of the reason, therefore, that the Church became affiliated with women and the private sphere was the need for men to separate Christian morality from the political and economic realms. This separation of the two spheres put such seemingly un-Christian activities as the exploitation of workers, underhanded business dealings, and ruthless competition against other businessmen outside the areas that were included within women's sphere of responsibility. Simultaneously created were the home and the virtuous woman who presided over it as a

⁸ See, for example, Peter G. Filene Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America 2nd edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Peter N. Stearns Be A Man! Males in Modern Society (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishing, 1979).

sanctuary from the “dirty work of business.”⁹ However, in the same way that defining women as belonging to the private sphere did not mean that they exercised control of that sphere, assigning them the responsibility for religious matters did not mean that they controlled the functioning of religious systems. In spite of the conservative dictates of Church decoration in general, however, women artists have associations with the murals that decorate Church walls which, as I will demonstrate, can be read in a variety of ways ranging from total compliance to the demands of Christian heritage, to being subversive in minor ways, to being subversive in more major ways.

Whether or not enough has been made of women’s contributions to the history of Christianity at a primary level, the large numbers of women who worked and continue to work within Church structures managed to gain tertiary experiences that allowed women in general to take some important steps toward social change. It was within Church gatherings that women formed the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, for example, and it was the fight for temperance, among other social battles, that led to women’s struggle for the vote. The work of the WCTU began in Canada in the 1870s and its all-female membership gave many women their first experiences in a political organization.¹⁰ The WCTU was the largest non-denominational women’s organization of its time in the entire country; by 1914, it could boast over 16,000 members nationally.¹¹ The formation of institutions such as the WCTU is one example of the ways women have worked to

⁹ Betty A. DeBerg, Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 18.

¹⁰ Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 58.

¹¹ Muir and Whiteley, Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada, 301.

circumvent situations where they would otherwise have remained essentially disempowered.

In spite of the strength of organizations such as the WCTU, however, feminists have realized for many generations that, although their own religious beliefs might remain resolute, their relationships to Christian religious dogma are tenuous at best and confrontational at worst. Going back a century, the American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), for example, decried the use of the Bible as a tool of patriarchy. Between 1895 and 1898 she published *The Woman's Bible*, commenting on those segments of the Bible that dealt with women and also on those sections that prominently excluded them. Stanton recognized that the Bible exerted great power in both ecclesiastical and civic circles, and she wrote that "they [referring, presumably, to women] cannot twist out of the Old or New Testaments a message of justice, liberty or equality from God to the women of the nineteenth century."¹² Opposition to Stanton's beliefs was vehement. Religious leader James H. Brookes, described as the "founding father and the controlling spirit of the premillennialist Niagara Conferences,"¹³ for example, called her revision of certain biblical passages "that miserable abortion...that is only the impudent utterance of infidelity."¹⁴

If Brookes read Stanton's views of the Bible as so appalling that he was forced to use the strongest language to express his displeasure, his reaction was not a random one.

¹² Elizabeth Cady Stanton cited in Eileen Schuller, "Feminism and Biblical Hermeneutics: Genesis 1-3 as a Test Case," in Morny Joy and Eva K. Neumaier-Dargygy, eds. *Gender, Genre and Religion: Feminist Reflections* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1995), 33.

¹³ Ernest R. Sandeen *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 134. Cited by de Berg, *Ungodly Women*, 1.

¹⁴ James H. Brookes, "Good for Miss Willard and the Women," *Truth, or, Testimony for Christ* 23 (January 1897): 6. Cited by DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*, 1.

Rather, it was mediated by the discursive field in which his opinion was formed. Its purpose was not simply to chastise Stanton, but also to reiterate the boundaries circumscribing where she could correctly stand and which opinions she could most correctly hold. The strength of his language paralleled the potency of her perceived attack on the status quo. The strength of Stanton's own action in creating the alternative Bible readings in the first place reflected the serious feelings she held about the relationships between women and religious teachings.

The more contemporary response to women's roles in Bible stories, as proposed by Mieke Bal, suggests an interpretation of Biblical mythology that in some ways parallels and updates Stanton's thinking. Bal states in the introduction to her book *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* that the dominant reading of the Bible in Western, Christian contexts has focused on a "monolithically misogynist view of those biblical stories wherein female characters play a role, and a denial of the importance of women in the Bible as a whole."¹⁵ Throughout her text, Bal suggests not so much that feminist re-readings of biblical women's narratives can repair misogynist attitudes to women today, but that the myriad of negative ways in which the women of the Bible have been interpreted provides a model for the understanding of contemporary patriarchy. In other words, the continuity of interpretation of, for example, Timothy's writings on women (such as, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being

¹⁵ Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 2.

deceived was in the transgression."¹⁶), is basically not different from common Christian morality as it has been maintained over centuries.¹⁷ She argues in response to *1 Timothy* that,

It is not obvious that Adam, the man, was first formed; even if he had been, that gives him no superiority in quality - on the contrary; even if he were better made, there is hardly any necessary relation between, on the one hand, being a less successful product of divine pottery and, on the other, one's ability to talk, teach, and to exercise authority. As for the deception, neither of the two human beings was deceived, and both transgressed equally.¹⁸

Bal's point is that misogyny is not intrinsic to the Bible - nor is there particular value in proving that point. Rather, the construction of gender as hierarchical is first of all ancient, and depends very much upon a repetition of the understanding of gendered behaviour as a given. Most importantly for this chapter, Bal suggests that these designs can be read in ancient religious texts that are still considered relevant today. She does not intend to find a feminist content in biblical stories, but seeks to suggest that the original mythology was designed in a misogynist environment and the fact that biblical stories have been little re-read from a purely content-oriented perspective suggests that that original environment still exists.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN QUEBEC: SOEUR VERONIQUE-DE-LA-PASSION

Bal's interpretation of biblical stories suggests a point of departure from which to examine mural paintings of religious imagery by Canadian women in the late-nineteenth

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

¹⁷ Bal, *Lethal Love*, 104.

¹⁸ Bal, *Lethal Love*, 109.

and twentieth centuries. If the Christian Church has been, and still is, strongly against the integration of that which is female, we might ask from which point and to what end did these women painters present themselves in religious environments and carry out such large-scale works of art? The very differences between the women themselves (time, location, environment, occupation, personality, etc) suggest that the incursion was possible from many perspectives and using many different means according to the woman's social, economic, and religious contexts. In the same way that the artists of Chapter One in this dissertation pursued different strategies for negotiating public personas, so the artists in this chapter are characterized more clearly by difference than by similarity. The only coherence to the definition of "woman" in this context is found in their gendered exclusion from the workings of the Church, and in the fact that, in the cases of these particular mural painters, with all their differences, they transcended that exclusion.

The lives and work of Catholic women in Quebec, for example, were bounded by parameters that were rarely paralleled elsewhere in Canada.¹⁹ The role played by the Catholic Church in the life and history of Quebec was a profound one, and far more complex than the control exerted by the Protestant Church in Ontario. Until the beginnings of the Quiet Revolution in the sixties, the Church was one of the two dominant social forces (along with, but under the control of, the Duplessis government) that directed and controlled all aspects of social mores in Quebec. The writings of religious leaders such as Abbé Lionel Groulx and politicians such as Henri Bourassa

¹⁹ For further information on the relationships between the Catholic Church and women of Quebec see Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

dictated against modern painting and insisted on the timeless reiteration of familiar imagery for church painting. Their hope was to protect traditional rural, Catholic, francophone, family-based culture from the onslaught of the modern world. For this reason, among others, the church decorations of Quebec prior to the Quiet Revolution have a remarkable homogeneity. By preferring an iconography that supposedly dates to the era of the events portrayed, religious doctrine was established and maintained with a timeless quality that guaranteed its universality. Since the Church has systematically devalued the contributions of its women members, the reiteration of subjects has played a part in maintaining the structure within which that marginalization has taken place.

Considering the dominant role that the Church played until recently in Catholic Quebec, coupled with the conservative and cloistered (both literally and figuratively) lives of Quebec nuns, it is perhaps not surprising that the most conservative and compliant murals to be addressed in this chapter were painted by a Quebec nun, Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion (1854–1939). In the second half of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, religious families in Quebec often gave one or more of both their male and female children to the Church to serve as priests and nuns.²⁰ The women who gave their lives (or who were given by their families) to their god as nuns were controlled by a set of rigid rules that kept them strictly separate from the parts of the Church designated as male preserves. Nevertheless, nuns were seemingly the only women in Quebec society at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries who painted murals.

²⁰ In 1851, there were 650 nuns in Quebec, representing 0.3% of the population over age twenty and 1.4% of single women over twenty. By 1921, those figures had reached 13,579, representing 2.2% and 9.1% respectively. Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*, 17.

Among the Canadian women who became nuns during the eighteenth, nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, it was traditional for one individual to be selected by the Mother Superior to receive artistic training. That nun would then teach art classes to the other women of the convent. Soeur Marie-Réparatrice (1860-1919), for example, born in Trois-Rivières, became a nun in 1891. She learned to paint at the Mother House of the Soeurs du Précieux-Sang in St. Hyacinth (her teacher is not known), and in 1895 was transferred to the Monastery of the Precious Blood in Toronto as an art teacher for the nuns who lived there.²¹ In 1898 Soeur Marie-Réparatrice returned to the Mother House in St. Hyacinth, and there she painted a series of four murals for the chapel choir (approximately 10' x 3' each), representing the Passion of Christ. These four murals remain extant and *in situ*.

Soeur Marie-Réparatrice was not, however, the only nun at the Mother House of the Soeurs du Précieux-Sang who was capable of painting large-scale murals, and I would like to discuss at greater length her contemporary, Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion about whom slightly more information is known. Soeur Véronique was born in St. Roch-de-l'Achigan in 1854, but beyond the records of her birth and of her death (in 1939) only a handful of details are known about her. Her birth name was Virginie Dion, and she became a member of the Monastère du Précieux-Sang in St. Hyacinth in 1876, taking her final vows in 1878. The Monastère du Précieux-Sang is a community of cloistered nuns who devote their lives to prayer and perpetual adoration. Founded in 1861, the congregation was the first contemplative community instituted in Canada by a Canadian, Aurélie Caouette (1833-1905). Adjoining the monastery is the chapel - open to the public

²¹ Letter to the author from Soeur Pauline Couture, Archivist, Monastère du Précieux-Sang, Trois-Rivières. 21 March 2000.

- where Soeur Véronique painted a series of eighteen murals.²² The chapel building was begun in 1871, but construction was interrupted by a lack of financial resources, and the work was not completed until 1876, the same year that Soeur Véronique entered the convent. Between 1886 and 1888 the vault of the chapel was decorated by a series of murals by Joseph-Thomas Rousseau (1852-96). Rousseau had a reputation as a mural painter and was well-known in the vicinity of St. Hyacinth for his church paintings. Soeur Véronique studied with Rousseau, and also with an unidentified American woman.²³ She may also have studied with Ozias Leduc.²⁴ Whether Soeur Véronique also instructed the other nuns, as Soeur Marie-Réparatrice did, has not been reported.

In the same room decorated on the upper walls and ceiling by Rousseau, Soeur Véronique painted her eighteen large murals with life-size figures at ground level, all of them (most probably) competent copies of Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings. Her *Saint Jerome* (fig. 14), for example, is a copy of Domenichino's *Last Communion of Saint Jerome* (fig. 15).²⁵ Her untitled version of souls being lifted from Purgatory by angels (fig. 16) was copied from an easel painting that is still hanging today in another

²² The Monastère du Précieux-Sang is located at 2500 rue Girouard Ouest, Sainte-Hyacinthe, Quebec.

²³ Letter to the author from Soeur Marie Madeleine Labbé, Assistant to the Archivist, Monastère du Précieux-Sang, Saint-Hyacinthe, 29 February 2000.

²⁴ Leduc mentioned in correspondence received by and held in the private archives of the Monastère du Précieux-Sang that "Soeur Veronique aurait été sa PREMIERE élève au Précieux-Sang." The emphasis is in the copy received from the Monastery but not necessarily in the original. Letter to the author from Soeur Marie Madeleine Labbé, 29 February 2000. The Monastery archives are private and I was not permitted to examine this correspondence in person. Unfortunately, the dates that Leduc worked there as an instructor were not recorded. Note also that in response to the possibility that Leduc was Soeur Véronique's teacher Dr. Laurier Lacroix comments that "in 1888, Leduc was only 24 and had yet no credential as an artist nor as a teacher." Correspondence with the author 12 December 2000.

²⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Anne Dunlop, Department of Art History, Yale University, for helping me to make these associations. Note also that Domenichino was himself inspired by a painting by Agostino Carracci. The two paintings are very similar, with St. Jerome being virtually identical in both and the

part of the convent and that was painted by an unidentified artist, possibly an Italian.²⁶ It is also noteworthy that of the eighteen murals, six are representations of female saints. She painted, for example, Saint Rose de Lima (fig. 17), Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Therese, and Saint Agnes. The other images by her are of such subjects as the Good Samaritan, and Michael the Archangel. Also included are several images of Christ, including the crucifixion, in a series of three paintings over the altar (fig. 18). The original works were restored in 1993-96, and are today in excellent condition, as is the entire chapel. All the renditions of the figures in Soeur Véronique's work are convincingly three-dimensional, but she did display some of the naiveté associated with a lesser-trained hand, with a lack of confidence in creating perspective in some of her paintings. In her version of *Sainte Rose de Lima*, for example, the desk surface slopes forward toward the picture plane and the orientation of the cross to the right of the figure is difficult to read, structural difficulties that most likely did not exist in the original. Yet her work is convincing in its dimensions, longevity, and sincerity of rendition. It is perhaps a pity that Soeur Véronique's environment may well have constrained her from attempting some unique work.

Although our attitude today might be somewhat disparaging of artistic work like that of Soeur Véronique, copied from that of other artists, the tradition of copying "old master" religious images to decorate the walls of Christian institutions in Canada was well-established in the late-nineteenth century, particularly in Catholic Quebec (see

setting and arrangement of the works being essentially identical. *Art Treasures of the Vatican: Architecture, Painting, Sculpture* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, inc., 1974, 395.

²⁶ The wall label beside the painting states that the artist was of an Italian school. The nun who generously showed me around the Convent and adjoining Chapel, Soeur Justine Giard, reiterated the general opinion of the Convent that the artist was Italian.

Appendix I for more information). The tradition would have been in accord with the wishes of both religious leaders and government officials who sought continuity without change. Antoine Plamondon (1804-95), for instance, painted many works after earlier artists in his multiple copies of works by both Raphael and Pierre Mignard. Plamondon painted several versions of a Raphael *Madonna*, as in, for example, his *La Madone de Saint Sixte* for the Church of St. Elzéar in St. Elzéar, Quebec. A number of nuns are known to have painted murals in Quebec, a significant number of them copies. For example, Soeur Jérôme de la Croix, who painted a mural cycle for the Church at St-Esprit-de-Montcalm, was advised by Guido Nincheri, who sent her to Italy to study murals. Soeur Jérôme painted over six hundred easel paintings between 1910 and 1950, most of them copies but some original compositions.²⁷ Artists such as Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-89) built successful and prolific careers almost exclusively on the art of copying. Returning to Quebec from Europe in 1862, Falardeau brought with him over two hundred canvases copied from “old masters.” The press praised the works, and as Virginia Nixon has noted in her thesis on Falardeau, “[T]he copy was part of mainstream artistic production, part of a spectrum of painting types that included originals, paintings that borrowed from other works, variants and other intermediate forms of the copy, and exact copies. Copies were produced by artists of all types and they were collected, along with other kinds of art, by a broad spectrum of patrons.”²⁸ Perhaps the most significant

²⁷ Author’s correspondence with Pierlucio Pellissier, 13 December 1999.

²⁸ Virginia Nixon, “Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-1889) and the Old Master Copy in the Nineteenth Century,” M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1988, 101. Nixon provides a basis for understanding the importance of the copy to the church in nineteenth-century Quebec on pages 136-151 of her thesis. See also John Porter, “Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895) et le tableaux religieux: Perception et valorisation de la copie et de la composition,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 8 (1984): 1-25.

fact to ponder when considering the work by Soeur Véronique is that she, unlike artists such as Falardeau, did not have access to the original paintings. She was making her copies from reproductions, either copies of European works, or prints, and would often have been forced to rely on her tutors and her own skill.

When the chapel of the Monastère du Précieux-Sang was opened in 1888, the St. Hyacinth newspaper was most complimentary concerning its murals and, although most of the attention and praise was focused on the paintings by Rousseau, the reviewer also commented on the work of Soeur Véronique. While her work could not compare to that of M. Rousseau (“je ne dirai pas la vigueur et la correction de dessin des meilleures oeuvres de M. Rousseau”), it did show “la délicatesse, la légèreté des touches et le poli du blaireau joints à des harmonieuses de nuances vraiment remarquables.”²⁹ Thus, through the use of gendered language, the reviewer maintained the distinction between women’s and men’s work, characterizing Rousseau’s painting (and, by extrapolation, Rousseau himself) as having vigour and technical drawing skill, while the work of Soeur Véronique was “feminine,” with delicate, light and harmonious features, the same words that might have been used to describe the stereotypically ideal woman herself. Within the custom of creating decorations for Quebec churches in the late-nineteenth century, Soeur Véronique provides an excellent example of the contributions made by Quebec nuns – contributions that, in their inherent conservatism, reinforced the marginalized status, within the Church, of Catholic women.

²⁹ A. “Fête religieuse à Saint-Hyacinthe,” *La Minerve*, 8 May 1888, 1.

MADELEINE DELFOSSE

The painting in Quebec of conservative murals following a strict tradition that dictated how such work should look was not limited to the decoration of convent chapels. Community churches were also frequently adorned with similar images worked within the same tradition of copying “old master” paintings. One such example is an easel painting by a secular Montreal artist, Madeleine Delfosse (1909-85) for St-Boniface Church in Montreal - a copy of Raphael’s mural *La Dispute du St-Sacrament*.³⁰ Delfosse was known primarily as a portrait and landscape painter - she had painted the portraits of several important Canadians, including Maurice Duplessis³¹ - but in addition to her easel paintings, she was also known as a muralist. Delfosse studied for six years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Montreal, but it was her artist father, Georges Delfosse (1869-1939), who continued her artistic training and encouraged her to practise art.³² Delfosse was commissioned in 1945 to paint a series of murals for Saint Pierre Claver Church in the Mile End district of Montreal.³³ Her work forms a competent and complete decorative cycle for the church. No other artist’s work was included to finish the decoration, and the painting of these murals at the end of the Second World War in Canada remains a testament to women’s ongoing incursions into the public life of the Christian Church.

³⁰ “Madeleine Delfosse: Son Nom Restera Grâce aux Eglises du Québec,” *Nouvelles Illustrées* (Montreal) 1 January 1966.

³¹ National Gallery of Canada Information Form, received by the Gallery 25 May 1939.

³² National Gallery of Canada Information Form. Other members of her family may also have encouraged Delfosse in an artistic career. She was the granddaughter of musician, composer, teacher and pianist Alexis Contant (1858-1918) and her aunt was the soprano Fleurette Contant (1892-1987).

³³ Saint Pierre Claver Church is located at 2000 St. Joseph Boulevard East, Montreal.

These murals also represent the earliest work found so far in Quebec of mural paintings for a church that were painted by a secular woman artist. In these murals Delfosse did not make exact copies of work by older artists, but she did repeat standard, expected imagery. However, as I shall elaborate, she also diverged, though to a small extent, from the expected path that dictated how these murals should look.

The series consists of nine works, three on the ceiling, one above the altar and five at ground level around the front of the Church. On the ceiling the three canvases show Christ healing the sick (fig. 19), Christ preaching (fig. 20) and Christ blessing the children (fig. 21). At the front of the Church, five images varying in size from 3' x 7' to 5' x 5' show Mary, Mary and Joseph, the birth of Christ, the Resurrection of Lazarus, and the Marriage at Cana. Over the five is a large canvas (approximately 30' x 10') showing the Crucifixion. The figures in all the paintings are professionally rendered in convincing three-dimensional perspective; Delfosse had none of the problems with perspective that remained unresolved in the work by Soeur Veronique. Each of the murals is a professional, yet conservative, rendering of a religious narrative, and the series is an impressive decorative scheme in an otherwise rather austere, cavernous environment.

The Saint Pierre Claver cycle is perhaps most remarkable for its noteworthy dimensions and for the fact that a great portion of it is on the ceiling.³⁴ Also noteworthy is the fact that the murals evoked criticism on lines of propriety. The largest of the ceiling murals, Christ preaching surrounded by the apostles, was criticized in the press on the grounds that the apostles in the work did not look like the apostles customarily seen in

³⁴ Although it is a common enough practice to place murals on ceilings, none of the other murals by women discussed in this dissertation were in this location, making Delfosse's work unique in this respect.

religious imagery.³⁵ In fact, they bore a striking resemblance to the seven priests who preached at Saint Pierre Claver, and Delfosse had indeed used these men as models at the request of the Curé, Father Ernest Labelle.³⁶ The artist was subsequently asked by Father Labelle to return to the canvas and add beards and moustaches to all the apostles, which she did. *Saturday Night* called the task “a job...that would please any healthy-minded boy,” and found the entire episode quite entertaining, adding that, for the artist, “it would be necessary to inhibit a strong inclination to add spectacles.”³⁷ Without this human interest story these murals would most likely have received only local review, but as it was the story traveled at least as far as Toronto.

Although the apostles might have borne little resemblance to what men born in the vicinity of the Holy Land two thousand years ago might actually have looked like (with or without beards), the congregation of St. Pierre Claver had a preconceived notion of how these men should appear. The use of real people as models for figures in religious works had many precedents, but the unfamiliarity of the custom to the congregation precluded its use here. Perhaps the greatest difficulty that the members of the church had was accepting the implication that the “real” apostles could be replaced by images of living men. Looking at images of men with whom they interacted perhaps elided the alchemy experienced by the faithful and premised on the idea that the apostles could not be *known*, since they were real people who had lived centuries before.

³⁵ *Le Petit Journal* (Montreal) 20 September 1947.

³⁶ “Parish Vicars Apostles’ Models,” *The Gazette* 23 September 1947, 13.

³⁷ J.N. Harris, “Add Whiskers,” *Toronto Saturday Night* 4 October 1947; See also “Beards for Seven Apostles,” *The Globe and Mail* 26 September 1943.

The policies of the Catholic Church in Quebec had severe consequences for the women who supported them. Particularly damaging was the *revanche du berceau*, or the revenge of the cradle - the political belief, supported by the Church, that a high birth rate and resulting large families, additionally living in isolated, rural districts and with poor access to education - would, as a result of sheer numbers, compensate for English economic and social domination. The policy affected both men and women, of course, but it was the women who had to bear and care for the large families that resulted. By 1945, however, when Madeleine Delfosse created her Saint Pierre Claver murals, the social and artistic atmospheres that had allowed the *revanche du berceau* to dominate were just beginning to change, a change that would culminate in the 1948 publication of *Refus global*, the Automatist artists' challenge to the stranglehold on Quebec society of politicians and the Church, retrospectively made into a central event in the history of Quebec. The social and technological modernism encouraged by World War Two remained juxtaposed against such issues as the fact that women could not vote in Quebec prior to 1940, and Duplessis and the Church were in political and moral control. Delfosse, living at a time when tension and contradiction were becoming much more the norm, could afford to offer a marginally different image than the standard as exemplified by the earlier work of Soeur Véronique. Her minor intervention was not permitted to survive, but the fact that she felt she could make it at all portended the more dramatic changes that would follow for Quebec society in general, but for Quebec women in particular.

MARIAN DALE SCOTT

The concern of most artists in creating church decorations has been to rely on identifiable imagery. It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that artists painting religious murals in Quebec but in venues outside the control of the Catholic Church might have had the potential to be more flexible in subject choice and styles of representation, and this seems to be true. In contradiction to the imagery relied upon by most artists working within Catholic venues, an unusual religious mural was painted in 1956 by an artist with no particular religious affiliation, Marian Dale Scott, for the non-denominational Chapel of the Montreal General Hospital.³⁸ Entitled *The Tree of Life* (fig. 22), Scott's painting shows a subject not often seen in more recent religious work and used infrequently as a subject for murals: the Tree of Jesse, which she interwove with references to the Burning Bush. (Although a large number of older religious works, particularly in stained glass, did represent the Tree of Jesse, it is seldom represented in the mural painting of the twentieth century. In fact, although Tree of Jesse representations were common in eleventh-century Europe, they had essentially disappeared by the sixteenth century.³⁹) According to Esther Trépanier, Scott's intention was "to incorporate a cross-shaped figure into a bush both aflame and blossoming, thus a figure that burns and flowers."⁴⁰ Although the Tree and the Bush have elements in common (both being plants), as religious iconography they are

³⁸ Esther Trépanier writes that "the mural was definitely finished by 1956," and it is Trépanier's date that I have used. Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000), 213.

³⁹ Peter and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 270.

⁴⁰ Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 213.

unrelated.⁴¹ Scott's conflation of the two Biblical stories was a departure from standard iconography, and is a more extreme example of a move away from mainstream representations than is Delfosse's work. We must consider, of course, that Delfosse's work was required by church practice to relate to the liturgy practiced in the space, whereas Scott's was for an inter-denominational area intended for private prayer. Nevertheless, Scott's mural was in a space defined as religious, and would have been subject to some scrutiny as to its appropriateness.

In the story of the Burning Bush Moses is addressed by God's voice emanating from a bush that is on fire, but that is not being consumed by the flames. The Tree of Jesse is a Christian symbol originating in an Advent activity that begins on November 28th of each year and continues until Christmas Day. It is a visual representation of the genealogy of Jesus as it is traced back to Jesse, the father of David. The Tree of Jesse is often highly stylized, and creating one can be a Christian activity in which the family participates in the home. A branch is selected and symbols of the Christian story representing the events of both the Old and the New Testaments, from the Creation to the Birth of Christ (Noah and the Flood, for example, represented by a rainbow, or Jacob and the Assurance of a Promise, represented by a ladder), are hung from it.⁴² Scott's forms, however, are abstracted, and none of the symbols – which are indicated by paint colour rather than by shape - is identifiable. The only identifiable object in her painting is a

⁴¹ Although the Burning Bush and the Tree of Jesse are not usually linked iconographically there is an iconological relationship in Christian theology. Both are connected to Mary, the Bush representing her perpetual virginity and the Tree in its messianic meaning as defining the genealogy of Christ and thus to Mary. David Bulmer, "Daughter of Zion, Mother of Christ," *The Catholic Gazette* 27 January 2002, 2.

⁴² For more information on creating a Jesse Tree for the home see <http://www.rca.org/resource/edu/jesse/making.html> or <http://www.cresourcei.org/jesse.html>.

roughly-sketched figure in motion up the trunk of the tree (fig. 23). Painted in sky blue with swirling, indistinct forms added in white, the shapes in the mural appear to be in constant motion, suggested in part by the tips of the branches, shaped like licking flames, which evoke the burning bush. In addition, the almost playful sweeps of paint that create the shape and details of the painting are significantly different from many of Scott's more studied, scientific canvases of the 1940s, such as the *Cell and Crystal* series that she painted in the middle of the decade, and the mural *Endocrinology* that will be discussed in Chapter Four. The *Tree of Jesse* resembles to a far greater extent the work that Scott was creating contemporaneously, such as her abstract canvases *Community 7* (c.1958; fig. 24) and *No. 10* (c.1960), both colourful, abstract paintings displaying the same exuberant quality that Scott used for the *Tree of Life*.

Scott was not intimidated by the notion of stepping well outside convention in her painting. She was known at the time primarily as a rigorously intellectual artist who focused on the urban landscape and on abstract work based on scientific research, and her mural for the chapel was actually only one of a number of her paintings with religious subject matter or references. She painted, for example, a series called *Iconics* (1950s) that consists primarily of human faces that could refer to the Madonna and child (although Scott rejected the title *Madonna and Child* for these works⁴³), and this series was followed by another titled *Apostles* (1950s). The mural, however, bears no stylistic resemblance to any of Scott's earlier religious referents, although the painting technique does resemble the gestural surfaces of the *Iconics* and *Apostle* series. Scott herself avowed no Christian beliefs. In fact, as Esther Trépanier writes of her work that included

⁴³Miriam Waddington, "Marian Scott: A Humanist Painter," *Vie des Arts*, no.6 (1956): 22; Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 202.

religious themes, “there was no question of close adherence to religious dogma: although art had a spiritual dimension for Marian Scott, we should not look for religious ‘messages’ in her work.”⁴⁴ The iconography of the painting, then, was not chosen from her personal ideological thinking, but was, rather, a professional task, executed (almost certainly) for remuneration.

Scott’s mural does not have any accompanying archive, and although we know that it was commissioned it is not certain who chose the subject. The chapel of the General Hospital is a multi-denominational facility and the people responsible for the commission would presumably have sought an image with wide appeal. A “Tree of Life” as the symbol for a chapel ministering to those in hospital, and their friends and families, was an appropriate choice. The chapel itself was dedicated to the memory of Paul Fleetwood Sise, a plaque on the wall reading, in part, “In loving memory of Paul Fleetwood Sise (1879-1951), for 24 years a member of the Board of Management of the Montreal General Hospital.” Sise was the President of Bell Telephone and father of the architect Hazen Sise, a friend of Marian and Frank Scott’s.⁴⁵ It was perhaps this connection that brought Scott’s work to the attention of the commissioners. Regardless of the original motivation for the commission, the mural looks out of place in its conservative surroundings.

The original version of the work had what appeared to be tree roots that extended down to the floor on either side of the altar (fig. 25). A renovation project that took place in c.1968 involved rotating the orientation of the chapel by ninety degrees. As a result the

⁴⁴ Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 201-202.

⁴⁵ Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott*, 212. Hazen Sise was a friend of Norman Bethune’s.

mural, which originally framed the altar, is now along a side wall. Once the positioning of the altar was changed the tree roots would not have made sense in the overall design and they were painted over. This caused the bottom section of the work (approximately one foot, probably including Scott's signature⁴⁶) to be painted over. The current managers of the chapel have chosen to cover the entire mural with a heavy drape that can be pulled aside if one wishes to see the work, although the chance visitor would have no reason to suspect the mural's presence or to know that it was permissible to open the drapery. In an obituary, "Scott Broke Ground for Woman Artists," critic Henry Lehmann lamented this covering up of the mural.⁴⁷ The current Director of Pastoral Services, Kathryn Thornton, replied in a letter to the *Gazette* that the "greater part" of Scott's mural still exists and that the drapes that cover it have as their purpose the guardianship of the chapel's interdenominational nature. She wrote, "In order for the chapel to be accessible and usable by patients of all faiths, moveable drapes were installed to cover the mural from time to time."⁴⁸ In fact, the mural is kept permanently covered. When so many other works by women have been lost, it is likely only Scott's reputation that has preserved this particular work and even so a significant portion of it was lost by being painted over. There is no small irony in the fact that Scott's mural – a radical departure from standard religious iconography and the conservative techniques of most religious mural painting – should today appear dated, while the unchallenging works from the turn of the century by

⁴⁶ Kathryn Thornton, "Mural Survives," *The Gazette* (Montreal) 28 December 1993.

⁴⁷ Henry Lehmann, "Scott Broke Ground for Woman Artists," *The Gazette* (Montreal), 4 December 1993, 18.

⁴⁸ Thornton, "Mural Survives."

Soeur Véronique, and the Bible stories told by Madeleine Delfosse, remain intact and celebrated as appropriate to their respective venues.

Although Scott's painting of a religious theme is probably the lesser-known of her two known mural works, it marked an interesting incursion into the Christian world. By professing no personal religious affiliation Scott removed herself from the path chosen by the majority of her contemporary Montrealers; by choosing a Tree of Jesse as her subject, a subject not commonly chosen for mural paintings, she managed to remain within the bounds of acceptability (her subject was still a Christian one) while eliding the reiteration of standard themes, not least by giving it the title *Tree of Life*. Thus, Scott created her own system for participation: she managed to paint in a very public venue a mural that was both inside and outside of the orthodox. As a secular painter working outside a traditional Church setting, Scott represents a type of incursion by women into Christian thinking that differs from the more predictable and established imagery of much Christian painting, particularly in the Province of Quebec.

OTTILIE PALM JOST

Churches in twentieth-century Ontario played a different and perhaps less overtly influential social role than did the Catholic Church in Quebec. To be sure, the population of Ontario was less easy to organize because it was divided more thoroughly into different denominations - Methodist, Church of England, Catholic, etc. In any case, the lack in Ontario of the political and social policies that governed Quebec society meant that English-speaking women were not similarly constrained, and the two societies,

French and English, had significantly different faces, at least until the time of the Quiet Revolution in the Quebec of the 1960s.⁴⁹

Given the differences between the two provinces it is perhaps not surprising that the only religious mural posing a challenge to church doctrine that I will discuss in this chapter is to be found in Ontario. Nevertheless, the mural's date of creation early in the twentieth century makes it a true anomaly, and complex to understand. To fully appreciate its potentially destabilizing nature, one has only to think back to the reaction to the mere fact that as late as 1945 Madeleine Delfosse was reprimanded for painting apostles who looked like the priests of St. Pierre Claver, and the insistence that she correct their appearance. In a work entitled *Resurrection*, painted in Hamilton in 1908, Otilie Palm Jost (1868-1961) created an image of Christ that was not distinctly male. Historian Ann Douglas has suggested that clergy and women were simultaneously disestablished in Victorian America - the clergy through the dismantling of various colonial churches and women by being barred from business and politics. She has proposed the notion that this created an alliance between the clergy and women that led to the feminization of the Christian Church. Following the development of this alliance, according to Douglas, Christ was portrayed as a more "feminized" character, stressing his meekness and his sacrifice.⁵⁰

The "feminization" of the figure of Christ was adopted by Otilie Palm Jost, an artist about whom little is remembered but who played a role of some interest in the

⁴⁹ For more information on the relationships between women and Christianity on Ontario, see: Joy and Neumaier-Dargyay, Gender, Genre and Religion: Feminist Reflections; Muir and Whitely, Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada.

⁵⁰ Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Alfred A. Knof, 1977). Cited in deBerg Ungodly Women, 21-22.

history of Canadian art, and also in the advancement of women's right to appear in public. Her parents, Wilhelm and Augusta Palm, were born in Hanover and emigrated to New York in 1857, and then to Hamilton, where Wilhelm Palm became the owner of Hamilton's largest hotel, *The Palm*. Otilie Palm was born in Hamilton, one of seven children.⁵¹ Described as the first woman in southern Ontario to own and drive a car, it was her unorthodox independence that made her particularly noteworthy to her contemporaries.⁵² By defying conventions such as the one that disapproved of women driving, Palm Jost symbolically asserted her autonomy from the social constraints of her time. Driving a car would have allowed her not only to transgress the public domain, but also to drive through it both literally and metaphorically with some impunity, in spite of the attention she attracted.

Otilie Palm Jost is one of only two Canadian women artists (the other being Emily Carr) named in the *Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs Bénézit* (first published in 1911 and revised approximately every twenty years thereafter) and the *World Biographical Dictionary of Artists (Thieme-Becker)* (published between 1907 and 1950), two major international sources of artists' biographies.⁵³ As an

⁵¹ Paul Benedetti, "A Brush with Immortality: Attic Dust Hid Artist's Treasures for Years," *Hamilton Spectator* 25 April 1992, C.1.

⁵² Most articles about Palm Jost mention the fact that she was Ontario's first woman driver. See, *inter alia*, Jeff Mahoney, "Otilie Palm Jost Rediscovered," *Hamilton Spectator* 13 July 1994; *Otilie Palm Jost (1868-1961: Canadian Impressionist* (Hamilton: Beckett Gallery, 1992); "1st Woman Driver Here, Artist Dies in Germany," *Hamilton Spectator* 29 March 1961; Kate Taylor, "Rediscovering a Pioneer," *Globe and Mail* 18 April 1992; Stuart MacCuaig goes so far as to suggest that Palm Jost's driving may have caused the failure of her relationship with John Gordon: "The most likely reason for an argument between them was the fact that Otilie Palm-Jost was the first woman in Hamilton to own and drive a car. John Gordon, though no more a chauvinist than most men of the time, did, after all, encourage his wife to walk several paces behind him." Stuart MacCuaig, *Climbing the Cold White Peaks: A Survey of Artists in and from Hamilton 1910-1950* (Hamilton: The Hamilton Artists; Inc., 1986), 52.

⁵³ Several sources make reference to the Bénézit and Thieme-Becker listings. See, for example, Taylor, "Rediscovering a Pioneer"; Benedetti, "A Brush with Immortality," C.1.

artist she has been described as “Canada’s first professional woman illustrator,”⁵⁴ and although this claim might be overstated she was certainly an early participant in the field. Much of her work appeared in the *Hamilton Herald* and the *Hamilton Spectator*, but she also worked on commission for the *Toronto Globe*.⁵⁵ Her active years as an illustrator can most likely be placed between 1884 (the year when, at the age of sixteen, she began to work as an instructor at the Hamilton Technical School) and 1911 (the year she left Canada for Germany). She studied in 1904 at the Florence Griswold School at Old Lyme, Connecticut, and at the Cape Cod School of Art in 1905. The Florence Griswold School at Old Lyme was connected to the Art Students League of New York. Frank Vincent DuMond was the only instructor there during that summer, so Palm Jost would almost certainly have studied with him.⁵⁶ In both places she was described as having worked with “the American Impressionists,” and as having been influenced by their style and technique.⁵⁷ She was among the first painters in Canada to use the light palette of Impressionism, working out of doors to create small sketches on panel of Canadian subjects. Her work was perhaps inspired by the techniques of William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), and, like Chase, Palm Jost began to record the landscape around her in

⁵⁴ Benedetti, “A Brush with Immortality,” C.1.

⁵⁵ Benedetti, “A Brush with Immortality,” C.1. This work was of an illustrative nature, consisting mainly of portraits.

⁵⁶ The Art Students League ran a summer school in Old Lyme only briefly, in 1903, 1904 and 1905. Miss O. Palm of 216 Bay Street, Hamilton was registered for July and August 1904. Letter from Stephanie Cassidy, Archivist, The Art Students League of New York, received 22 January 2002. At the Florence Griswold School, students often painted on the doors and walls in exchange for the rent, so Palm Jost would have been surrounded by murals during her stay. For illustrations of these works, see: Arthur Henry Howard Heming, *Miss Florence and the Artists of Old Lyme* (Essex, Connecticut: Pequot Press, 1971).

⁵⁷ Benedetti, “A Brush with Immortality,” C.1.

Impressionism-influenced ways that have been described as being unlike anything seen before in Hamilton.⁵⁸

In 1913 Palm Jost showed a work at the Royal Canadian Academy that was described as “the most daring painting exhibited. The colours are quite different from anything that would have been seen in Canada to that date.”⁵⁹ Without access to images of the other paintings in the exhibition, however, this statement is difficult to verify, and paintings by Ernest Lawson and Maurice Cullen - both early disciples of Impressionism in Canada - and also Suzor-Coté’s major painting *Youth and Sunlight* (1913), which is a definitive example of impressionist brightness of light and colour - were all included in the same show. Nevertheless, although she may not have been the primary exponent of Impressionism in Canada, Palm Jost was an early adherent, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that she might have been among the first women in Canada to paint in an impressionist manner. But Palm Jost did not develop her reputation as a Canadian painter much beyond her initial contributions. In 1911 she moved to Germany, and left behind her in Canada only four known works of art - a Paris street scene, a portrait of artist John Sloan Gordon, an untitled landscape (all three now in the Art Gallery of Hamilton), and the *Resurrection* (fig. 26), a mural in St. Paul’s Lutheran Church (now St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church), Hamilton.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Benedetti, “A Brush with Immortality,” C.1.

⁵⁹ “A Passion to Paint” Sunday Arts Entertainment, CBC, 1995.

⁶⁰ Since that time David Mitchell has traced Palm Jost’s daughter and visited her in a small town near Munich. She sold him about two hundred works by her mother, which he subsequently brought back to Canada. Taylor, “Rediscovering a Pioneer,” C5. St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church is located at 104 Hughson Street North, Hamilton.

The 1908 date makes *Resurrection* possibly Canada's oldest large-format (21' x 11.5') public mural painting that was original in conception (i.e., not a copy), that remains *in situ* and that was painted by a woman. It was intended as a memorial to the artist's parents, who had both died shortly before she undertook the work. Although it was Palm Jost's intention that the mural would serve as a memorial, it was commissioned and paid for by a local brewery owner named Gompf. Why Gompf chose to have this work painted for St. Paul's was not recorded, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that the success of his brewery business may have led him to make a contribution to the religious community in which he participated. The mural is a subdued, almost tonalist work, in a colour range unlike the lighter palette that Palm Jost is supposed to have chosen for her much smaller easel paintings, but years of damage and the accumulation of dirt had virtually hidden the image by 1998. At that time two Hamilton sisters named Heilig, whose father had been a cousin to Palm Jost, decided to contribute the restoration costs and the work was conserved.⁶¹

Resurrection shows Christ in the centre, arms outstretched, with praying figures kneeling on either side and angels overhead. The image is subtle and calm, and might be taken for virtually any competent version of the Resurrection, with one significant difference. Although Christ was often portrayed with soft, or even feminine, facial features (as Ann Douglas suggests), here the gendering of the body of the Christ figure is ambiguous. The head is definitely male (it has a beard), but the body itself appears to have breasts. Palm Jost has developed the notion of a "feminized" Christ to a most unusual conclusion. The suggestion is subtle, however, and the mural does not seem to

⁶¹ Paul Wilson, "Elizabeth Rushes in for Angel Retreads Restores Historical Altar Icon" *Hamilton Spectator*, 13 November 1997, A3.

have been criticized in print for this curious choice. It is perhaps doubtful if any of the parishioners would even have noticed the understated allusion to femininity as the distinctly male head of Christ most clearly defines the gender of the image.⁶²

This ambiguously-gendered figure in the final mural painting makes it perhaps not surprising that in the preliminary drawings that still survive (private collection, Toronto), Otilie Palm Jost drew Christ as a woman, including a specifically female head on a female body (fig. 27). There is little doubt that this drawing was intended as the precursor to the final painting. It exists as one of a set that includes the other figures that were to appear in the mural. Everything about the Christ figure in both versions, the drawing and the final painting, is the same, except the head. Palm Jost drew the head of Christ that would appear in the final painting in the top left-hand corner of the same page that held the drawing of Christ as a woman as its central figure.

By eliding the definition of a clearly “male” figure in her representation of the body of Christ, Palm Jost inserted her gender into Christian dogma in a profound way. The body is an issue that plays a major role in Christian theology. Christian thinking has traditionally assumed that the ideal person is made in the image of the deity and that the deity is male. This dichotomy automatically sets up the female as “other” to the male foundation and any address made to the internal structure of the system risks being interpreted as blasphemous. Thus, Palm Jost in her creation of a trans-gendered Christ has undermined one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. Could she have intended in creating such a drawing to produce a final work in which the Christ figure was female? Did she show any of these drawings to the commissioner – and, if so, what was his

⁶² I would like to thank David Mitchell for pointing this out to me.

reaction? Unfortunately, like many, if not most, of Canada's historical women artists, Otilie Palm Jost left behind her no documents that have been discovered to date for consultation or for confirmation of her ideas.

We do know, however, that although Palm Jost painted a great deal of her *oeuvre* in Germany, her early years in Canada were devoted to the development of several Canadian art institutions. She served as vice-president of the Vacation Sketch Club, an organization that had developed from the Hamilton Art School (established 1886), and she was a member from the earliest days of the Women's Art Association of Hamilton, formed in 1894. Starting out as a student at the Hamilton Art School, Palm Jost became a teacher there. She was also one of the founders in 1898, with John Sloan Gordon and J.R. Seavey, of the Hamilton Art Students League. She was engaged for many years to John Sloan Gordon (who would later marry Hortense Mattice, an important art teacher in the Hamilton area and later one of the two female members of Painters Eleven), but broke off her relationship with him in 1911 and moved to Germany, where she married the sculptor Josef Jost and remained for the rest of her life. She always claimed that she intended to return to Canada but was prevented from doing so by the two world wars. Palm Jost did visit Canada again following her husband's death in 1950, but after a year in Hamilton her daughter, Waldefriede Worz, was homesick for Germany, and the two returned there. Palm Jost died in Munich in 1961.

According to Worz, Palm Jost's intention in participating in the founding of the Art Students League in the late-nineteenth century was to provide Hamilton students with access to the undraped figure, a controversial issue at the time.⁶³ Whether or not these

⁶³ "A Passion to Paint," Sunday Arts Entertainment, CBC, 1995.

early efforts to establish life-drawing classes in Hamilton met with any success is not clear but, even if such classes were successfully created, by 1900 they were no longer available. An article in *Toronto Saturday Night* in that year bemoaned the general lack of life-drawing classes in Canada and pinpointed Hamilton for particular criticism. The author, Jean Grant, noted that “Hamilton has recently ruled itself out of, if it ever was in, the list of up-to-date schools of art.... The effort by a few enlightened citizens to establish life study there has threatened to swamp the institution.”⁶⁴

Issues surrounding access (or lack thereof) to art education certainly shaped the history of Canadian art for artists of both genders. Early in the nineteenth century, studying from manuals and copy prints, and taking lessons from individual teachers had been the only means of instruction available to those Canadian art students unable to travel to Europe or the United States for professional art training.⁶⁵ By 1875 it had become possible for Ontario artists of both genders to study at the Ontario School of Art in Toronto. However, women who were able to pursue classes in professional Canadian schools like the Ontario School of Art were excluded from life drawing from the male nude. According to Whitney Chadwick, Victorian and Edwardian moral codes were rooted in the belief that exposure to the nude body would inflame the passions of female sexuality.⁶⁶ After 1900 some life-drawing classes became available to women in Canada, but only at the School of the Art Association of Montreal.⁶⁷ This was in spite of the fact

⁶⁴ Jean Grant, “The Living Model in Art,” *Toronto Saturday Night* 13 (9 June 1900): 9.

⁶⁵ Maria Tippett, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), 7.

⁶⁶ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 165.

⁶⁷ Tippett, *By A Lady*, 45.

that women constituted significant numbers of the students at the Ontario School of Art. By 1911, when the School moved into its new building, The Grange, it had a total enrolment of sixty-five students, twenty-five of them women. Only men, however, drew from the nude.⁶⁸

The issue of drawing from the male nude has been a prominent one in feminist discussions of the history of Western art. As early as 1971 Linda Nochlin identified the lack of access to life-drawing classes as a major impediment to women's artistic aspirations.⁶⁹ Nochlin noted that from the time of the Italian Renaissance until the late-nineteenth century - a period during which the study of the nude model was essential to the production of what was accepted as the highest category of art, history painting - drawing from the nude model was only available in most circumstances to male students. Nochlin likened this to a medical student being denied the opportunity to dissect a human body. The analogy is particularly apt, since up until the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries women were also denied access to medical training and thus were prevented from becoming doctors (Chapter Four of this dissertation will develop this topic at greater length). Feminist theorists writing in the wake of Nochlin's pivotal article have often reiterated her concern about the relationship between women's lack of access to life-drawing classes and the subsequent inability to develop sophisticated renderings of figures. The reasons and explanations forming the varied replies to Nochlin's original question "Why have there been no great women artists?" have been widely explored and expanded, but most theorists would tend to agree that restrictions on educational

⁶⁸ "New Art School at the 'Grange,' Philosopher's Home in Transition," *Toronto Star Weekly* 18 March 1911, 8.

⁶⁹ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *Art News* 69 (January 1971): 31.

opportunities for historical women artists in particular remained fundamental. In Canada, those restrictions meant that, unless they had the means to travel abroad, lack of access to professional instruction tended to limit women's artistic practices prior to about 1914 to subjects such as landscape, gardens, and still-life. To a certain extent this lack of access to education was bound to be a limiting factor in the number of murals that women would paint, since murals so often portray human narratives in some form.

By 1914 life studies from the nude for students of both genders had become more generally available. Women who were able to study in Europe or the United States had greater chances to practice their life-drawing skills. Women drew from the nude male model at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York from the 1880s and women could sketch from the male nude at the Académie Julien in Paris in the late 1870s.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Thomas Eakins was fired from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1886 for allowing his female students to draw from the nude male model.⁷¹ In addition, even after women were permitted to attend life-drawing classes many still hesitated to participate. Emily Carr, for example, proclaimed when she first arrived in San Francisco to study art in 1890 that she would never draw from the nude. She did not enter a life-drawing class until 1899, when she began studying at the Westminster School of Art in London.⁷² The average woman's sensibilities were considered too fragile to support anything as vulgar as viewing a nude man. In the 1905

⁷⁰ Tippett, *By A Lady*: 206, fn.34.

⁷¹ Farr and Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes*, 6, fn.3; Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 35.

⁷² Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946), 40, 135.

words of author Léonce Bénédite, “Imagine...the embarrassing promiscuity of life in studio and school, particularly as regards the study from the living model - and one can realise how brave, how energetic, or how ambitious must be the woman who would win the title of Artist.”⁷³

In promoting the rights of women to have access to life drawing classes by attempting to institute them at the Hamilton Art Students League Otilie Palm Jost not only aligned herself with radical thinkers of her day, but also insisted upon her rights as a professional painter to receive an adequate education. Her fight to institute nude figure drawing echoes the unconventionality of her portrayal of Christ. The latter representation thus functions on three intersecting levels in this chapter: as a comment on women’s ambitions for a role in the Church other than the ones to which they were limited; as a reference to the conflicted nature of Palm Jost’s own relationship with figure drawing; and as a paradigm for the subtle strategies that women used to usurp male-dominated discourses. Palm Jost’s subversive image, painted close to a hundred years ago, even today represents an unfulfilled incursion into Church doctrine. However, the artist’s struggles seem to have had little impact on the understanding of women’s relationships both to the Church and to the world of culture. Palm Jost may herself have toiled for the right to study the same subjects as her male contemporaries, and she may have subverted the overarching understanding of creation as male-dominated, but close to a century later the divisions between men and women in their relationships to the Church, despite the more recent ordination of some women as ministers or pastors in certain denominations, have scarcely altered.

⁷³ Léonce Bénédite, “Of Women Painters in France,” in Walter Shaw Sparrow, ed. Women Painters of the World (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, 1905), 169.

Women, therefore, pushed the boundaries of the particular religious spaces wherein their religious works would appear to the limit that their individual situations would allow, while still guaranteeing their inclusion. Their most profound incursions occurred in situations where their deviations would be most likely tolerated. But even in the cases of the most conservative of mural paintings by women for church decoration these works mark an ideological space of some significance. Here women have achieved a delicate balance that has permitted the inclusion of their very public artistic achievements and simultaneously succeeded in evading censure by retaining the necessary iconography. Of all the public spaces where mural paintings might appear, works for religious sites, with their inherently conservative requirements, signify for women perhaps one of the most profound spaces of intervention.

CHAPTER THREE: WHO IS CANADIAN?: IDENTITY AND MARGINALITY

The concept of bilingualism as a basis for the construction of Canadian identity dates back to the time of Confederation. The historian J.R. Miller has suggested that not only was homogeneity impossible in a land of people from such diverse origins, but that “[d]iversity was both desirable and unavoidable.”¹ However, the founding of the Canadian nation on French and English bilingualism rather than as a cultural “melting pot,” with the inherent implication that difference would be accepted and even embraced, did not alter or improve the positions of the disenfranchised in relationship to governing bodies. Women, First Nations peoples, and many non-Europeans were among the groups who remained secondary in consideration to the politically powerful, and in some ways provided a counter against which being Canadian was defined.

In this chapter I will consider, using several mural paintings as examples, some of the ways in which Canadian identity was established and reiterated in those works. In particular, I will discuss Canadian women’s relationship to the collective construction of the belief in a unifying “Canadianness.” Referencing the mural work of several artists - Anne Savage (1896-1971), Lorna Claire (active 1928-30), Jane Lippert Birchall (b.1924), Edith Grace Coombs (1890-1986), and Jori Smith (b.1907) - I will argue that many women have actively participated in the manufacture of Canadian identity in relation to notions of marginalization and “otherness.” My first concern will be that of

¹ J. R. Miller, “Unity/Diversity: The Canadian Experience: From Confederation to the First World War,” in R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith, *Readings in Canadian History Post-Confederation* 4th edition (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Co, Canada, 1994), 68.

representations of Canadian landscape and the ways those representations functioned to construct an identity that was premised on being “not-British,” but that also excluded women. Within the painting of the landscape women will be seen to be both overtly and covertly marginalized, both as the subjects and the creators of the works. Second, I will examine constructions of race and ethnicity, exploring ways in which Canadian identity has been juxtaposed both to the Native and to the Québécois “other.” Here, the elision of women’s experiences is reiterated, but is suggested through more subtle means. By creating works of art in which the White male dominates, the artist invokes not only the reduced status of the particular marginalized figure in the painting, but, by presuming the power of such domination, implicitly erodes the potential of other groups to participate in the mainstream. I will suggest that the work of women mural painters has generally paralleled mainstream thinking in terms of what it means to be Canadian, and that in this sense women have contributed to the construction of the very systems that have generally valued their experiences as secondary. I will additionally argue, however, that, in the very acts of creating works of public art, women artists have trespassed on the gendered expectations of the roles they should play in the formation of Canadian identity. Here, women’s active contributions will be interpreted as an insistence on being heard.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

The issue of identity functions at both the microcosmic and macrocosmic, or personal/local and global levels. How the individual places her or himself and is simultaneously placed within the family, the local community, the larger community, the

state and indeed the entire world defines a personal identity. On the other hand, how the people of any nation come to agree on what constitutes their unifying identity defines the concept of identity in a broader sense. When nations undergo traumatic episodes (and here I am thinking especially of social revolution) in the search for their macrocosmic or global identity, the revolutionary event continues for later generations to be a major focus of definition. However, Canada is a country without a revolutionary history and could never have sought such unity at the expense of diversity, because, in J.R. Miller's words, "there was nothing to which they could conform, and no imperative of revolution to force them to make such a compact."² I would like to suggest that in Canada social identity has often been predicated more on what we are *not* as opposed to what we *are* and that this is played out in several of the murals discussed in this chapter. That is to say, Canadians have defined themselves as "not British," or alternatively as "not American."

Confusingly, alongside the desire to be "not British" Canadians have also characterized themselves more broadly as "only of Western European descent." This "not-non-European" definition was maintained by such controls as the head tax placed on Chinese immigrants at the turn of the century, and the severe limitations on immigration from Japan and India that continued up until the 1950s. Discrimination based on religion, race and national origin continued in Canadian immigration policies right up to 1967 when Canada introduced a point system that based immigration criteria on qualifications such as language and job skills. Canadians have also defined themselves historically in complex ways as "not Native" (and theorists such as Marcia Crosby and Daniel Francis

² Miller, "Unity/Diversity," 69.

argue that this definition persists³).

In the midst of this list of “not” definitions concerning what might constitute a Canadian identity lies an even more fundamental concept. Canadian women have often tended historically to support the structure invoked by their male peers when it comes to defining “Canadianness.” In so doing, they have reiterated their own positions as secondary to the primacy of the rank of being male, thereby solidifying the status quo and simultaneously failing to establish a subjectivity either unique to or inclusive of their own gender. Thus, while the act of mural painting itself can be interpreted as an intervention in the male-dominated public sphere, the themes women chose (or that were chosen for them via commissions) for their mural paintings generally did not differ in any significant way from the ideas advanced by male painters. The idea that men and women would be ascribed different characteristics, that different expectations and aspirations would be assigned to them, and that men would play more prominent roles in the public arena is not a surprise. Feminist theorists have amply discussed the gendered dichotomies of man/woman, culture/nature, rational/emotional or public/private, with the more culturally valued and normative first of the two components attributed to men.⁴ In addition, in Canada no less than in many other parts of the Western world, a “person” has often been, both literally and figuratively, constituted solely by the male gender. Prior to the 1929

³ See Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991): 266-291; and Daniel Francis The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992). I am not suggesting here that the American “melting pot” concept of cultural construction included Native people any more than Canada’s culture. Native North Americans have been systematically marginalized within both Canada and the United States.

⁴ See, for example, Moira Gatens, Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality (New York: Routledge, 1996), Chapter 5.

“Person’s Case,” for example, Canadian women were not deemed “persons,” and were therefore ineligible for appointment to the Senate.

The disparate definitions of what it means to be Canadian can be read in the painting of murals for public venues, wherein the population can see its (recommended) identity in large-format, easily-accessible works of art. It is within post-structuralist thinking that the idea of the “self” as promoted in public forums, mural painting included, might be thought of as more a construct than a given. The self then becomes, in Michel Foucault’s terms, a construct created through discourses of power and knowledge.⁵ Cultural production in general, and mural painting in particular, can therefore be considered parts of a larger whole within which the individual is defined as Canadian and the self is posited as “belonging” through the reiteration of cultural standards (to which the individual might, of course, work in opposition as well as acquiesce). The idea that marginalized groups acquiesce to the demands of more powerful individuals without any need on the part of those in power to resort to overt oppression refers again to Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony as discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation, wherein the disenfranchised are persuaded that cultural hierarchies are “normal” through the reiteration of cultural norms presented as givens.⁶ However, the suggestion that the identity of the gendered self is not a given based on physical attributes, but is rather made up of an intersecting of cultural dictates that are so familiar that they assume the guise of “normal,” has broad implications for feminist theorists, not all of them favourable. For

⁵ See, for example, Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); and Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. I, Joseph A. Buttigieg, ed., Joseph A Buttigieg and Antonio Callari, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 155-156.

example, if the self is not given, on what terms are women, who have in many ways been historically denied the right to establish a “self,” by being defined primarily as “other” to their male counterparts, to base their identities? For this very reason, feminist theorists have argued that the poststructuralist challenge to the concept of an integrated subjectivity does not necessarily advance the search for social equality for women. In spite of this contradiction, however, the poststructuralist insistence on the understanding of identity as a social construction rather than an innate, pre-existing, a-historical “truth,” allows for the possibility that the denial of women’s subjectivity has come about in the first place as a result of hierarchies of domination, rather than as something innate in gender relationships. Although the difficulty of a subjectivity for women must be considered, this idea of gender relationships as constructions rather than natural and timeless facts simultaneously provides a venue for the exploration of identity as an externally imposed phenomenon.

One of the ways in which the problem of subjectivity for women can be addressed is through an insistence on the value of biography. Since women have not been historically well defined, their missing histories simultaneously suggest that biography must be an integral part of feminist research in the attempt to incorporate the instability of the poststructuralist self with the need to establish an historical identity for women. In the words of feminist author Liz Stanley, who insists on the importance of biography in women’s historical narratives, “lives and works are by no means neatly distinct.”⁷ In other words, any research conducted on the lives and works of women producers in

⁷ Liz Stanley, ed., *Lives and Work: Autobiographical Occasions*, (special double issue of *Auto/Biography* 3, nos 1 and 2, 1994): i.

particular must be predicated on much more than the formal examination of their artistic practices. Formal analysis has itself proved to be a constructed rather than unbiased method of analysis, and much of the formulation of such analyses has focused virtually exclusively on production by men without concurrent inquiries into why women's work has not been similarly considered. I am simultaneously aware, however, of Nanette Salomon's cautions concerning the use of biography. Salomon traces the trajectory of Western art history from Vasari's *Le Vite De' più eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani* (first published in 1550 and reissued in 1568) to Janson's *The History of Art* (first published in 1962 and reprinted at regular intervals), suggesting that the biographies of male artists have played a central role in enhancing the notion of the artist as genius. She warns that projects such as Mary Garrard's writing on Artemesia Gentileschi "reveals her desire to enroll Gentileschi in the canon as presently constructed."⁸ Rather than using biography to establish or reiterate a norm, as Salomon warns against, however, I am suggesting that biography can also function in a different way. It can insist on the importance of contextual information and, rather than immortalizing the artist, it can suggest that the precepts of humanity are common to all, but that humanity is composed of infinitely diverse component parts - emphasized by distinct experiences. The value for the study of women lies in the emphasis on difference and its implied subjectivity.

⁸ Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in Joan E. Hartman and Ellen Messer-Davidow, eds., *(En)Gendering Knowledge: Feminists in Academia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 230.

CANADIAN IDENTITIES AND CANADIAN LANDSCAPE

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, with Canada in the physical process of formation as a country (a process that continued until as recently as 2000 with the formation of Nunavut), the one factor that held the vast landscape together was the promise of a railway that would cross the entire span. In order to fulfill the dream of uniting the largely unpopulated country, the builders of the railroad knew that immigration to the west would be essential and to that end free passes and supplies were distributed to encourage artists to paint the landscape. The landscape of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canada was promoted as a raw, untamed wilderness, with an impenetrable barrier in the form of the Rocky Mountains awaiting the strong and stalwart pioneer to tame it. (This was in contrast to the landscape murals painted for *The Canadian*, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, where the audience was composed of tourists and the land was marketed as friendly.) The definition of the pioneers as “rugged” set them apart from their European roots, creating a North American identity based on a pioneer spirit that was incontestably masculine. In this regard it was appropriate that the artists chosen to represent the West, being members of the Royal Canadian Academy, were men. By definition, then, the land as indicative of what it meant to be Canadian was constructed as something seen through male eyes. In the words of geographer Joanne P. Sharp, “The imagined bonding between individuals and the nation in narratives of national identification is differentiated by gender. Men are incorporated into the nation metonymically.... Women are not equal to the nation but

symbolic of it.”⁹

Thus, Canadian identity was in part predicated on the idea of being “not female,” an ideology that would be strongly reinforced, as will be seen, by the later work of the Group of Seven and of artists influenced by them. In creating a specifically masculine discourse that defined the land, the painters for the CPR and later the Group painters juxtaposed their renditions to the more common theme of landscape as a trope which is gendered female. Referring to land as if it has a female gender has not, however, simultaneously implied that the ownership of that same land is something particular to women. Just as men “own” women by the power of their gaze (men look, women are looked at), so the feminized landscape is owned by the male gaze that sweeps across it and, in presuming the power to look, also presumes ownership. In the same way, the gendering of the landscape as something threatening, although it might appear to be a diametric opposite, in fact also excluded women’s experience. In this sense, the land would require the ruggedness of male physical power. It was constructed - and this is particularly symbolic to my argument - specifically as “impenetrable.” Here the threatening land could also be interpreted as the phallic mother - a pre-gender condition as Freud defined it, existing prior to sex differentiation, and inspiring fear. Regardless of the way the Canadian landscape was constructed, however, it was not women who would possess it, but men. The feminist geographer Gillian Rose suggests that the relationship between men, women and the landscape “draws on not only a complex discursive transcoding between Woman and Nature...but also on a specific, masculine way of

⁹ Joanne P. Sharp, “Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National Identity,” in Nancy Duncan, *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 99.

seeing.”¹⁰ The gaze is the possessive looking of male desire, the presumption of ownership and the assumed privilege of belonging in the space. By defining a “Canadianness” predicated on the appearance of the land, artists of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries created a Canadian identity that precluded women as subjects. Nevertheless, many women artists represented the Canadian landscape in their work, and the way that these paintings function ideologically within the definition of what it means to be Canadian is complex.

ANNE SAVAGE

Much of Anne Savage’s (1896-1971) one extant series of mural paintings was devoted to the representation of a Canadian landscape - a landscape influenced by both the Group of Seven and the landscape painting of Quebec (fig. 28). Painted by Savage for the library of Baron Byng High School in Montreal at an unrecorded date during her tenure there as art teacher (1922-48), the panels were removed from the walls at some point prior to 1979, and today are in poor condition. The series consists of fourteen panels (each 72" x 34") and four larger works, *Indian Fur Traders* (54" x 48"), *Early Settlers* (54" x 48"), *Indian Camp* (65" x 73"), and *Church on a Hill* (48" x 186"), all oil on board. They were installed following their completion by hammering nails at four-inch intervals horizontally and vertically through the surface of each of the panels, and the resultant damage to their surfaces following their removal from the wall has posed a major restoration problem. The four larger panels have now found a permanent home at

¹⁰ Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 88.

the Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery at Concordia University, but the fate of the remaining fourteen works is undecided.

Anne Savage was born in the late nineteenth century (1896) in Montreal and was raised in Dorval. She was one of eleven children (she had a twin brother, Donaldson, who was killed during the First World War) born to John George Savage, a Montreal businessman. She studied for five years (1915-20) with Maurice Cullen and William Brymner at the Art Association of Montreal and in 1920 she studied design in Minneapolis. She was a founding member of both the Beaver Hall Group (1920) and the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP; 1933), and she was President of the CGP in 1949 and again in 1960. As a practising artist she exhibited widely during her lengthy career, participating in over seventy exhibitions during her lifetime. She is sometimes described as “informally associated” with the Group of Seven, and she had an extensive correspondence with A.Y. Jackson over a period of many years.¹¹ Beyond the painting of landscape Savage also worked in other genres, including still-life, interiors, gardens, city and town views, and portraiture, though it is for her landscapes and flower paintings that she is best known. Savage’s influence also extended far beyond her own artistic production. She was an unmarried woman who supported herself as a teacher, and she is remembered most often in this capacity. She taught design at the Commercial and Technical High School in Montreal in 1922 and in that same year she started teaching art at Baron Byng High School, where she remained for the next twenty-six years. Between 1948 and 1952 she was the Supervisor of Art for the Protestant School Board of Greater

¹¹ See Anne McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1977) for excerpts from this correspondence.

Montreal and she also taught Art Education at McGill University in the 1950s. Leah Sherman and Alfred Pinsky, both students of Savage's, went on to found the Faculty of Fine Arts at Sir George Williams (now Concordia) University. Of Savage's abilities as a teacher Sherman wrote, "In her company, the visual world became an endless source of stimulation and pleasure."¹² Pinsky also spoke highly of Savage, noting that he had founded the Faculty of Fine Arts "directly because of Anne Savage."¹³ Many women and men who went on to become prominent in the visual arts in Canada studied with Savage.¹⁴ As Robert Ayre wrote in his obituary tribute to her, "She gave her pupils such a good grounding in the principles and methods of painting that many of them became painters and art teachers in their turn. But her love and awareness and eagerness kindled many others and enhanced many lives."¹⁵

In addition to her other accomplishments, Savage had a reputation as a public lecturer. She spoke several times on the subject of Canadian art in general, but she also devoted a number of her public speaking engagements to the subject of women artists, lecturing on "Women Artists Through the Ages" (venue unrecorded, 1941) and several times on different aspects of "Canadian Women Artists" (venues unrecorded, 1941-42

¹² Leah Sherman, *Anne Savage: A Retrospective* (Montreal: Sir George Williams University Art Gallery, 1969). Cited by Leah Sherman, "Anne Savage: A Study of her Development as an Artist/Teacher in the Canadian Art World," David Thistlewood, ed., *Histories of Art and Design Education* (England: Longman, 1992), 151.

¹³ From an interview with Pinsky in the early seventies, cited by McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 66.

¹⁴ Among them were Rita Briansky, Alfred Pinsky, David Silverberg, William Allister, Maurie Rohrlach, Seymour Segal, Moe Reinblatt, Sylvia Lefkowitz, Frances Karanofsky, Leah Sherman and Tobie Steinhouse. McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 65.

¹⁵ Robert Ayre, "A Tribute to Anne Savage," *Montreal Star* 30 March 1971.

and c.1965 and one other lecture to the Women's Canadian Club, Montreal, after 1946).¹⁶ In her lectures she did not comment on any differences she may have noted between the work of women and that of men, or differences between the opportunities offered to women and men.¹⁷ However, the simple fact that she singled out "Women Artists" as the topic for several lectures attests to the fact that she saw the group "women" as something separate, due perhaps to the close personal and professional friendships that existed between several women artists (Savage, Lilius Torrance Newton (1896-1980), Prudence Heward (1896-1947), Mabel May (1877-1971), Nora Collyer (1898-1979), Mabel Lockerby (1882-1976), Kathleen Morris (1893-1986), and Sarah Robertson (1891-1948)) in Montreal dating back to their membership in the Beaver Hall Group. Savage was aware that women were occupied in painting murals for public venues across the United States, stating in her 1941 lecture that "[i]n America there is a great Renaissance Movement in Art to-day. Through all the towns in the country public buildings are being decorated with Murals Paintings [sic] and I believe many have been executed by women."¹⁸ She was quite correct in her belief. Many women in the United States received mural painting commissions as a result of New Deal projects (1933-43), including Henrietta Shore (1880-1963), Marion Greenwood (1909-70), Alice Neel (1900-84) and Berenice Abbott (1898-1991).¹⁹ Savage therefore had, at the very least, an abstract model

¹⁶ Anne Savage Archives, Concordia University, Files 3-6, 2.18-2.21. Savage did not give her lectures any titles - the titles have been added to the finding aid to clarify the lecture topics.

¹⁷ Anne Savage Archives, Concordia University, "Women Artists," Files 3-6, 2.18 to 2.21.

¹⁸ Anne Savage Archives, File 3, 2.18.

¹⁹ There are also many examples of mural commissions completed by turn-of-the-century American women. Violet Oakley (1874-1961), for example, received in 1902 a commission to paint eighteen murals for the Governor's Reception Room in the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. For more

(by which I mean that she did not necessarily see the paintings themselves) for use in defining herself as a mural painter, and she considered the painting of murals to be of sufficient importance that she singled them out as something women in the United States were engaged in doing.²⁰

Savage also believed that mural painting should form an integral part of her pedagogical programme at Baron Byng. She encouraged her students to decorate the hallways of the school with murals, and her activities in this regard were well-known and greatly encouraged.²¹ The students painted mural works throughout the school on diverse subjects such as outdoor life, industrial Canada, the war effort, animals, and mythology. They painted, for example, sixty-five feet of wall space in the basement of the building, working in oil paint directly on the bricks.²² These murals were removed at an unspecified later date by a principal, who as a result incurred Savage's wrath. "He should have been arrested," she is quoted as saying in reaction to the removal. "He destroyed a living museum."²³

In 1939 Savage broadcast a series of eight lectures on CBC radio on the subject of

information, see Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein, American Women Artists: From Early Indian Times to the Present (Boston: G.K Hall and Co., 1982). 159-161.

²⁰ An exhibition of mural designs for Federal buildings in the United States had taken place in 1940 at the National Gallery of Canada and Savage certainly may have seen the show. Michael Bell, "The Welfare of Art in Canada," The Kingston Conference Proceedings reprint of the 1941 Kingston Artists' Conference (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1991 [1941], vi.

²¹ See, for example, Brian Moore, "Teenage Art Blooms on High School Walls" unidentified newspaper clipping, Anne Savage Archives, File 50, 13.3; Zoe Bieler, "High School Art: Teacher Anne Savage Encourages Mural Painting," The Standard, (Montreal), undated, Anne Savage Archives, File 50, 13.4.

²² Moore, "Teenage Art Blooms on High School Walls."

²³ Robert Ayre, "Anne Savage – the Legacy of a Remarkable Teacher," Montreal Star 25 May 1968.

Canadian art.²⁴ In these broadcasts she traced the Canadian love of landscape to a similar love by artists in Great Britain, suggesting that there was a direct connection between artists such as John Constable (1776-1837) and the Canadian tradition. She introduced Constable's biography and his artistic training, remarking that she found it odd that the Pre-Raphaelites did not use Constable's aesthetic as a source. She continued, "But 100 years later a group of painters in Canada heard its whisper and benefitted [sic] by it, and in the light of Constable's revelation set out to seek the same truths in their own land."²⁵ The landscape that she represented, both in her easel and her mural paintings, was usually expressly Canadian. Works such as *Dark Pool, Georgian Bay* (1933; Art Gallery of Hamilton) and *Green Shores, Laurentians* (c.1935; McMichael Canadian Art Collection), for example, represent Canadian geographical locations, but more importantly the style of Savage's work has a distinctly Canadian appearance, as defined most forcefully by the Group of Seven. Differing most specifically from landscape painting in the British tradition, the Canadian landscape was represented by Savage as sharply coloured, with a patterned surface close to the picture plane and a narrowed view. Savage has been described as "one of the first women to participate actively in the creation of a school of Canadian painting."²⁶

The Group of Seven influenced Savage's painting although not to the extent that her own imprint was elided. In a review of the retrospective held at Sir George Williams

²⁴ McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 150-151.

²⁵ Savage Archives, File 2, 2.2. Typescript. "First Talk: Canadian Art Series."

²⁶ Sherman, "Anne Savage: A Study of her Development as an Artist/Teacher in the Canadian Art World," 142.

University Art Gallery in 1969, Irene Heywood noted that “the influence of the Group of Seven, while strong in early works, never overshadows the painter’s personal contribution to landscape.”²⁷ Merging Group of Seven landscape ideals depicting boldly patterned landscapes, with a Quebec tradition that included references to human habitation such as buildings and farm equipment (although seldom humans themselves, especially in her later work), overlaid by her own strong sense of decorative and design elements, Savage created landscapes that were distinctly her own (fig. 29). Similarly, her mural paintings evoked the Group’s aesthetic in part, but were at the same time different. Savage, for example, included Native Canadian figures in the central panels of her Baron Byng murals - a subject not often seen in Group paintings. At the same time as her work differed from the Group’s she was also linked to them, partly in terms of subject, partly in terms of style, and partly in terms of her friendships with members of the Group, especially Jackson.

CANADIAN ART AND CANADIAN IDENTITIES

If the best-known subject of the most generally popular of all Canadian paintings – the collective landscapes of the Group of Seven – has often been considered the most significant artistic representation of what it means to be Canadian, then it would seem that Canadian identity as expressed through artistic media is something that is inextricably linked to an unpopulated, sometimes impenetrable, landscape. The members of the Group had deliberately sought a style of painting that would represent

²⁷ Irene Heywood, “Exciting Retrospective of Anne Savage,” *The Gazette* 12 April 1969.

“Canadianness.” In one of a series of “Algomaxims” written for a 1919 exhibition of sketches and paintings from Algoma, three future Group members expressed the desire that the painting of the landscape would have profound meaning for Canadians, and that “[t]he great purpose of landscape art is to make us at home in our own country.”²⁸ Their goals were “idealistic and nationalist in intent,” writes Charles Hill. “They set out to throw off the colonial attitude which denigrated all Canadian creative ventures and slavishly imitated or worshipped all things British or European.”²⁹ One of the primary motivating forces behind the Group’s formation, therefore, was to suggest an artistic dimension for Canadian painting that would serve the specific purpose of defining Canadians as “not British or European.” The Group of Seven was not alone in thinking that there was a need to define “Canadianness.” The early decades of the twentieth century, particularly the 1920s, were a time when many Canadians were trying to formulate what might constitute that identity, and ties with the British Empire were coming under serious questioning from many quarters. Politicians, poets, economists, lawyers and people from many other walks of life published papers extolling the same desire - to define themselves separately from British roots.³⁰ They sought an identity that would be uniquely Canadian, created by Canadians, for Canadians. As a 1913 article

²⁸ The sketches and paintings were by J.E.H MacDonald, Frank Johnston, and Lawren Harris (Toronto Daily Star 3 May 1919); Fred Jacob, “The New Canadian Art,” Toronto Mail and Empire 10 May 1919. Cited in Charles Hill, The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1995), 83.

²⁹ Hill, The Group of Seven, 20.

³⁰ For an overview of the individuals and organizations devoted to developing the notion of Canadian identity in the 1920s see Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism 7, no.1 (Spring 1980): 32-52.

suggested:

Who but the native Canadian equipped with this training [i.e., artistic training] is more likely successfully to give expression to the spirit of the country in a series of panels or frescoes, such as would give pleasure to those who know the life of Canada and its characteristics? At the same time he will leave an historical record for the future students of nations.³¹

Thus, as Charles Hill has pointed out, the members of the Group of Seven were not the first to work towards nationalist Canadian goals and attempt to define a Canadian identity that was neither British nor American. In fact, the debate surrounding what would constitute a specifically Canadian aesthetic predated the Group's formation by several decades, having existed since the 1870s.³² And indeed the attempts to define "Canadianness" did not end with the creation of the Group, either. Long after their formation numerous articles on the subject continued to be published in magazines such as *The Canadian Forum*, and writers such as Robert Ayre, Frank Underhill, Dorothy Livesay, and Frank Scott all expressed the desire to define a uniquely Canadian persona and perspective.

In formulating a Canadian identity founded on a specific interpretation of landscape, however, the Group of Seven was constructing an identity that also quite specifically excluded women. The creation of a more rigorously masculine group of painters could scarcely have been imagined. Their work was seen as integrally connected to the Canadian wilderness, and wilderness existence was not associated with female activities. The difficulty of the terrain and the barren and inaccessible landscape were

³¹ "Art in Winnipeg" *Toronto Saturday Night* (6 September 1913): 31.

³² Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 20.

captured in paintings such as J.E.H. MacDonald's *Dark Autumn, Rocky Mountains* (1930; National Gallery of Canada) or Arthur Lismer's *The Glacier* (1928; Art Gallery of Hamilton). That the movement was considered primary to male experience is reflected in the texts that surround their production. In his autobiography, *A Painter's Country*, for example, Jackson describes his adventures in painting various remote parts of Canada, living in rough and occasionally dangerous circumstances.³³ He never remarks on the absence of women in his travels. They have not so much been excluded as literally not expected in the first place; their absence required no explanation. Similarly, Fred Housser's *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven*, written in 1926, describes the need for the art that will define Canada to be specifically masculine (the artist "paddles, portages and makes camp; sleeps in the out-of-doors under the stars; climbs mountains with his sketch box on his back"³⁴). In Housser's writing women are not included in the Group's inspirations, expeditions, or production. They appear only as a few lines towards the end of the book where the author notes that the formation in Montreal of the Beaver Hall Group included several women. According to Housser, the Beaver Hall Group was "distinctly, though less aggressively, associated with the Canadian art movement of which this book is an appreciation.... In 1925 some of the lady members contributed canvases to a group [Group of Seven] show."³⁵ However, Housser underestimated the relationship between the Group of Seven and women

³³ A.Y. Jackson, *A Painter's Country: The Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, Ltd., 1958).

³⁴ Fred Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1926), 15.

³⁵ Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement*, 212.

painters of Canada. While the Group itself may have been founded on definitely masculine principles, its members were generous in their inclusion of the work of women in their exhibitions.³⁶ As Housser's contemporary Blodwen Davies remarked in 1932, "The Group have gone out of their way to encourage women whose work indicated the same vigorous attitude, the same frank and untraditional conception of the mission of the painter."³⁷ Charles Hill elaborates on the relationships between women artists and the members of the Group in *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, detailing throughout the text the contributions made by the women who showed with them on a regular basis and those for whom the various members provided encouragement.³⁸

It is particularly noteworthy, however, that although the Group of Seven did indeed support the work of many women artists by including their work in shows, the most significant factor in their formation and success was that they were all men. This was in spite of the fact that some women, notably Emily Carr, Yvonne McKague Housser and Anne Savage, had art practices more in common with Group ideologies than did some of the men who became Group members after the original seven. LeMoine FitzGerald, for example, shared little of a stylistic nature or subject interest with the rest

³⁶ For example, in one of the final Group shows, in 1931, the invited contributors "outnumbered the members once again." Exhibitors included Ruth Eliot, Isabel McLaughlin, Rody Courtice, Ruth Hood, Prudence Heward, Yvonne McKague Housser, and Anne Savage. Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 268. In addition, other women artists who benefited from their connections with the Group included Sarah Robertson, Emily Carr, Liliias Torrance Newton, Mabel May, Bess Housser, Doris Mills, and Kay Daly. Hill, 291. The Group also supported the idea of mural painting. Several members engaged in the practice themselves and Arthur Lismer published his support in a newspaper article. Arthur Lismer, "Paint Canada's History Upon Walls of Schools is Proposal by Artist." *Toronto Daily Star* 13 December 1926: 1.

³⁷ Blodwen Davies, "The Canadian Group of Seven," *American Magazine of Art* (July 1932): 17. Cited by Alicia Boutilier, *4 Women Who Painted in the 1930s and 1940s: Rody Kenny Courtice, Bobs Cogill Haworth, Yvonne McKague Housser, Isabel McLaughlin* (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery), 1998.

³⁸ Hill, *The Group of Seven*.

of the Group. Dennis Reid describes his work of the twenties as having artistic concerns that differed significantly from the aims of the other members, noting that "its realism is emphatic, with great concern for "plastic" qualities; a careful modelling of volumes, a precise description of space and of the placement of forms in that space. It is reverent and still."³⁹ If we compare this assessment to just one review of work by A.Y. Jackson we can see that their artistic goals were seen to be almost diametrically opposed. Of Jackson's *Terre Sauvage* (1913; National Gallery of Canada), and work by J.E.H. MacDonald, the critic Albert Laberge wrote, "They paint their canvases in a fugue, in a kind of fury. It's as if, vibrating before untamed nature, savage and wild, they can scarcely find colours strong enough, gesture vigorous enough, to express the emotions they feel. An atmosphere of apocalypse breathes through the paintings of these artists."⁴⁰ FitzGerald was not the only Group member who had little in common with the others. Edwin Holgate also followed his own path, as did A.J. Casson. In spite of the fact that some members of the Group did not share its general aesthetic goals, however, and that women painters existed whose work more closely paralleled the Group's general objectives, no woman was invited to join their ranks, nor is there a recorded request from a woman to the Group asking for membership.

Anne Savage's biographer, her niece Anne McDougall, offers an interesting explanation for Savage's case. She suggests that Savage "impressed people as a bonny,

³⁹ Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988, 165.

⁴⁰ Albert Laberge, "Superbe travail des artistes canadiens" (unsigned), *La Presse* (Montreal), 22 November 1918. Cited by Hill, *The Group of Seven*, 309.

vivacious woman,” but “in many ways she was not as strong as she looked.”⁴¹ Savage had a thyroid condition and although “[s]he was very energetic when it came to painting or packing material into her car for school...she was shy, certainly noncompetitive, and so retiring emotionally that it affected her physically.”⁴² While the exact nature of Savage’s condition and the real effect it had on her as an artist does not appear to have been recorded, the construction of her as a partial invalid in her biography plays a role in the gendering of her art. It also serves as a metaphor for her exclusion from the masculinist, rugged, outdoor life prescribed as conditional to the successful capturing of a landscape that would construct the Canadian experience.

How, then, is the mural painting of landscape views by a woman artist such as Savage to be interpreted within the discourse of landscape as a male domain? Savage’s landscape murals are linked to Group of Seven painting but differ in some significant ways. Her work is generally less spontaneous, more symmetrical, more stylized and significantly less rugged than work by most members of the Group (with the possible exception of Frank Carmichael) most of the time. If we compare, for example, a set of three of Savage’s untitled panels (fig. 30) to Arthur Lismer’s *Isles of Spruce, Algoma* (fig. 31), we can see that Savage’s work is more domesticated than Lismer’s, but that they also have significant features in common. Both have dispensed with the panoramic gaze, both represent a landscape that is unlike European landscapes, with bright light, sharp colour and diminished detail, and both use abstract surface patterns and trees to create a screen across the picture plane, thereby emphasizing the surface. By selecting a

⁴¹ McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 79.

⁴² McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 79.

landscape style that was linked stylistically to the work of the Group, Savage fit within the contemporaneous understanding of Canadian identity as defined, at least to a certain extent, by the land. One successful avenue into the male-dominated art world was, in fact, to “paint like a man,” and Savage was occasionally described in those terms. Robert Ayre, for example, noted that the “decorative element in some of her canvases... may remind you that the painter is a woman.” Nevertheless, “[s]he is a robust painter, who handles big masses and powerful rhythms convincingly.... The fullbodied paintings of the thirties give way to the lighter, more transparent, more spacious prospects of the sixties, but there is no loss of vigor and command.”⁴³ What emerges is the picture of a woman painter who works both inside and outside the mainstream structure of Canadian art of the time. She is “too frail” for total inclusion, but her work is “robust” enough to survive (and survive well) on the sidelines. Her work is *like* that of the dominant Group, but has enough of its own characteristic that it is not reduced to mere copying. By aligning herself stylistically with the prominent artists of her time, Savage negotiated a road into one of the more prominent discourses that defined Canadian art. By simultaneously developing her own additions and design features she created an individual way of painting that was not only accepted, but admired, and could not be dismissed with the pejorative accusation that it was “derivative.” Again in the words of Robert Ayre, “Anne Savage has a place entirely her own in Canadian painting.... She painted with love, and she painted with intelligence.”⁴⁴ She did not stray far enough from

⁴³ Robert Ayre, “Renewal and Discovery - The Art of Anne Savage,” Unidentified newspaper clipping, 1969, Anne Savage Archives, File 63, 14.134.

⁴⁴ Robert Ayre, “A Tribute to Anne Savage.”

the Group's popular style to incur criticism, but that meant that it was only by virtue of her gender that she was not included in what would come to be considered the most significant group of painters to construct Canadian identity.

As an unmarried woman Savage perhaps saw herself as functioning within the artistic community in much the same way as a male painter. Except in her decision to address specific lectures to the subject of women artists, as we saw earlier in this chapter, she did not differentiate in her public lectures between the quality of work of male artists and the work of women. However, in her role as a high school teacher Savage saw the mural-painting activity by her students as stereotypically gendered in terms of what the female and male students were to paint. In a 1949 radio broadcast she was asked, "Both boys and girls worked on these school murals, did they?" She replied "Oh yes they did – the boys providing the bold action panels and the girls the more delicate flower friezes – scenes of interiors – costume decorations and designs for textiles."⁴⁵ In spite of her public career and her own activities as a mural painter, Savage maintained in her classroom teaching the clear division of expectations that would be directed at female and male students. She was not perceived as trying to destabilize an established system, even though she had, in fact, penetrated it with her own work.

CANADIAN IDENTITY AND NATIVE CULTURE

Landscape, however, is by no means the only factor implicated in the construction of Canadian identity. Issues of race and ethnicity also enter the equation, and to explore

⁴⁵ Anne Savage Archives, File 72, 18.2.

the implications of their involvement I will look at a number of mural paintings wherein the concept of the non-White “other” is invoked. While much late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century painting in Canada was devoted to the construction of a Canadian identity defined through the landscape, artists also constructed a “Canadianness” premised not so definitively on the land itself, but in juxtaposition to the Native population that had been suppressed to enable white colonization. The choice to represent Native Canadian images in two of her own murals most likely stemmed from Savage’s experiences in recording Native Canadian life in Western Canada. In 1926 and again in 1927 the ethnographer Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), invited Savage, along with other artists such as A.Y. Jackson (1926), Edwin Holgate (1926), Florence Wyle (1927), and Pegi Nicol (1927 and 1928) to accompany him to the Skeena River in British Columbia.⁴⁶ During those excursions Savage recorded the totem poles of the district before they completely disintegrated. Savage turned at least two of her sketches from these trips into oil canvases, *The Owl Totem* (1928) and *Hills on the Skeena* (c.1928-29).

As Sandra Dyck outlines in her thesis on Barbeau, during the first decades of the twentieth century First Nations cultures were appropriated for use as signifiers in the construction of a Canadian nation that was premised, ultimately, on the same White maleness ideologically implicit in the wilderness landscape.⁴⁷ Barbeau’s influence was extensive, and had a significant impact on the work of a notable number of Canadian artists. His activities are in some ways the linchpin around which the concept of “not-

⁴⁶ Nowry, *Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau*, 222, 231. Note, however, that Anne Savage’s biography places her there only once, and in 1928. McDougall, *Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter*, 72-76.

⁴⁷ Sandra Dyck, “‘These Things are our Totems:’ Marius Barbeau and the Indiginization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s” M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1995.

other” that defines the history of Canadian identity organizes itself. Barbeau worked for the Anthropological Division of the Geological Survey of Canada (now part of the Canadian Museum of Civilization) between 1911 and 1948. The influence of his work, reinforced by its sheer volume - he released almost one thousand publications⁴⁸ - perhaps strengthened the acceptance of his concepts of Canadian identity, an identity he formulated on the disappearance of both Native and Québécois cultures. Beginning in 1911 Barbeau, with the assistance of a number of Canadian artists, studied the ethnoculture of Canada’s First Nations peoples, especially in British Columbia.⁴⁹ After 1914, he also recorded many of the folksongs and social and cultural traditions of Quebec, working right up until the year before his death in 1969. Barbeau’s activities most certainly documented large amounts of cultural heritage that might otherwise have been lost, but it is in his ideology that the most significant point in terms of this argument resides. His main objective, and the objective of all those who participated both with him and in separate endeavors, was to record the cultural heritage of dying civilizations before they disappeared, and it was therein that he constructed a vital, Anglophone community (although he himself was French-Canadian) allied with the future, and juxtaposed it to a past that was soon to be lost, embodied in the Native and traditional Québécois populations.

Among those influenced by Barbeau were a number of Canadian mural painters.

Muralists’ representations of Native Canadians reinforced a specific definition of what it

⁴⁸ Lawrence Nowry, Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau, (Toronto: NC Press, 1995), 255.

⁴⁹ Barbeau also worked with Emily Carr, Arthur Lismer, and musicians such as Ernest MacMillan, Healey Willan and Harry Adaskin. Nowry, Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau.

means to be Canadian in the twentieth century, and this definition - in addition to marginalizing Natives - also implicitly marginalizes women (including, ironically, the very women who painted the images under discussion). That is to say, Native Canadians were interpolated into mural paintings in a way that seemed natural, necessary, and advantageous, and women were interpolated in exactly the same way. The assumptions made about the way Native peoples would behave, based on an understanding of all Natives as being essentially the same person, were not the same stereotypes as those applied to women's behaviour, but they functioned identically. Women (like Native Canadians) were ultimately being defined as the "other" against which the definition of Canadian was being established. In this regard Anne Savage's depictions of Native figures are highly suggestive.

Although the majority of Savage's mural panels for Baron Byng High School were devoted to landscape, she also chose to include images of Native Canadians in two of them, *Indian Fur Traders* (fig. 32) and *Indian Camp* (fig. 33). In these two works Savage joined earlier painters in representing Native Canadians as close to, and part of, the land. *Indian Fur Traders* shows a transaction being negotiated between Indian trappers and European buyers. The Native negotiator faces the European buyers, posed against the two static Europeans who are more heavily clothed than the Native - attesting to their "civilized" status. Two other Natives in the scene kneel, close to nature in the familiar way in which Natives are so often portrayed. Savage worked the preliminary painting for this mural on the back of the final piece. The preliminary painting differs slightly - in the final painting Savage eliminated some of the original figures, made the overall tonality of the work less green, and brought the trees to the picture plane, placing

the figures among them (fig. 34). In *Indian Camp*, the encampment is nestled into and becomes part of the landscape scheme, the shape of the tents echoing perfectly the shape of the trees behind them. The people form part of an overall, symmetrical design, as if they are not engaged in real activities at all, but are instead merely actors on a stage set. By reiterating the understanding of Native life as part of or integral to the landscape, Savage subsumed Native identity within the land, and juxtaposed Western European identity against it, much as Canadian artists had been doing for generations preceding her. Then, as now, many Native leaders insisted on that relationship as an important strategy in negotiating land claims.⁵⁰ But Euro-Canadian sentiment tended toward the belief that Natives did not use the land “properly” (i.e., that they did not mine, farm or build sawmills on it) and that they therefore did not have a claim to it. Stephen Leacock’s history text of 1941 demonstrated the longevity of the sentiment when he wrote,

There is little room for regret that the possession of her soil [has] been transferred to the Anglo-Saxon race, and that the rule of the fierce Indian has for ever passed away.... We think of prehistoric North America as inhabited by the Indians, and have based on this a sort of recognition of ownership on their part. But this attitude is hardly warranted. The Indians were far too few to count. Their use of the resources of the continent was scarcely more than that made by crows and wolves, their development of it nothing.⁵¹

Exacerbating the opinion that Natives had no legitimate claim to land that they had never “used” was the trope wherein Natives were (and are) represented as inhabiting a primitive

⁵⁰ For more on the subject of Native land claims see Jill Oakes et al, eds., *Sacred Lands: Aboriginal World Views, Claims, and Conflicts* (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute Press, 1998); Craig MacLaine, *This Land is Our Land* (Montreal: Optimum, 1990).

⁵¹ Stephen Leacock, *Canada. The Foundation of its Future Montreal* (Privately printed, 1941), 19. Cited by Marilyn McKay, “Canadian Historical Murals, 1895-1939: Material Progress, Morality and the ‘Disappearance’ of Native People,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 15, no.1 (1992): 66-67.

past and, therefore, as having no future. The great variety in living conditions of Native groups in Canada, for example, was conflated in most nineteenth-century murals into a single representation - that of a stereotyped teepee as in Savage's mural. The image of the teepee functioned first as a signifier of Native culture that would be easily read by the children of the school where she taught. But, by repeating the image Savage contributed to the insidious perpetuation of the stereotype and reinforced it for them. By reiterating this type of imagery in a twentieth-century work, albeit a work intended to depict a nineteenth-century scene, Savage consolidated the idea of the Native as living in an eternal historical moment. The concept was, in fact, so entrenched that Savage might conceivably have been criticized for inaccuracy had she done otherwise. Writings about Native peoples additionally exacerbated the concept through the repeated use of words such as "disappearing" and "vanished," to suggest that Native peoples have no present.⁵² Accepting and repeating the stereotypes that defined Native Canadians, Savage implicitly suggested that she concurred with general conventions that defined all marginalized groups, including women. Indeed, the figures playing active roles in the narratives in her murals are all male. This is not to suggest that she overtly considered any of the related problems. In fact, such marginalization functioned effectively because it was accepted as "natural," and artists such as Savage gave no overt indication that they doubted or questioned the validity of the practice. Neither Native Canadians nor women would form part of the definition upon which Canadian citizenship was ultimately based. Savage was by no means alone in her use of stereotypes that defined a Canadian identity against

⁵² See, for example, Matthew Teitelbaum, "Sighting the Single Tree, Sighting the New Found Land," in *Eye of Nature* (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1991), 76.

Native populations and by implication against other marginalized groups. Her renditions of Native life were typical of the work of artists who preceded her, of artists who were her contemporaries, and of those who followed her.

Art historian Marilyn McKay has proposed ways in which Barbeau's belief in the impending disappearance of Native cultures was made manifest in Canadian mural paintings that offer potential ways of examining the Savage murals. Whereas Barbeau tried to record what he believed were fading cultures McKay problematizes this type of recording as a contributing factor in the understanding of Native Canadians as "Other." She notes that turn-of-the-century opinions about Canada's Native people very much reflected the opinion of people of European descent that their own civilization was a superior one.⁵³ Native Canadians were "primitive" by comparison, and would, in the normal course of events, be assimilated or die out. In 1899, for example, Jean Grant described the subject of George Reid's murals for the Toronto Municipal Buildings by expressing the belief that the pioneers in the images "mean to take in hand this mighty forest, which the Indian has regarded as his, but whose possibilities for subsistence have never entered his simple mind...."⁵⁴ Grant's belief summarized the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century opinion of many that Native Canadians, while perhaps quaint, did not merit consideration in the future of Canada. McKay elucidates the ways this opinion was expressed in the painting of murals by pointing out how often Native peoples are shown sitting on the ground (close to Nature) and in passive postures. She also notes that Canadian mural painters

⁵³ McKay, "Canadian Historical Murals."

⁵⁴ Jean Grant, "The Mural Decoration in the New City Hall," Toronto Saturday Night 12 (13 May 1899): 9.

often contrasted their representations of material progress with images of inactive, emotionless Native Canadians. Moreover, while both historical and contemporary Euro-Canadians appear in the murals, Natives are depicted only as figures from the distant past. By portraying Natives as stone-age foils to people of European ancestry, the artists not only documented European technological development, but also implied that Native Canadians should acknowledge the inferiority of their material culture, accept the legitimacy of the European presence in North America, and the subsequent assimilation and demise of their own peoples. Thus, the murals strengthened the cultural hegemony of the dominant group and demonstrated a moral purpose for the material progress of modern life.⁵⁵

Certainly this description can be read in Savage's paintings. In *Indian Fur Traders*, for example, the Europeans are fully dressed, including hats, while the Natives' "primitive" status is reiterated through their scant clothing. Although one of the Native figures is standing, the second maintains the lesser status of the pair by bending to the ground.

HISTORICAL MURAL PAINTING

Significant numbers of Canada's mural paintings have been dedicated to the task of recording the disappearing histories of the Native peoples. That being said, however, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century observers were often acutely aware of the disservices done to Native Canadians by European colonizers. While the dying out of Native cultures was generally believed to be inevitable, many also thought it was deeply regrettable. In 1912, for example, a writer in *Toronto Saturday Night* observed that George Reid's painting *The Coming of the White Man* "shows a number of Indians with an extraordinary resemblance to one another.... The kindly interest which this Indian –

⁵⁵ McKay, "Canadian Historical Murals, 63.

pardon me, I mean Indians – seem to show in the landing of the white man is a sad reminder of what the white man subsequently did....”⁵⁶

George Reid included Native subjects in several of his mural works (and in the preliminary drawings for works that were never completed) for the Toronto Municipal Buildings in the 1890s, and in Toronto’s Jarvis Collegiate (1928-30; 1949). In these works he defined a Canadian identity as specifically constructed against representations of Native Canadians. McKay has observed, for example, that two of the drawings for the uncompleted Toronto Municipal Buildings panels represent Native Canadians sitting on the ground listening to European colonizers who read from unidentified documents and “[t]hus the Native as nature is addressed by the written word of culture.”⁵⁷ Similarly, in one of the completed panels, *Staking a Pioneer Farm* (fig. 35), the land is being surveyed by European workers, while a Native looks on from behind a tree, at what McKay calls “the awesome and, to him, inaccessible display of technology.”⁵⁸

Of particular interest here is Reid’s painting of the earlier of the two Jarvis Collegiate series of murals (1928-30); in this work an artist named Lorna Claire assisted him. Jarvis Collegiate commissioned Reid to paint the murals after the First World War as a memorial to those students who had died in the fighting. The amount of money available (\$1500) extended only to the painting of one wall, and Reid offered to complete

⁵⁶ “Doing the Pictures at the Exhibition,” *Toronto Saturday Night* 25 (7 September 1912): 2.

⁵⁷ McKay, “Canadian Historical Murals, 64. McKay’s text suggests that a large number of Canadian historical murals can be read from this perspective, including J.W. Beatty’s *Governor and Mrs. Simcoe Paddled Up the Credit River* for the Mississauga Golf Club (1908), F.S. Challener’s four panels for the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg (1908-1912) and Arthur Crisp’s *Freight and Travel By Canoe* and *The Empress of Britain. The Last Word in Ocean Travel* for Toronto’s Commerce Building (1931).

⁵⁸ McKay, “Canadian Historical Murals,” 64.

the others free of charge.⁵⁹ The theme of the works was “Canadian History,” emphasizing the arrival of European explorers and culminating in two murals dedicated to those who had fought in World War I. The series remains *in situ* with the exception of the panel *Lief Ericson*, which is now missing and was likely painted over when Reid returned in the 1940s to paint the east wall.⁶⁰ Reid painted the most prominent portions of the eleven murals, but Claire was an active participant; at least one of the smaller spaces on the east wall - albeit in a back corner, under the balcony - a representation of a First Nations camp, was painted and signed by her (fig. 36).⁶¹ The image is of a Native figure in the foreground, bending to a stream to collect water in a container. On the far bank stand two teepees with two more figures in front of them. The representations of the Native people in Claire’s mural are not essentially different from Savage’s, with a figure bent to the ground and the ubiquitous teepee.⁶²

There is no record of whether or not Claire was paid for her participation. She most likely also contributed to, or possibly even completed herself, the extensive decorative portions of the works, including the shields of many countries, names of explorers, emblems of navigation, the Arms of the Provinces, and many other decorative

⁵⁹ Elisabeth Beattie, “George Reid: Forgotten Artist” www.interlog.com/~jarvisci/jargon/artist.html. This is not confirmed, however, by Harvey Medland, *Minerva’s Diary: A History of Jarvis Collegiate Institute* (Belleville: Mika Publishing Company, 1979).

⁶⁰ I would like to thank Marilyn McKay for this information.

⁶¹ I would like to thank Marilyn McKay for pointing this out to me and for providing me with an image. Jarvis Collegiate is located at 495 Jarvis Street, Toronto,

⁶² A joke told recently on the radio affirms that this concept of Native peoples having no future is still repeated. The joke included a description of contemporary “Indians” who “were collecting firewood to heat their homes.” CHOM, Montreal, 26 November 2001.

borders that surround and frame the main narratives.⁶³ A pamphlet probably written by George Reid, entitled “Descriptive Notes of Mural Decorations Designed and Painted by G. A. Reid, R.C.A., O.S.A., Assisted by Lorna Claire, A.O.C.A. in Jarvis Collegiate Auditorium,” acknowledges in its title the contributions of both artists.⁶⁴ A newspaper article describing the murals may suggest that Claire was included at the design stage as well as in the actual painting, noting that George Reid “designed the decorations for the hall with the assistance of Miss Lorna Claire,”⁶⁵ although it is not clear what the unidentified author understood by “designed.”

Little is known about Lorna Claire. She was a student at Jarvis Collegiate, which probably accounts for her selection as Reid’s assistant, and she also attended the Ontario College of Art (OCA).⁶⁶ An unidentified press clipping in the OCA archives notes that she won the Governor-General’s award for general proficiency and the highest standing in one subject offered by the school and that she also won a diploma for painting while she was a student.⁶⁷ After the completion of the Jarvis Collegiate murals she did a set of mural panels (now destroyed) on her own in the late 1920s for the children’s reading

⁶³ A pamphlet attributed to George Reid states that “Miss Lorna Claire...assisted Mr. Reid with his heraldic and decorative work.” George Reid [?], “Descriptive Notes of Mural Decorations Designed and Painted by G.A. Reid, R.C.A., O.S.A., Assisted by Lorna Claire, A.O.C.A. in Jarvis Collegiate Institute Auditorium,” Jarvis Collegiate Archives, undated, 1.

⁶⁴ George Reid (?) “Descriptive Notes of Mural Decorations,” cover page.

⁶⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, George Reid scrapbooks, E.P.Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario: 385.

⁶⁶ Claire is listed in the 1923-24 Jarvis Collegiate Departmental Examinations as having obtained two second-class honours exams, but she does not appear in lists of graduating students in that year or any following year.

⁶⁷ Unidentified press clipping. Archives of the Ontario College of Art, Scrapbook of Press Clippings, undated, unpaginated.

room of Earls court Public Library.⁶⁸ What happened to her after the mural painting at Jarvis Collegiate and Earls court remains a mystery. She appears not to have pursued an artistic career in the public eye, in spite of the fact that she was talented enough to paint a small mural as a contribution to Reid's cycle and a solo cycle for a public library.

While the majority of mural paintings such as those by Savage and Claire depicted Natives as either ineffectual or submissive, some works also described a cruel people inflicting torture on European settlers, most often missionaries. Although the depiction of the Native as actively cruel might appear to be diametrically opposed to the passive or submissive characterization, in fact the two representations functioned in the same way. Both constructed the Native in opposition to European civilization - Natives posing no threat (when they were ineffectual) or deserving elimination (when they were cruel). Examples of both themes appear in a mural by Jane Lippert Birchall (b.1924), almost thirty years (1956) after Reid's and Claire's work for Jarvis Collegiate Institute. The mural, which was commissioned for the building by the architects (the Toronto firm of Page and Steele), was painted for Midland-Penetanguishene District High School (fig. 37; no longer extant). It included the central and dominant figure of Champlain, who towered imposingly over all the other characters. Surrounding him were numbers of Hurons in the standard, passive poses, the majority seated on the ground. On the left side, they engaged with a (standing) fur trader. On the right they listened to a missionary preaching. Behind Champlain and to the left, a second missionary was bound to a pole, being tortured. The far left and far right of the mural showed the development of industry

⁶⁸ Marilyn McKay suggests that these murals represented images from children's literature. Communication with the author, 5 April 2002.

in Penetanguishene, the lumber industry, the railroad, and shipping, all linked to the early history of the area.

Birchall was born in Kitchener, Ontario, one of thirteen children. Her father was a businessman who owned a furniture factory. He encouraged her to pursue an artistic career and she graduated from the OCA in 1950 and studied in 1952 at the Akademie Der Bildenden Kunst in Vienna. In 1954 she spent an additional year of study at the Instituto Allende in San Miguel d'Allende, Mexico. While at the OCA, Birchall studied mural painting with Will Ogilvie, whom she describes as having filled her with confidence, and, upon graduation she was determined to become a professional mural painter.⁶⁹ She was prolific in the field, completing ten commissions before abandoning her career and turning instead to easel painting following the birth of her son. In addition to her work for Penetanguishene High School, she painted murals for, among other locations, the Newman Club, Toronto (1951, depicting the study of the university student), the Niagara Falls Vocational Institute Memorial Library, London (1955, depicting the history of Niagara), two for the Royal York Hotel, Toronto (both 1958; abstracted images of different parts of the Canadian landscape), and one for Waterloo Collegiate (1960; on the theme of education). Her final commission was dedicated to the history of medicine, *Tribute to Medicine* (1962), painted for St. Mary's General Hospital, Kitchener. This mural, which remains *in situ*, was the object of public pressure when the hospital threatened to cover it up in 1993. A campaign conducted in the press and by the hospital

⁶⁹ Author's interview with Jane Lippert Birchall, Laval, 1 November 2001.

staff succeeded in saving it.⁷⁰

Birchall actively solicited mural commissions by approaching architectural firms that were in the process of designing buildings and suggesting mural subjects to them. This most likely accounts for the relative size of her mural *oeuvre*. The active solicitation of mural commissions was an unusual act for a woman artist; Birchall was exceptional in her insistence on her right to participate in the decoration of public buildings, and in her success in obtaining commissions to do so. Her achievements in inserting herself pose an interesting juxtaposition to her portrayal of the Native “other.” Birchall did not perceive any negative structuring of her life, in spite of the fact that she left behind her lucrative mural-painting career in order to work as a homemaker when she became a mother.⁷¹ The acceptance of the “normal” or “natural” idea that women would abandon professional pursuits in order to care for their children functioned in the same way that the Native Canadian was marginalized in mural paintings. Birchall participated in the wider construction of hierarchized social patterns, but, like the other women in this dissertation, she simultaneously infringed on their convictions.

EDITH GRACE COOMBS

While the majority of mural paintings by Canadian artists depicting Native Canadians are perhaps most readily interpretable as the recording of Native populations

⁷⁰ Carol Goodwin, “Hospital ‘Display Wall’ Will Hide Front-Lobby Mural: St. Mary’s Petition Opposes Coverup,” Kitchener-Waterloo Record 10 March 1993, 6; “Hospital’s Mural Will Remain on View,” Kitchener-Waterloo Record 12 March 1993; Brian Caldwell, “Sentiment Can Be More Important Than Practicality,” Kitchener-Waterloo Record 13 March 1993, 15.

⁷¹ Author’s interview with Jane Lippert Birchall, Laval, 1 November 2001.

as “Other” to European colonizers, there are additional concerns to consider in the understanding of these relationships. Writers such as Terry Goldie in his book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* posits a relationship he terms “indigenization.” Goldie describes indigenization as “a peculiar word, [suggesting] the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous.”⁷² He suggests that, at the point of arrival in a foreign land, European settlers appropriated Native culture not precisely as their own, but in a way that, as he describes it, made the indigene “a semiotic pawn on a chess board under the control of the white signmaker,”⁷³ That is to say, in order to understand her/himself as part of the new land the European settler created a cultural continuity by constructing her/himself as having a continuous link following naturally from Native Canadian heritage. The assimilation of Native culture by anglo-European settlers, however, did not imply that Native Canadians would have an enduring culture of their own; Native culture was constructed as dying regardless of the ways European relationships to it were understood.

While most mural paintings can be read, then, more clearly in the terms outlined by Marilyn McKay, work by an artist named Edith Grace Coombs (1890-1986) can be interpreted as an example of Goldie’s thesis. If artists such as Anne Savage, Lorna Claire and Jane Lippert Birchall represented Native Canadians as members of a dying culture that could simultaneously function as a foil against which “real” Canadians as White and, preferably, male could be defined, Coombs painted, in 1930, two mural depictions of

⁷² Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston, Montreal, London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 13.

⁷³ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 10.

Native culture that functioned in a different fashion, although not unproblematically so. While McKay's interpretation of the way European settlers juxtaposed Natives as "Other" against the primacy of European culture, Coombs made the Native subject the central focus in both her works. Her two murals, *The Sky Woman: They Shall Come to Me On Their Journey to the Land of the Little People* (fig. 38) and *The Sky Woman: The Council of the Animals* (fig. 39), are representations of Wyandot creation myths, and both portray the Native character in the myth as a strong and central subject. Both are painted in oil on canvas and both are framed; the first measures 88" x 40" and the second 60" x 50". The first of the two was shown at the Ontario Society of Artists annual exhibition in 1930, the Canadian National Exhibition in 1931, the *Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal* in 1931, and the Oshawa Branch of the Woman's Art Association of Canada in 1931, among other venues. It was also entered into the Willingdon Arts Competition in Ottawa in 1931, where it was offered for sale.⁷⁴ The second mural was shown at the Royal Canadian Academy annual exhibition in Montreal in 1931 and the Ontario Society of Artists annual exhibition in 1935. This suggests that Coombs did not originally paint the murals as site-specific works and that they were most likely painted as easel paintings and they only acquired the designation "mural" at a later date when they were put on permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Canada in Ottawa. From there, they were transferred to the National Gallery of Canada, and finally, in 1983, to the Canadian Museum of Civilization.⁷⁵ Several sources refer to them as

⁷⁴ "Willingdon Arts Competition Entry Form" Grace Coombs Artist's file, National Gallery of Canada.

⁷⁵ Margot Reid, Collections Management Services, Canadian Museum of Civilization, fax to Benoit Geriault, Canadian Museum of Civilization, collection of Alison Garwood-Jones, Hamilton.

mural paintings; for example, Coombs' obituary in the *Guelph Mercury* included the information that "she created several fine murals based on Indian legends," in reference to the works.⁷⁶

A typescript contained in Coombs' National Gallery of Canada artist's file and signed by her describes the myth on which the paintings are based. The images are founded on the nine versions of Wyandot creation myths as collected by Marius Barbeau.⁷⁷ The story tells of a "Sky Woman" who fell from a land beyond the sky to the world beneath, which was all water. The water animals - otter, muskrat, beaver, and toad - built an island for her on the back of a turtle. The island became the earth. Both murals show a central image of the Wyandot woman bathed in light, surrounded by animals. Although the images appear saccharine and romanticized, the centrality of the Native character, and the prominence of the Native myth as the subject of the mural are nevertheless significant departures from the stereotyped renderings of Native Canadians as non-subjects in paintings that refer to their histories.

Goldie addresses specifically this type of rendition of the "indigene maiden" as an "ethereal romantic figure...best understood as ...absolute purity, absolute beauty, and absolute devotion."⁷⁸ He elaborates on this: "The indigene shaman possesses the mystical land and through either his/her aid or the general assistance of indigene mysticism the

⁷⁶ "Edith Lawson Dies, Was Noted Artist," *Guelph Mercury*, 24 November 1986.

⁷⁷ The Wyandot people were composed of the Huron, Petun, Neutral, Wenro, Erie and other Iroquoian groups. The word "Wendat" (Ouendat, Wendat, Houandate, Wyandotte, Wyandot) is difficult to translate but conveys the meaning "People of the Island." *Craigeleith and the Birth of the Historic Wyandot Tribe*. <http://www.wyandot.org/craigeleith.html> . Marius Barbeau collected the myths in 1911 and 1912, on field trips to southwestern Ontario and Wyandotte, Oklahoma. Nowry, *Marius Barbeau*, 106-126.

⁷⁸ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 68.

white shaman initiate can also know the land as a spiritual restoration of the soul-less white consciousness.”⁷⁹ Thus, by appropriating Native mysticism, the White settler creates a safe haven for her/his infringement of an otherwise alien territory. The Native subject is, nevertheless, bound for obscurity. Coombs illustrates this clearly through the depiction of her Native character as a shaman who represents her people’s mythical history, but is powerless to protect them from assimilation. The “story-book” quality, emphasized in particular by the saccharine characteristics of the main figure in both murals and by the animals that surround her, places the myth in the realm of past fantasy rather than current reality. In other words, the illustration of the myth by Coombs does not suggest its perpetuity; instead it documents its loss.

Coombs was born in Hamilton in 1890, the daughter of Jabez Coombs and Elizabeth Taylor and was one of nine children. Her father’s occupation has not been recorded, but he studied at the Royal Military College in Kingston and the family appears to have been middle-class.⁸⁰ Since they moved frequently (from Hamilton to St. Catharines, Gananoque, Port Arthur, and Fort William⁸¹) it is not unreasonable to assume that Jabez Coombs pursued a military career. Coombs was associated with the Group of Seven, J.E.H. MacDonald in particular being a friend. She studied at the Ontario College of Art between 1913 and 1917. Following the completion of her courses, she attended the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. Upon returning to Canada, she became an

⁷⁹ Goldie, *Fear and Temptation*, 146.

⁸⁰ Lorne Pierce, *E. Grace Coombs [Mrs. James Sharp Lawson] A.O.C.A., O.S.A.* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), 3.

⁸¹ Pierce, *E. Grace Coombs*, 4-5.

instructor at the OCA in 1921, staying until 1956. Like Mary Hiester Reid, Coombs was highly praised for her paintings of flowers. Her work was compared, as was Reid's, to the flower paintings of Robert Holmes, with emphasis on their botanical accuracy "saved from tightness and triteness by the lights and shadows that play over her work."⁸² In 1949, a biography of Coombs' life claimed that "no Canadian artist has ever had so many reproductions of their work published, either in colour or in monochrome."⁸³ While it is doubtful that work by Coombs has been more extensively reproduced than the work of the Group of Seven, the testimony attests to the esteem accorded her work, at least at one period of time.

Thus Coombs straddles convention in two different ways. In the first place, she constructs the Native figures as central to her images rather than giving them the more common peripheral (in the trees) or submissive (kneeling) placement. Simultaneously, she erodes any power that this centrality might have given to the figures by choosing a child-like iconography. Second, she was herself constructed as an artist with "masculine" qualities. Coombs was a married woman who conducted an active, highly productive artistic career throughout her adult life.⁸⁴ Like many other successful women artists such as Yvonne McKague Housser and Anne Savage, the success of her practice was attributed by some sources to the "masculinity" of her work. The *Guelph Mercury* noted,

One of the unusual factors in the development of Canadian painting has

⁸² Margaret Gray, Margaret Rand, Lois Steen, *A.J. Casson* (Agincourt, Ontario: Gage Publishing, 1976), 6. Cited by Stuart MacCuaig, *Climbing the Cold White Peaks: A Survey of Artists in and from Hamilton, 1910-1950* (Hamilton: Hamilton Artists' Inc, 1986), 34.

⁸³ Pierce, *E. Grace Coombs*, 2.

⁸⁴ Note, however, that she did not marry until 1942, when she was fifty-two years old, long after the murals were painted.

been the unusually strong contribution made by ... women artists who have achieved national recognition. Such women painters as Emily Carr, Yvonne McCague [sic] Housser, Rody Courtice, Paraskeva Clark, and Kay Daly have always been particularly virile in their handling of paint. Seldom if ever can the label 'feminine' be attached to their way of seeing and working. Mrs. Lawson [Grace Coombs] is no exception. Her singularly forceful paintings are rugged and strong in their sure and definite brushwork.⁸⁵

The ascribing of so-called masculine characteristics to women's artwork, as we have seen in the examples of several of the women already discussed in this dissertation, often provides a means by which women, and perhaps particularly married women, could be included within the definition "artist." The repetition of the description suggests that some understanding that would not threaten the status quo had to be established for women in this social position. That is to say, a complex transcoding ascribed masculine characteristics to successful female painters in order to explain their presence in public. They were successful because they had some masculine traits, but those masculine traits did not subsume their essential femininity. Although the ascribing of masculine characteristics to the work of successful women artists was not uncommon, the complex relationships between this definition of Coombs, her representation of the central Native figure, and the narrative as a story-book rendition creates a tension in her mural paintings that makes them unusual and difficult to categorize. Nevertheless, Coombs' murals push the boundaries surrounding constructions of Native identity, and by extrapolation her work addresses women's issues in a similar way. In the case of the Native subjects in her work the central figures are couched in a saccharine presentation that makes palatable to Western expectations of the Native "other" their dominant positioning in the paintings. In

⁸⁵ "Excellent Art Exhibition Given by Grace Coombs," Guelph Mercury, 17 May 1954.

the same way, work by women does exist but is simultaneously marginalized; some negotiation strategy is required before inclusion can be achieved. In the case of Coombs the artist (and many other women artists) her personal inclusion was, in part, attained through the ascription of masculine characteristics to her work. Other women artists, as we have seen at various points in this dissertation, have achieved their own inclusion through a variety of overt and covert negotiation strategies.

JORI SMITH

Marius Barbeau's influential views on Native Canadians were widely disseminated, but his work recording the cultural heritage of the people of Quebec also influenced much Canadian artistic production, and in a similar way. In 1914, Barbeau began collecting folktales and recording French-Canadian folk songs from Charlevoix, Kamouraska and Beauce Counties, a pursuit he continued until 1946. During those years he collected over six thousand tunes and thirteen thousand lyrics, publishing *Chansons Canadiennes/French Canadian Folksongs* (1929), *Chansons Populaires du Vieux Quebec* (1935), *Come a Singing* (1947), *Les Contes du Grand-Pere Sept-Heures* (1950), *Contes Populaires Canadiens* (2 volumes, 1916 and 1917) and a significant number of additional volumes.⁸⁶ As with his work with Native Canadian culture, Barbeau's primary objective was to record French-Canadian culture before it disappeared.

One artist who was influenced by Barbeau to represent the people of Quebec in this way was the Montreal painter Jori Smith (b. 1907). Of the Québécois people Smith

⁸⁶ For a comprehensive list of Barbeau's publications see Nowry, *Man of Mana*, 404-13.

remarked, “How fortunate that Marius Barbeau and a few others, realizing what was about to happen [i.e. rapid change and the introduction of technologies such as electricity and telephones], worked so assiduously to document that doomed culture.”⁸⁷ As a committed participant in the politics of the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), Canada’s forerunner to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and later the New Democratic Party (NDP), Jori Smith might seem at first glance to have been the ideal painter of politically-themed murals along the lines of those appearing in the thirties in Mexico and the United States. The 1932 manifesto of the LSR, written by Frank Underhill, proclaimed the members’ intention of working for “a social order in which the basic principle regulating production, distribution and service will be the common good rather than private profit.”⁸⁸ Socialist groups in Canada, however, while addressing what they saw as social ills, did not particularly concern themselves with gender issues. When the CCF was founded in 1933, male delegates far outnumbered female and of those women who did become involved only a small minority had feminist goals in mind.⁸⁹ The sexual division of labour in the CCF paralleled that of Canadian society. The men were the leaders and the women were called on to “make the coffee and lick the envelopes.”⁹⁰ And women themselves were divided about the need for a women’s division within the nascent party. More conservative members predominated, and it was not until the 1960s,

⁸⁷ Jori Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930* (Manotick, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1998).

⁸⁸ Frank Underhill, “The League for Social Reconstruction,” *The Canadian Forum* XII (April 1932): 249-250.

⁸⁹ Joan Sangster, “The Role of Women in the Early CCF,” in Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 118.

⁹⁰ Sangster, “The Role of Women in the Early CCF,” 123.

when the CCF became the NDP, that the party began to specifically address multiple issues particular to women's concerns.⁹¹ The institutional definition of gender roles paralleled other definitions, marginalizing women to construct a social dynamic in which men predominated.

Jori Smith's friendships and associations with League members might conceivably have led her to paint a political mural representing their socialist thinking. During her years of study and work both alone (1930 to mid-1940s) and with Barbeau in Charlevoix County (1936), Smith had been particularly interested in capturing images of children, emphasizing the sadness of their poverty.⁹² Along with her political affiliations, such concern for representing the plight of the working classes might also have contributed to Smith's desire to create a political painting. However, it was to Barbeau's influence rather than to her political friends that she looked for the inspiration for her one and only mural work, a painting of individuals engaged in playing games common to the people of Quebec (fig. 40). That the mural illustrated games thought of as typical to the Québécois is implied in its title, *The Games of Quebec*. Reproductions of the mural show a loosely painted but detailed surface, filled with figures and with a sense of movement appropriate to the notion of the activity surrounding sports and contests. Only men and children are pictured; only men are engaged in activities - playing croquet, cards and pool. The children are positioned as observers. Women are noticeably absent. Smith

⁹¹ Thelma McCormack, Politics and the Hidden Injuries of Gender. Feminism and the Making of the Welfare State (Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 1991), 23-24.

⁹² Smith and her husband Jean Palardy first visited Charlevoix County in 1930 and spent summers and occasional winters there in various rented accommodations until 1940, when they bought their own home at Petite-Rivière-Saint-François. They lived in the home until the mid-1940s.

made many preliminary sketches for the mural, but painted the final work directly on the wall without cartoons. She simply “started at one end of the wall and went right down to the other.”⁹³

Smith painted the work for Mont Tremblant Lodge in the Laurentian Mountains near Montreal, in 1940-41. The mural was destroyed in 1994, with no public protest or response, when the building was demolished, and Smith owns only black and white photographs of her painting. The colours, described by *Canadian Art* as “rich and intense - the horseshoe pitch, vivid green; the croquet ground, sandy; the jeu de poche section, green again; the mountains, blue, the costumes, bright blue, green, red,”⁹⁴ are therefore no longer available for visual inspection.

The commissioners of the mural were in a hurry. They were expecting the Christmas rush of visitors and they wanted the Lodge’s wall, five feet by sixty feet, decorated in five days; Smith completed the commission in three and a half.⁹⁵ The topic for the mural was left to her. Since the Lodge was to incorporate a games room, the idea of representing the games of Quebec seemed to her to be appropriate.⁹⁶ Smith had shared an interest with her husband, Jean Palardy (they married in 1930) and also with Barbeau, in the folk customs and artifacts of Quebec, traveling extensively around the province, especially Charlevoix County, in the thirties and forties to seek out works and

⁹³ Jori Smith quoted in “Games of Quebec: A Lively Mural,” *Canadian Art* 2 (December 1944 - January 1945): 68.

⁹⁴ “Games of Quebec: A Lively Mural,” 69.

⁹⁵ “Games of Quebec: A Lively Mural” 68.

⁹⁶ Author’s interview with Jori Smith, Montreal, 14 January 14 1998.

simultaneously familiarizing herself with the subjects for the later mural work.⁹⁷ She later documented these experiences in a book entitled *Charlevoix County, 1930*.⁹⁸

Smith studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montreal between 1923 and 1928, when she left in frustration at the school's insistence on an academic curriculum. Marian Scott described Smith as the student whom

[e]veryone expected...to get this scholarship at the end of the year. They sent a student to Paris for a year. She didn't get it, and so she took the year over, since everyone was really certain that she would get it the second year. The authorities took her aside towards the end of the second year and said '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 taxpayer's money, and we would be criticized for it.'⁹⁹

Smith's great interest lay in portrait painting, and she shunned the landscape work being pursued by her contemporaries in order to develop that interest.¹⁰⁰ She showed her work at the Art Association of Montreal between 1928 and 1934, and in 1938 she was the only woman among the founding members of the Eastern Group of Painters. She also became a member of the Contemporary Arts Society (1939). Formed by John Lyman in large part as a counter to the work of the Group of Seven, the Contemporary Arts Society encouraged non-academic painting without supporting any particular school or style.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ National Archives of Canada, <http://www.archives.ca>, Jori Smith fonds, Biography.

⁹⁸ Jori Smith, *Charlevoix County, 1930*.

⁹⁹ Marian Scott quoted in Cathy Hobart, "Art Transformed," *Branching Out* XII (1980): 13.

¹⁰⁰ Dorota Kozinska, "A Life in Art," *The Gazette*, Montreal, 25 January 1997: 16.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Varley, *The Contemporary Arts Society: Montreal 1939-1948* (Edmonton: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1980).

Much of Jori Smith's *oeuvre* consists of strongly-modeled, massive, pared-down figures. When she came to the painting of the mural, however, she adopted a different style - a style unique to the mural, but one that has similarities to easel paintings of the same topic by other artists. Kathleen (Kay) Daly (1898-1994), for example, painted *Le Soirée Canadienne*, c.1935-36, using a very similar sense of movement to enliven her characters.¹⁰² In Smith's mural the figures have lost the massive quality that is typical of much of her easel painting, and the reference to action and movement is in contradiction to the still focus of many of her portraits. Perhaps thinking of the mural more as a "fun" project than as a serious venture resulted in a looser style, and the speed with which the work was created, in conjunction with the topic itself, meant that a feeling of action and motion would be the result. Smith's chosen subject was an unusual one in mural painting by women; very few murals devoted to games and sports have emerged. One other that bears mentioning is by an artist named Helen Chisholm (b. 1921) who painted in c.1941 a mural devoted to sports, specifically to hockey, football and rugby. The work by Chisholm, installed originally in a restaurant no longer in existence, near Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, has now disappeared and no information about the artist has surfaced in any source beyond a brief newspaper clipping.¹⁰³

The construction of the Québécois people in Smith's murals very much paralleled the construction of Native Canadians in the work of artists such as Savage, Claire, Birchall and Coombs. Their vastly different identities notwithstanding, the two groups

¹⁰² Daly was another artist influenced by the work of Barbeau. Beginning in 1931 she painted scenes of French-Canadian life in Charlevoix County and she illustrated Barbeau's book *Kingdom of the Saguenay*.

¹⁰³ "Honor Student: Timmins Miss Displays Promise as Artist," *The Press* (Timmins) 22 February 1941, 1.

were conflated in the elite imaginary to form a homogeneous group of “disappearing” peoples with ideological similarities.¹⁰⁴ By recording the Québécois at play, Smith contributed in several ways to the construction of Canadian identity. In the first place, the underlying basis of the mural helped to shape the understanding of a Québécois culture - with its stereotypical *joie de vivre* (such as that painted by Cornelius Krieghoff) - as an entity that was to be recorded prior to its disappearance. This in turn contributed to the definition of anglophone Canadians as “not French,” and, specifically, as serious and less childlike. In addition, and importantly for this dissertation, by eliminating women as subjects of her games mural, Smith reiterated the concept that women belonged in their homes and that they were not, and should not be, present in the public “playing fields.” Thus, the theoretical underpinnings of the work functioned to reiterate the definition of what it meant to be Canadian, with its multiple exclusions, including the marginalization of women’s experiences.

As the mural work by the women in this chapter demonstrates, identity is constructed not only through the imposition of patriarchal discourse but through the acquiescence and contributions of women. Artists such as Anne Savage worked at the margins of artistic societies such as the Group of Seven, their production sufficiently like that of the dominant discourse to guarantee their inclusion. Perhaps more importantly, however, the similarity of work such as that by Savage to prevailing movements in Canadian art meant that it did not disrupt the “canon,” and, in fact, guaranteed its

¹⁰⁴ On the topic of the conflation of Native Canadians, Québécois, and the mining towns of Ontario see Boutilier, *4 Women Who Painted in the 1930s and 1940s*, 29.

continuation. The language of the Canadian landscape as “not British” was reiterated in Savage’s painting. By reiterating the dominant constructions of identity without metaphorically inserting women into the otherwise-male landscape, Savage reinforced the status quo. This is not intended, however, to be read as a criticism of her work, but more as an observation focused on the ways in which identity is constructed, and how acquiescence through the repetition of the idea that what is happening is “natural,” social systems are held in place. Similarly, women, most particularly White, middle- and upper-class women, have participated with men in the construction of Canadian identity as a series of “not” definitions, and have, by implication, simultaneously contributed to their own inferior position. Nevertheless, women have not remained unwitting pawns in the game of social domination. As artists, Anne Savage, Lorna Claire, Jane Lippert Birchall, Edith Grace Coombs, and Jori Smith actively participated in the history of Canadian art and their works for public venues stand as representations of their public participation. In the following chapter, I will suggest that women’s marginalization from centres of domination has been, in part, controlled through their lack of access to educational resources and through the discouragement of their pursuit of socially valued professional careers. It is perhaps the constraints placed on women’s access to education that functions most seriously as the primary means that has kept women absent from the public domain.

CHAPTER FOUR - EDUCATION

Equal in importance to the discourses already discussed surrounding women's history, the significance of religious influences, and the various ways that Canadian identity has been defined, lies the issue of women's access to education. Feminist thinkers have suggested that the perpetuation of social structures dominated by men has both facilitated and been facilitated by "male control of the production and dissemination of knowledge."¹ Lack of access to adequate education has contributed in large measure to women's inability to choose their vocations, and the repeated insistence in historical writings that women prefer homemaking and motherhood as their (unpaid) employment is prevalent. Turn-of-the-century authors suggested that there were physiological reasons that prevented women from succeeding in educational endeavors. In 1875, "Fidelis," for example, warned that "the more delicately organized and less vigorous physical system of woman, with a brain some five or six ounces lighter than that of man, cannot stand so great a strain, either mental or physical, as that of man, and that consequently the average girl should not be expected to do as much work, either mental or physical, as the average boy."² A few years later, in 1884, a writer in *The Week* addressed the same issue by arguing that, when it came to women's education, "[f]ew of them are equal to the strain, and fewer still inclined to make the effort."³ In addition, if women were to be educated at

¹ Ruth Roach Pierson, "Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education," *Resources for Feminist Research* 13 (March 1984): 1.

² Fidelis, "Higher Education for Women," *The Canadian Monthly and National Review* VII (January to June 1875): 145.

³ J.M. Loes, "Higher Education for Exceptional Women and Occupation for All," *The Week* (31 July 1884), 551.

all, the main goal of their education was to make them better wives and mothers, not to support any aspirations they might have for independent lives. Women were destined to aim to become “[t]houghtful, high-toned, earnest, intelligently-helpful women...realizations of Wordsworth’s beautiful ideal; to beautify with womanly and Christian graces, refinement and culture, many a future Canadian home.”⁴ The only women who needed an education were those unfortunates who could not successfully procure a husband and find happiness in homemaking and motherhood. These few failures were to have sufficient education to allow them to be independent, but only if circumstances barred their admission to the preferred state of marriage.⁵ Other authors found that the educated woman was essentially a failure in every circumstance. In 1908, an article in *Toronto Saturday Night* listed three different kinds of businesswoman - “The kind that marries [that a woman would leave her place of employment upon marriage was assumed], the discontented, unhappy kind, uneven in its work, and the desexed kind.”⁶ Women of the desexed kind, according to the article, had failed as women and had additionally failed in their attempts to enter professional ranks. This was evidenced by the fact that there were few women who became physicians, lawyers, executive heads of colleges or editors - the author seeming to have no difficulty with the tautology. The article concluded by asserting that “Only as the mother, the Madonna della Sedia, with

⁴ Fidelis, “Higher Education for Women,” 157.

⁵ Loes, “Higher Education for Exceptional Women,” 551.

⁶ “Is the Professional Woman a Failure?” *Toronto Saturday Night* 21 (27 June 1908), 14.

babe in arms, little ones clustered about her knee, does any woman attain the magnificent serenity, the poise of man.”⁷

This chapter will consider the broad issue of Canadian women’s relationship to education, asking particularly what it is that we perceive as knowledge, who decides what constitutes education, who controls its dissemination, and how these issues are relevant to women. Because the subject of education - and the subsets of that subject such as science and medicine that form the focus of this chapter - are politically charged as blatant sites of women’s exclusion from professional public lives, murals on these topics are bound to lend themselves to ideological examination. Four murals will provide diverse focal points. First, the broad issue of education will be explored through two murals painted in 1941 and 1957. The first was completed by Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904-49) for Fisher Vocational School in Woodstock, New Brunswick and the second by Rosemary Kilbourn (b.1931) for the dining-hall of the University of Western Ontario. The gendered roles played by the figures in the two works will represent the stereotype of women’s roles in institutions of higher learning. Second, I will address more specifically the issue of women’s marginalization from high-profile, professional fields, beginning with their relationships to the field of medicine, and referring to a mural by Mary Filer (b. 1920). Painted in 1954, Filer’s mural, *The Advance of Neurology*, provides a wide scope for the examination of several feminist issues, including the marginalization of women from medical practice, the female body as pathology (as opposed to the male who stereotypically represents anatomy), and issues of censorship as they relate to gender.

⁷ “Is the Professional Woman a Failure?” 14.

Third, I will look at what is certainly one of the most unusual murals that a woman has painted in Canada, Marian Dale Scott's *Endocrinology* (1941-43). Scott painted the work for the Department of Histology at McGill University, insisting on the potential of the relationship between art and science, studying the human endocrine system for over a year before commencing her painting, but ultimately representing the generic human in the centre of her work as male. Scott's incursions into the scientific field, which continued to influence her work for years after the painting of the mural, represent a study that is not typically undertaken by women. All three of the murals in this final chapter are extant and *in situ*.

A HISTORY OF DISSENT

The struggle to understand the history of women's marginalized relationships to education in the Western world is a lengthy one. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, written in 1405 in Paris by Christine de Pisan (c.1363-c.1430), Christine collected the stories of women's lives and recorded them to refute the writings of men who, according to her, "have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behaviour.... They all concur in one conclusion: that the behaviour of women is inclined to and full of every vice."⁸ In particular, Christine attempted in her compilation to show that women had an affinity for learning. Her work was revolutionary: she insisted that women should be

⁸ Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* Earl Jeffrey Richards, trans., (New York: Persea Books, 1982), 4.

educated.⁹ “If it were customary to send daughters to school like sons,” she wrote, “and if they were then taught the natural sciences, they would learn as thoroughly and understand the subtleties of all the arts and sciences as well as sons.”¹⁰ Christine was “a highly respected and widely disseminated voice on the status of women.”¹¹ There is no little irony in the fact that the issues she addressed in her medieval manuscript are still relevant and under consideration today, almost six hundred years since the time of her writing, particularly, in terms of this chapter, as she addressed the issue of education for women.

Christine may have been one of the earliest authors whose concerns about the lack of educational opportunities for women have survived, but she was certainly not the last. In attempting to outline a history of challenges to the male dominance of educational structures, Ruth Roach Pierson of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education selected three representative moments in the European history of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Using as her examples three women who spoke out against women’s marginalization within educational hierarchies - Mary Astell (1666 or 1668-1731), Mary Wollstonecraft (died 1797) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) - Pierson argues that women’s demands for equal rights to educational opportunities have paralleled the radicalization of women’s demands for equality in general.¹² That is to say, as women have become increasingly aware of the fundamentally gendered nature of society, their demands for access to education have simultaneously grown. Mary Astell,

⁹ Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, xxviii.

¹⁰ Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 63.

¹¹ Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, xx.

¹² Pierson, “Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education,” 1.

in writings such as *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (Part One published in 1694 and Part Two in 1697) and *Some Reflections upon Marriage Occasioned by the Duke and Duchess of Mazarine's Case* (1700), suggested ways that women's access to education might be improved.

Conservative in her beliefs in a necessarily hierarchical ordering of society to preserve good government, Astell nevertheless challenged the logic that reinforced the belief that men were in power *because* they were superior. She argued that the claim that men are superior by nature was no demonstration of their natural superiority, only further evidence of their social dominance.¹³ She sought a solution in education for women.

Mary Wollstonecraft addressed many of the same issues a century later.¹⁴ Unlike Astell, she was anti-aristocratic and had egalitarian visions for the future of society. She addressed her comments to middle-class rather than upper-class women. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1792, and focused on the exclusion of women from political structures. Wollstonecraft blamed male sexual desire for the creation of women who were decorative and useless rather than educated. She sought social changes through her belief that both female and male children should receive an identical education. According to Pierson, Wollstonecraft believed that women and men had the right "to an education based on the assumption of the sexual and intellectual equality of

¹³ Pierson, "Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education," 2.

¹⁴ For more information on Mary Wollstonecraft, see: Maria J. Falio, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Mary Lowe-Evans, ed., *Critical Essays on Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1998).

girls and boys, women and men. This right to education was fundamental to all the other rights of social and political self-determination.”¹⁵

Pierson describes the passage of time from Wollstonecraft’s age to the era of Virginia Woolf as “quite a leap, for they stand at opposite ends of the vast social transformation subsumed under the term ‘the Victorian Age.’”¹⁶ Born into a middle-class household in 1882, Woolf lamented her lack of access to Oxford or Cambridge. She saw the separate spheres of public and private as “vitiating by the relations of dominance and subordination.... Men’s dominance in the private sphere depended on women’s exclusion from or restricted access to the public sphere as much as men’s dominance in the public sphere rested on the relegation of women to domestic labour in the private sphere.”¹⁷ In order for change to occur women must have access to education to enable them to achieve economic independence. For Pisan, Astell, Wollstonecraft, and Woolf, and for feminist thinkers in general, the role of education in the gendering of space is paramount, for it is generally only the educated who have access to positions of power in public forums.

WOMEN’S ACCESS TO CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

In Canada, the issue of elementary and high school education for children of both genders has never been in much question - early education for both girls and boys was deemed both necessary and desirable in most locations and across most class divisions

¹⁵ Pierson, “Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education,” 4.

¹⁶ Pierson, “Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education,” 4.

¹⁷ Pierson, “Historical Moments in the Development of a Feminist Perspective on Education,” 6.

for as long as both have been available.¹⁸ The situation changed, however, when women began to seek access to universities. In 1900, the National Council of Women of Canada produced a book for distribution at the Paris International Exposition. In the section devoted to “Professions Open to Women,” the writer noted that the issue of higher education was under debate, but women’s “unrestricted admission to the learned professions would be out of harmony with the spirit of the country.”¹⁹ Many educators felt that women should not be attending schools of higher learning, and should instead be getting married. In addition, there was a belief that it was unwise in the interest of maintaining morals to allow young men and young women to be in close proximity.²⁰ No university in Canada opened its doors to female students prior to 1862, when Mount Allison permitted women to attend classes. The first degree, a Bachelor of Science, was granted to Grace Annie Lockhart in 1875. After the opening of Mount Allison to women students, other Canadian universities followed suit: Queen’s in 1878, Dalhousie in 1881, McGill and University College, Toronto, in 1884.²¹ Admission to Canadian universities did not, however, guarantee access to all the courses. Although women were permitted to attend several universities in Canada by the 1880s, this did not grant them admission to the most respected professions - the male bastions of science, medicine, law and

¹⁸ Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., The Proper Sphere: Women’s Place in Canadian Society (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 119.

¹⁹ Women of Canada: Their Life and Work Montreal: National Council of Women of Canada, 1975 [1900], 57.

²⁰ Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 119.

²¹ Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 120.

theology. McGill University, for example, did not permit women to enter its Faculty of Medicine until 1917.

At the end of the nineteenth century in Canada, women - particularly middle-class women - began to express their dissatisfaction with “the uselessness of a dependent existence.”²² Articles began to appear in the media expressing such sentiments as “I want to know why it is that I, a well-brought-up lady-like...girl, am so utterly helpless and dependent. I have not been taught anything that is of the slightest earthly use to anybody in the whole world.”²³ But the majority continued to oppose higher education for women, fearful that educated women would undermine the sanctity of the family.

Although much has changed in today’s society, and higher education for both genders is taken for granted in wealthier sectors, women, although they make up the majority of students in universities, continue to remain concentrated in the humanities and social sciences, fields that have less potential in terms of earnings after graduation. In addition, women’s representation among university graduates also declines sharply the higher the level, with the exception of young women between twenty-five and twenty-nine.²⁴ Issues concerning women’s relationships to education have not been completely resolved.

²² Linda Kealey, ed., A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s - 1920s (Toronto: The Women’s Educational Press, 1979), 1.

²³ “A Girl of the Period,” Canadian Monthly iv (1880): 624. Cited by Cook and Mitchinson, The Proper Sphere, 65.

²⁴ “The Status of Women: Women and Education and Training,” <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/publish/beijing5/education-training-e.html>.

PEGI NICOL MACLEOD AND ROSEMARY KILBOURN

Mural paintings devoted to the topic of education in general, such as those painted by Pegi Nicol MacLeod for Fisher Vocational School in New Brunswick in 1941 and Rosemary Kilbourn for the University of Western Ontario in 1957 provide a visual reminder of the history of women's relationships to educational issues.²⁵ Born near Ottawa in 1904, Pegi Nicol studied with Franklin Brownell at the Ottawa Art Association in 1919-21. During her single year of study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montreal in 1922, she won five medals for her work.²⁶ Like many other artists in this dissertation, MacLeod was involved with Marius Barbeau. She traveled to Western Canada with him in 1927 and 1928, painting many representations of First Nations peoples. In 1933, a series of French-Canadian stories were adapted by Barbeau for publication in *La Presse*, and MacLeod drew illustrations for two of them, *Legende française du St. Laurent* and *La deliverance des loups-garous*.²⁷ MacLeod was a member of the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (1936) and the Canadian Group of Painters (1937), and she exhibited with the Ontario Society of Artists and the Royal Canadian Academy.

Barbeau did not, however, directly influence MacLeod's painting of the mural for Fisher Vocational School. In 1934, two years after her Montreal studio had burned down and she had returned to live in Ottawa with her parents, MacLeod moved to Toronto.

²⁵ There are also other murals by women devoted to the subject of education. For example, the one painted for Waterloo Collegiate in 1960 by Jane Lippert Birchall (see Chapter Three).

²⁶ F. Maud Brown, *Breaking Barriers: Eric Brown and the National Gallery* (Ottawa: Society for Art Publications, 1964), 67.

²⁷ Marius Barbeau, "Legende Française du St. Laurent," *La Presse* (Montreal) 7 janvier 1933, 42; Marius Barbeau, "La Deliverance des Loups-garous," *La Presse* (Montreal) 4 mars 1933, 40. In both publications three illustrations were included, all six signed by MacLeod.

While living there she had the opportunity to practice the painting of large-format works through her employment by Eaton's in 1936. The window designer for Eaton's, René Cera, created large displays with assistance from artists such as MacLeod, Paraskeva Clark, Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer and Caven Atkins. All these artists painted large mural-like decorations for the store windows, and MacLeod additionally painted three murals for the interior of the store, for the restaurant and the dining room.²⁸ In 1937, she married businessman Norman MacLeod and the couple moved to New York where her husband worked for an engineering firm. MacLeod had reported that painting the murals for Eaton's had changed her sense of space, and her work in New York was described as demanding the vast space of murals,²⁹ both references presaging her painting of the mural under discussion here. MacLeod and her husband remained in New York until MacLeod's death in 1949, although MacLeod herself spent every summer in Canada. Beginning in 1942 she taught summer classes at the Art Centre Summer School at the University of New Brunswick. In 1944-45, she was commissioned by the National Gallery of Canada to record the lives of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. She created one hundred and ten pieces, now in the collection of the Canadian War Museum.³⁰

As a married woman with a child, MacLeod found it difficult to juggle the demands of homemaking and motherhood with her own professional aspirations. In 1937

²⁸ Joan Murray, ed. *Daffodils in Winter: The Life and Letters of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904-1949* (Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1984), 31.

²⁹ Donald Buchanan, "Pegi Nicol MacLeod 1904-1949," *Canadian Art* 6 (Summer 1949): 159.

³⁰ Laura Brandon, "War Art of Atlantic Canada, Pt. 2," <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/courage/warartofatlanticcanadapt.2/html>.

she wrote to her friend Marian Scott, “How did you ever do it? Be a bride, mother and paint? You can see by the question that I have found out the truth. There isn’t time to live.”³¹ MacLeod’s friendship with Scott meant that she was exposed to the thinking of Scott’s husband Frank Scott, a political activist who was among the founding members of the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), an organization MacLeod actively supported. MacLeod was also friends with Paraskeva Clark, whose painting *Petroushka* arguably numbers among the few Canadian paintings by women of any period with an overt political content.³² She was also closely associated with Dr. Norman Bethune (her mural painting for his home - now lost - has already been mentioned in this dissertation.) MacLeod was committed to socialist causes, supplying drawings for *The Canadian Forum*, the mouthpiece of the LSR, and contributing to the cooperative venture that was the Picture Loan Society in Toronto.³³ The Society, founded in 1936, sought space where artists could hold exhibitions, and rented out works.

When she was invited to do some mural painting in New Brunswick, MacLeod already had experience and was prepared for the task. During her tenure at the Art Centre Summer School of the University of New Brunswick, she painted two murals for the Fisher Vocational School in nearby Woodstock (fig. 41³⁴). The murals were removed

³¹ Murray, *Daffodils in Winter*, 131.

³² *Petroushka* was based on the story of five striking workers killed by Chicago police. It shows a puppet policeman beating a worker while the audience laughs.

³³ Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 16-17.

³⁴ I would like to thank Rosemary Joly for providing me with images of MacLeod’s murals, as they appeared *in situ*.

from the school's walls in 1969, and exist today only in fragments stored in the attic.³⁵

According to MacLeod's 1941 correspondence, the murals came about as the result of an invitation she had received to a tea for summer teachers at the school, where the principal of Fisher Vocational, Grace Caughlin, invited her to paint the mural. MacLeod agreed to do it in exchange for material for clothing for herself and her daughter.³⁶ "Every artist should get off a few murals in a life time," MacLeod would later write. "They clarify the mind. They use up all the ideas that straight painting does not need.... The material spaces in murals are as wide open as the mental."³⁷ MacLeod had many ideas for the designs for the mural, wanting to include representations of figures important to the establishment of the school, such as the founder and the principal, representations of the importance of agriculture to the community, and images referring to social life.³⁸ The mural was created at little expense to the school, since it was painted on fabric that had been ordered to create curtains for a church, but never used.

The major theme portrayed by the work was the benefits to be reaped from vocational training, an appropriate theme since this was the school's pedagogical focus. In one portion, a young man looks backwards "to the city in which he had once dreamed of living, but which he has now put behind him because of his new interest in the land. His parents dig and delve in the old way, but his own new knowledge will enable him to

³⁵ Rosemary Joly, "Pegi Nicol MacLeod," unpublished lecture delivered 23 November 1999, Concordia University.

³⁶ Murray, *Daffodils in Winter*, 162-163.

³⁷ Pegi Nichol [sic] MacLeod, "Adventure in Murals," *Maritime Art* 2 (December 1941): 37.

³⁸ MacLeod, "Adventure in Murals," 38.

modernize their farm.”³⁹ The theme is elaborated in the mural with such symbols as a set of hands coming out of a book and holding crops (eggs and vegetables) representing an enlargement of production - the result of new farming techniques taught at the school (fig. 42).

Throughout the section of the mural devoted to the technological advances that education would bring to farming, progress is achieved and reported by young men. Young women also play a part in the painting, but the role defined for them by MacLeod is that of the stereotyped activities considered suitable to women of the time. These young women appeared on the opposite wall, the distinction providing a physical definition of the separation of appropriate gender roles. The figures worked at a loom, sat sewing, kneaded bread, and were even represented by an image of the Virgin Mary, accompanied by a lamb and a child. A table set for a meal completed the definition of the women’s roles (fig. 43). Hands figure prominently in both murals. In the mural devoted to those activities stereotyped male, the hands emerge from a book, elaborating men’s relationship with education. In contrast, the hands representing women’s productions knead bread, reiterating women’s relationship to nurturing and to the home. The close gendering of activities in the painting prescribed the socially accepted roles that the boys and the girls of the school were expected to grow into, and each of the two genders could look to the walls to find a reflection of what would be expected of them as they grew. Like many women artists before her, Pegi Nicol reiterated gendered expectations of men and women, simultaneously denying those expectations by painting a mural for a public venue. In so doing, she blurred the boundaries between nature and culture, the division

³⁹ MacLeod, “Adventure in Murals,” 38.

into which men and women were so clearly divided in her mural, in the same way that women as mural painters blur the public and the private.

MacLeod's own complex and possibly ambivalent feelings about her work were reiterated in a statement she made following the completion of the murals. In discussing the many ideas she had for the paintings, and the number of them that she would simply be unable to incorporate, she commented that "there were so many motives for that mural that there are enough designs left for three or four good size hooked rugs."⁴⁰ Hooked rugs were a medium in which MacLeod worked fairly often. By referencing a medium that was stereotypically associated with women's work, and suggesting it as a platform to "use up" her abundant ideas, MacLeod balanced between acknowledging herself and her work as women's production, and simultaneously reiterating the stereotyped ideas of gendered productions that she illustrated in the murals. Her brief statement is a concise summary of some women's attitudes to their artistic creations.

MacLeod's mural in Maritime Canada presages the later work done by Rosemary Kilbourn for the University of Western Ontario in 1957. Kilbourn takes the gendered roles prescribed by MacLeod for students at high school level and elaborates their gendered outcome in a university setting. Kilbourn graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1953 with a medal for drawing and painting. For the next three years, 1953-56, she lived in London, England and her work was accepted in the Royal Academy summer show and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.⁴¹ After her sojourn in England, Kilbourn

⁴⁰ MacLeod, "Adventure in Murals," 38. MacLeod worked in a variety of media, including designing and making clothes, illustration, set design, and rug hooking. Murray, *Daffodils in Winter*, 15.

⁴¹ Rosemary Kilbourn, "Biography," unpublished typed document, artist's file, McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario.

returned to Canada, and taught at McMaster University (1959-60, 1969-70), the Artist's Workshop, Toronto (1959-65), and Central Technical School (1959-65). Beginning in 1960, she pursued a career that focused on work in stained glass and wood engraving and her stained glass windows are installed in several Toronto churches.⁴² In addition, she has completed windows in Ottawa and Timmins. Her wood engravings have illustrated books by such authors as Farley Mowat (*The Desperate People*, 1958), her brother, William Kilbourn (*The Firebrand*, 1956 and *The Elements Combined*, 1959⁴³), and Florence Wyle (*The Shadow of the Year*, 1976). In 1977 Kilbourn became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy.⁴⁴

In 1957 a competition was held to design and execute a mural painting for the dining-hall at the University of Western Ontario⁴⁵ (fig. 44). During Kilbourn's years of study at the Ontario College of Art, she had taken mural painting classes with Will Ogilvie (1901-89), who taught there between 1947 and 1957. In addition, Kilbourn admired Ogilvie's large mural in Hart House Chapel, commissioned in 1936 by the Massey Foundation, and she wished to do some similar work.⁴⁶ Ogilvie's classical figures

⁴² Kilbourn has created stained glass windows in Toronto for St. James Cathedral, St. Thomas on Huron Street, St. Timothy's on Tedburgh Road, St. John's in York Mills, and Kingsway Lampton United.

⁴³ William Kilbourn played an important role in fostering Toronto culture. Much of his writing was devoted to commemorating Toronto history and the arts in the life of the city. He was a member of many organizations, including the Toronto Arts Council, and he was the recipient of many literary awards during the course of his career.

⁴⁴ One of the only published sources on Kilbourn's work is Colin MacDonald, *Dictionary of Canadian Artists*, vol. 3, (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1989), 639-640.

⁴⁵ The mural is in Somerville House in the lower level entry on the University of Western Ontario campus.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Rosemary Kilbourn, 6 January 2000. In c.1969, Ogilvie designed a stained glass window (5' x 4'), based on the commissioner, Vincent Massey's, love of nature, for Hart House chapel, and Rosemary Kilbourn executed it.

with sculptural faces provided a model for Kilbourn's figures, which have a similar classical look (fig. 45). It was Ogilvie who suggested to Kilbourn that she submit a design to the mural painting competition, and Kilbourn was the winner.⁴⁷ The subject for the painting was not dictated by the commissioners (presumably some facet of life at the University of Western Ontario was wanted, but this is not certain), but was left to the artist's discretion. Kilbourn chose to paint representations of the various faculties in the university, depicting "the main branches of learning and creative endeavor of mankind"⁴⁸ set onto a stylized map of Canada. Her preliminary drawing was accepted without changes and she executed the work without assistance in oil on canvas that had been affixed to the wall prior to painting. The design was drawn full-scale in advance and a traditional pouncing technique, tapping charcoal through holes punched in the outline on paper and thereby transferring the image to the wall, was used.⁴⁹ The choice of paint colour was subdued, presumably to reflect the serious nature of the subject. The figures are organized in two rows that create a stable structure, suited to the impression the commissioners would doubtless have wanted Kilbourn to create as representative of the ideal of the concrete foundation resulting from access to education. After the completion of this one work, Kilbourn did no further mural painting.

As she stated in a recent interview, Kilbourn was confident, even in 1957, that she could contend on an equal footing with potential male painters in the competition for the

⁴⁷ Rosemary Kilbourn does not know how many other participants submitted sketches or who the other participants were, and this information does not appear to have been recorded. Author's interview with Rosemary Kilbourn, 6 January 2000; McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario.

⁴⁸ Letter to the author from Rosemary Kilbourn, undated, received 21 January 2000.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Rosemary Kilbourn, 6 January 2000.

mural commission.⁵⁰ Although she had studied mural painting during her years at the Ontario College of Art, she had never met any other female mural painters who might have provided role models, but she believed that Emily Carr was Canada's finest artist. Since Carr was both a woman and successful, Kilbourn saw no reason why she herself could not also succeed. In spite of the confidence she felt in her ability to compete in the mural competition and to complete the painting after winning it, however, she created gendered stereotypes to represent the characters in her work. In fact, Kilbourn's mural neatly delineates the gendering of education and the roles women and men were expected to play in the educational hierarchy of the 1950s. There are ten figures in the work, six men and four women. All six men represent a particular professional discipline, but only one of the four women plays a similar role. The men are a theology student, a university graduate, a doctor, an engineer, a scientist and a judge. Robes and a clerical collar identify the theology student. A radiating sun behind his head attests to his connection with the creator and the goodness of his mission. The graduate wears the traditional gown and hat and looks into the distance, his vision trained on the future that awaits him. The engineer holds a model bridge and a triangle, a goal and tool of his trade. The scientist holds trees and buildings, and scientific equipment in the shape of laboratory flasks behind him confirms his identity. The judge also wears robes and reads a scroll unrolled on the desk before him. The male doctor examines a female patient who is lying on a table. Of the four women, one is the patient, two are students of an unidentified discipline, and the fourth is an arts student, the sole woman in the work who is associated with a faculty in an institution of higher learning. She holds a violin, although she is not

⁵⁰ Author's interview with Rosemary Kilbourn, 6 January 2000.

playing it, and a traditional mask signifying theatre (in this case neither comedy nor tragedy - the expression is neutral) behind her confirms the faculty she represents. The two female students are obviously studying but their subject is not defined. They appear smaller and younger than the rest of the figures, thus clarifying their roles as students rather than graduates. Thus, only one of the four women in the work is assigned an active educational position, and that position is in a faculty that has stereotypically been filled by women as students (although not by women at the professorial or administrative levels). The sciences, theology, law and medicine are all defined by the work as male territory.⁵¹ In this sense, the mural functions as a visual index of the expectations of both women and men when it came to education in the 1950s. As the precursor to professions in the public arena, access to education serves to predict the future status that the individual will enjoy. Women in the 1950s, if Kilbourn's mural is to be believed, were not expected to enter any of the professional, higher-status fields. Of the professions where women have had difficulty making incursions I will look particularly at medicine and science, using two murals based on those themes to elaborate the issues surrounding their production.

WOMEN AND MEDICINE

Of all the professions that people have performed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, possibly no other is held in as high esteem as the practice of medicine. In the

⁵¹ Note an interesting contrast in the work of the American painter Lydia Emmet (1866-1952), painted for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. She created a decorative panel called Art, Science and Literature for the Women's Pavilion and all the figures in it were women. Perhaps the venue influenced her choice.

nineteenth century in Canada, the foremost problem that faced women who wished to study medicine was finding access to a medical school, the majority of Canadian schools refusing admission to women. The Toronto School of Medicine and the Medical Faculty at Queen's University had granted women limited admission in the early 1870s and the early 1880s respectively, but female students were met with a great deal of hostility, and "pressure from male students and faculty ultimately resulted in the re-imposition of bans on women at both medical schools by 1883."⁵² Demands for medical training persisted, however, and in the fall of 1883 the Kingston Women's Medical College and the Women's Medical College, Toronto, were both established.⁵³ In 1879, two women, Augusta Stowe and Elizabeth Smith, graduated as medical doctors from the School of Medicine at Queen's University. These two women were the first women to graduate from Canadian schools, although two other Canadian women, Emily Jennings Stowe (1831-1903) and Jennie Trout (1841-1921) had graduated a few years earlier from American schools of medicine (Stowe in 1867 and Trout in 1875) and had returned to Canada to practice medicine.⁵⁴ Emily Stowe worked as a doctor in Toronto after 1867, although she was not licensed by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons. Jennie Trout was the first woman in Canada to receive this accreditation. The attempts by these women to breach the wall that surrounded and prevented women's admission to medical schools in Canada paralleled the struggle for attainment of other rights. It was Emily and

⁵² Lykke de la Cour and Rose Sheinin, "The Ontario Medical College for Women, 1883-1906: Lessons from Gender-Separation in Medical Education," in Marianne Gosztanyi Ainley, ed., Despite the Odds: Essays on Canadian Women and Science (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1990), 112.

⁵³ De la Cour and Sheinin, "The Ontario Medical College for Women," 112.

⁵⁴ Augusta Stowe was Emily Stowe's daughter.

Augusta Stowe who, in 1876, started the Toronto Women's Literary Club, a "ladylike camouflage for a hotbed of suffrage sentiment."⁵⁵ In 1883 the club became the Toronto Women's Suffrage Association.

By 1894 financial constraints had forced the medical college at Queen's to close, leaving the Women's Medical College in Toronto as the only location in Canada where women could continue to study towards a medical degree.⁵⁶ By the early 1900s, however, the University of Western Ontario, Dalhousie University, and the University of Manitoba were all admitting women to their medical faculties, and in 1906 the Women's Medical College closed. By that time female students could study at the University of Toronto, where, according to Dr. Elizabeth Stewart, who graduated in 1907, they were "cordially hated."⁵⁷ The problems encountered by women who tried to study medicine in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were many: there were "[q]uotas on female enrolment, discrimination in admissions criteria, lack of adequate financial support, lack of positive reinforcement in career plans, as well as unpleasant and prejudicial attitudes in university classrooms [all of which resulted in] decreased numbers of female medical students...in deteriorated conditions of study."⁵⁸ The numbers of women who studied medicine continued to be low until 1945, when women began to be slowly but more

⁵⁵ Doris Anderson, *The Unfinished Revolution: The Status of Women in Twelve Countries* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1991), 200.

⁵⁶ De la Cour and Sheinin, "The Ontario Medical College for Women," 116.

⁵⁷ Cited by de la Cour and Sheinin, "The Ontario Medical College for Women," 118.

⁵⁸ De la Cour and Sheinin, "The Ontario Medical College for Women," 118.

regularly integrated into medical schools. It was not until the mid-1990s that almost equal numbers of men and women would graduate as medical doctors in Canada.⁵⁹

There is a certain irony in the idea that Canadian women should have been denied the right to study and practice medicine; long before medicine became a profession, it was women who were assigned responsibility for health in the home. In the nineteenth century, as Annmarie Adams has noted, “Women were considered ‘natural’ healers and nurturers because they bore children. Victorian scientific theories of sexual difference also saw women as passive, intuitive and tender, qualities that were considered appropriate to caring for the sick. ‘Sick-nursing’ was seen as a natural extension of domestic labour.”⁶⁰ In the nineteenth century, care of the sick, including major surgery, was done at home. It was not until the turn of the century that new knowledge of the need for sterilized surroundings changed the meaning of hospitalization.⁶¹ We might expect that, as medical practice moved into the public arena, women who had traditionally performed its rites would continue to be considered the ideal practitioners. However, the practices of healing within the home as compared to the public medical profession were not paralleled. Men became the creators of medical discourses, and, since medicine then became associated with scientific knowledge, rather than with healing arts, with men rather than with women, the “spatial metaphor,” as Nancy Duncan describes it, that located reason in public ensured that only men would become medical practitioners. If we

⁵⁹ Christel A Woodward, “Medical Students’ Attitudes toward Women: Are Medical Schools Microcosms of Society?” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (9 February 1999). <http://www.cma.ca/cmaj/vol-160/issue-3/0347.htm>, 347.

⁶⁰ Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900* (Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 81.

⁶¹ Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, 88.

then consider the idea, as Duncan puts it, of knowledge as “embodied, engendered and embedded in the material context of place and space,”⁶² then it becomes clear that women’s marginalization from medical practice functions as a metaphor for the valuing of knowledge created in public by men and remunerated, as compared to the value of knowledge created in private by women and uncompensated. We can read the differences between the roles that men and women have played in the field of medicine in a poignant mural by Mary Filer.

MARY FILER

In 1954, Dr. Wilder Penfield, founder and director of the Montreal Neurological Institute (along with Francis MacNaughton, chief neurologist and teacher at the Institute⁶³), commissioned a mural to decorate a conference room in the McConnell Pavilion of the Institute. Penfield had traveled to Mexico, and in Mexico City he had seen the recently completed mural by Diego Rivera, *The History of Medicine in Mexico: The People’s Demand for Better Health* (fig. 46) in Hospital de la Raza. He wanted a similar work for the Institute and he hired an artist by the name of Mary Filer (b. 1920) to paint it. Financier and philanthropist John Wilson McConnell, who had also financed the original construction of the McConnell Pavilion where the mural was to be housed, provided the financial support.⁶⁴ Filer had not traveled or studied in Mexico herself, but

⁶² Nancy Duncan, *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

⁶³ MacNaughton is named as one of the commissioners of the mural, but his actual involvement in the project does not seem to have been recorded anywhere. Mary Filer, however, states in an interview that she “worked closely with Frances McNaughton.” Author’s interview with Mary Filer, 28 April 1997.

⁶⁴ “Impressionnante Cérémonie” *Montreal-Matin* (15 November 1954), 32.

she studied reproductions of Rivera's work, particularly the work that Penfield admired in Hospital de la Raza. Filer created for the Montreal Neurological Institute a mural, *The Advance of Neurology* (fig. 47), with a distinctly Mexican appearance.⁶⁵ In his Hospital de la Raza work, Rivera contrasted contemporary and pre-Hispanic medicine, showing the goddess of medicine, Tlazoléotl, and Aztec medical procedures on the right side, and contemporary procedures on the left. Like Rivera's work, Filer's mural includes representations of medicine in the past and present (she also suggests a future). But Filer's work also has the appearance of a work by Rivera. The structure of the painting, with a sense of activity being the pervasive feel, and a crowd of people in close proximity very much echoes Rivera's work. Filer has also likened the structure of *The Advance of Neurology* to El Greco's *Burial of the Count of Orgaz* (fig. 48), and the two images do have compositional similarities.⁶⁶ A recumbent central figure is common to both, with concerned heads bent over the body. Both works have rows of heads behind the central motif, and the heads in El Greco's painting are portraits of real people, as are the heads in Filer's work. El Greco painted a portrait of himself into his work (immediately above the head of St. Stephen who is to the left of the body), as did Mary Filer - Filer is the nurse at the front of the mural. The second nurse is Eileen Flanagan who was Director of Nurses at the time the mural was being painted.⁶⁷ It was Penfield's wish that Filer include herself in the work. He believed that the inclusion of the artist's portrait was a Mexican tradition

⁶⁵ There are also other murals by women devoted to the subject of medicine. For example the one painted for St. Mary's Hospital, Kitchener in 1962 by Jane Lippert Birchall (see Chapter Three).

⁶⁶ Author's interview with Mary Filer, 28 April 1997.

⁶⁷ Robert Ayre, "Art Notes: Mary Filer's Work in Progress," *Montreal Star* 28 August 1954, 17.

- and the Mexican muralists did, in fact, often include self-portraits in their murals. Since he was basing the mural on Mexican work he wanted to uphold that tradition.⁶⁸

Filer's mural remains *in situ*, but it is currently behind a locked door and has recently (2001) been damaged by water over approximately five percent of its surface.⁶⁹ The room it originally adorned, on the ground floor of the Institute, has been renovated, its dimensions reduced from an original 40' x 15' to a mere 12' x 15'. The reduction in the length of the space from 40' to 12' makes it difficult, if not impossible, to stand back far enough from the mural to appreciate its complexity. The work was painted in tempera on a casein base directly on the plaster wall - an unusual medium for a Canadian mural painting. Several years ago, attempts were made to find a way to relocate the work but the expense proved prohibitive.⁷⁰ It is most unfortunate that this mural is no longer available for public viewing. In spite of the fact that it is crowded with portraits, it is not static or cluttered. The sweeps of movement and use of strong colour create a feeling of involvement and the hard work and dedication of the figures is implied in the general impression of occupation, the whole creating a sumptuous feeling of visual pleasure. Filer planned the design on holidays and weekends during 1953-54, and painted it in a ten-week period in 1954. At its completion the mural was greeted with much fanfare. The final painting was viewed by the Duchess of Kent - finished the day she arrived for the

⁶⁸ Mary Filer, "The Mural: An Episode in Time," handwritten notes for a talk on *The Advance of Neurology*, delivered c.1984. Received by the author from the artist 2 May 1997, 3.

⁶⁹ Mary Filer reports that the mural will be repaired, but that the water damage is "very disturbing." Telephone conversation between the author and Mary Filer, 12 May 2001.

⁷⁰ Interview with Dr. William Feindel, retired director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, 25 March 1997.

viewing - prior to its official opening, and Premier Maurice Duplessis unveiled it. At the ceremony, Duplessis called the mural “a very important monument. The mural is an important addition to a very important building.”⁷¹

Mary Filer was born in Edmonton, the daughter of a successful salesman and a mother and grandmother who encouraged her artistic pursuits. She studied nursing at the Regina General Hospital. After graduation, she came to Montreal (1944) and she did postgraduate work at the Montreal Neurological Institute while simultaneously studying art part-time (1944-46) with Arthur Lismer at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. At the Montreal Museum she was awarded scholarships for life drawing and book illustration.⁷² Described as “one of Montreal’s busiest citizens,”⁷³ Filer was active as a student, teacher, nurse, lecturer and practising artist from the time she arrived in Montreal until she left for the United States in 1952 to do an M.A., studying with Viktor Lowenfeld. By 1946, she was working only half days at the Neurological in order to devote more time to her art studies and in that year she became a full-time instructor in arts and crafts at St. Helen’s School for Girls in Dunham, Quebec, while simultaneously teaching art to children with Arthur Lismer at the Montreal Museum on Saturdays. In 1947 she became a full-time assistant instructor at the School of Art and Design at the Museum, teaching both adults and children, and in that same year she taught at Weston School in Westmount.⁷⁴ By 1948 she was studying with John Lyman in the Fine Arts Department at McGill, where she

⁷¹ “Duplessis Lauds Institute’s Work” Montreal Star 15 November 1954.

⁷² Mavis Gallant, “Window Artist,” The Standard (Montreal) 31 January 1948, 3.

⁷³ “Will have Views on Art Explained,” Montreal Daily Star 6 March 1951.

⁷⁴ “Art Classes Are Announced at Weston School,” The Examiner (Westmount) 20 February 1948.

also taught.⁷⁵ She graduated in 1950, the first student to complete a Bachelor of Arts from McGill's Faculty of Fine Arts,⁷⁶ and she continued teaching there until 1952. Filer was a member of the Contemporary Arts Society (1948) and the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists (1949). In 1950 she was Chair of the Exhibition Committee of the Federation of Canadian Artists, organizing traveling exhibitions of Canadian painting and displays and lectures for schools.⁷⁷

In addition to her various teaching roles, Mary Filer lectured a number of times on the subject of Canadian art. For example, she delivered a lecture on the subject of "Pictures from the Gallery-Goers Point of View" to the Guild of St. James the Apostle Church in Montreal in 1951,⁷⁸ and she lectured on Canadian Art before the Canadian Israeli Art Club in the same year.⁷⁹ In 1952, Filer left Montreal to study with Viktor Lowenfeld at Pennsylvania State University, where she obtained a Master's degree in Art Education, while simultaneously teaching part-time. Following her graduation from Pennsylvania State, Filer taught until 1955 at New York University. In 1956 she went to England and work in glass became her primary focus. She returned to Canada in 1973.

⁷⁵ In the years 1948-1952, Filer was appointed a full-time lecturer in the Department of Fine Arts at McGill. She worked as an assistant instructor in the painting and drawing studio, assistant in teacher training courses, and as a lecturer in Art History. Biographical sketch of Mary Filer, received from the artist 2 May 1997.

⁷⁶ Montreal Gazette 7 October 1950.

⁷⁷ "Coast to Coast in Art: Paintings and Drawings by Mary Filer," Canadian Art 8 (Christmas 1950): 80.

⁷⁸ "Will Have Views on Art Explained."

⁷⁹ "Israel to Honor Canadian Artists," The Herald (Montreal) 12 November 1951.

Filer has had an extensive artistic career, with over twenty solo exhibitions and many more group exhibitions in Canada, the United States and England.⁸⁰

During the time that Filer worked as a nurse at the Montreal Neurological, and for several years after she no longer worked at the Institute (1944-51), she painted window designs in poster colours throughout the building as Christmas decorations. They were painted at high speed, about fifty paintings in three days on five floors, some of the windows being quite large (7' x 5').⁸¹ All the work was done spontaneously, without preliminary drawings. The decorations were outlined in black, creating an effect such as that of stained glass,⁸² the precursors, so to speak, of Filer's work today, which consists almost exclusively of glass and stained glass pieces. The Christmas decorations were washed from the windows after about six weeks and none of this early painting survives, except in photographs. But when it came time to choose an artist to paint the mural for the Neurological, Mary Filer was well-known at the Institute as a result of her annual window decorating and she was an obvious choice as the artist who would bring Penfield's dream to life.

In addition to the annual Christmas decorations, Filer had other experience as a mural painter prior to her work in Montreal. While she was at Pennsylvania State she painted two murals for the University buildings. The first was *The Anguish of Decision* (fig. 49, now destroyed). The work was intended to show her personal conflict in

⁸⁰ In addition to her many other professional accomplishments, Simon Fraser University gave Filer an honorary degree in 1991.

⁸¹ Gallant, "Window Artist," 3.

⁸² "Murals Bring Gaiety," *Canadian Art* 5 (Winter 1948): 141.

choosing between the profession of nursing - a career she did not wish to pursue, but to which her parents encouraged her to aspire - and being an artist, which was the path she preferred to follow. Filer wrote "My parents felt I should have something more practical to fall back on before taking up art more intensively, so I went in training with some of my girlfriends.... The realization of what I had done was a shock and this conflict is depicted in the upper left-hand corner of the mural."⁸³ The distraught figure shown is herself, the trauma of the difficult decision she has had to make symbolized by her heart literally being ripped out by two symbolic personas, herself as a nurse and herself as an artist. Here, Filer reminds us of Angelica Kauffman's *Angelica Kauffman Hesitating Between the Arts of Music and Painting* (before 1796) in which Kauffman depicted the difficulty of her early choice between her two talents. As Angela Rosenthal notes, Kauffman, in this painting, "specifically thematizes and criticizes prevailing societal constructions of women and femininity."⁸⁴ In a similar way, Filer graphically illustrates the pain of the decision she has been forced to make. In order to please her parents (thus guaranteeing her inclusion in the social order) she has abandoned her passion for art. The mural's central figure of a nurse is the artist being embraced by her parents on graduation day. She has met their demands, and the result is rewarded by their continued affection. It is significant that Filer's nursing career lasted such a short time and that she felt able to extract herself to pursue her artistic goals. In a biographical sketch that she prepared around 1952, she described herself as a "Professional Artist, Art teacher and Lecturer,"

⁸³ Mary Filer, "Candidate for Society of Mural Painters," 4. Unpublished typescript, 9 pages, received by the author from the artist September 1997.

⁸⁴ Angela Rosenthal, "Angelica Kauffman Ma(s)king Claims," *Art History* 15 (March 1992): 38. I would like to thank Dr. Kristina Huneault for bringing this comparison to my attention.

adding under “Professional Qualifications” the words “I am a Professional Artist” (with the underscore in her original).⁸⁵ However, even after she abandoned nursing to work as an artist, she continued to believe that art practice was more difficult for women than for men, saying in 1952 that “[m]en are better fitted to put up with the hardships of the purely creative artists’ life. And there are far more men painting than women.”⁸⁶

Filer’s second mural at Pennsylvania State was *The Role of the Administration in the University and Community* (fig. 50, now destroyed) painted for the office of the President of the University, who also chose the subject. Filer symbolized the role of the University in the community by showing an agricultural worker with a Pennsylvanian farmer discussing the growing of corn. An office with a group of figures conducting a meeting symbolized the role of the administration in the University. An image of Abraham Lincoln, the founder of the University, linked the two subjects. Both *The Anguish of Decision* and *The Role of the Administration in the University and Community* were admired by critic Robert Ayre, who saw only photographs, but remarked of *The Anguish of Decision* that it was “a work of prodigality and power.” He continued by observing that, in the painting “Miss Filer’s two careers come together, [and] she uses the one to express the other.”⁸⁷ The two Pennsylvania State murals were tempera on casein, giving Filer experience in the medium she would use for the later Montreal work.

⁸⁵ Mary Filer “Biographical Sketch of Mary Filer,” unpublished typescript, 3 pages, received by the author from the artist, September 1997.

⁸⁶ Ann Lyons, “Painting Not Lucrative, Local Artists Hunt Jobs,” *The Gazette* (Montreal) 3 July 1952.

⁸⁷ Robert Ayre, “Art Notes Mural Work by Mary Filer Shows Power,” *Montreal Star* 25 July 1953.

Wilder Penfield's main wish in commissioning the mural by Filer was "to convey the role of the institute in the whole field [of neurology] and to especially point up its effort to discover new knowledge."⁸⁸ Mary Filer spoke of Penfield's idea in a lecture delivered many years later (c.1984), stating that Penfield was excited about his research into epilepsy and that "his concept was to portray this visually, perhaps in the manner of the Mexican muralists.... For Penfield, the mural was a noble, grand gesture at the height of his power."⁸⁹ *The Advance of Neurology* is triptych-like in the sense that it is a tripartite composition, although the sections are not separated into individual canvases or by framing. The three parts represent the past, present and future of neurology, reading from right to left in the same way that Rivera's mural for Hospital de la Raza reads. Filer's narrative begins at the far right with the figure of Aesculapius (the Greek and Roman god of healing) who holds the caduceus, the traditional staff entwined with a serpent - today the symbol of medicine. Below him, a patient is being cured by trepanation, the practice of allowing demons to escape by drilling a hole in the sufferer's head.⁹⁰ Next appears Hippocrates, his back turned to the superstitions of the past and his interest expressed in the ways of the present. Above him, hands emerge from the heavens to sooth the cares of a stricken woman.

In the central background appear major figures in the history of neurology, those who were dead at the time of the painting represented by pale, shadowy skin tones to

⁸⁸ Filer, "Candidate for Society of Mural Painters," 8.

⁸⁹ Mary Filer, "The Mural: An Episode in Time."

⁹⁰ Contemporary advocates of the benefits of trepanation have a website at <http://www.trepan.com/home.html>.

denote their state. Over forty portraits are included, all life-size, each based on drawings Filer did of the doctors themselves, or created by her from small photographs in books (see, for example, her preliminary drawing for the portrait of Wilder Penfield, fig. 51).⁹¹ Below them, figures associated with the hospital at the time of the painting are grouped around a patient on a table. The figure linking the present with the future by means of an expansive arm gesture is Penfield himself (fig. 52). To the left of him hands pull back curtains to reveal the future. Below him and to the left, surgeons are at work and laboratory science is symbolized by the figures, surrounded by instruments and materials, above them. In the lower left of the painting, a group of people holding a model building in their hands represents the benefactors of the building. The group includes Paul Martin representing the Government of Canada, Maurice Duplessis representing the Government of Quebec, Montreal Mayor Camilien Houde, Alan Gregg representing the Rockefeller Foundation, J.W. McConnell, W.H. Donner and “a figure representing women donors.”⁹² Perhaps the summary dismissal of the identities of the women who were benefactors to the Institute, while simultaneously individually identifying the men who played a similar role, indicate the place that women held in general in the mural. The lack of women’s appearance amongst the doctors and scientists, in the history of medicine, as identifiable figures in the role of donors, in the present of neurological research, and in its future, all mirrored the expectations of women of the 1950s and reflected to the viewer an image of

⁹¹ Mary Filer, “The Mural: An Episode in Time,” 3. The preliminary drawings for many of the portraits in the mural are in the collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

⁹² Invitation to the unveiling of the mural, 14 November 1954. Received by the author from Mary Filer, 10 September 1997.

the roles considered suited to women in the field of medicine at the time - that is, as nurse and as patient.

The patient on the table, the central focus of the mural, is a significant figure in several ways. The female body, nude or artfully draped, is a long-standing trope in European art - as in Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, for example. According to Filer, she echoed a statue called *Nature Unveiling Herself Before Science* by Adolphe Galli (from the original in the Louvre by Ernest Barrias and copied at Penfield's request⁹³) that stood in the lobby of the building housing the Neurological Institute. In the mural's original incarnation, the patient was not completely covered by the white drape, but was naked from the waist up (fig. 53). This first version of the mural with the undraped figure was reproduced in *The Gazette* on 13 November 1954, a few days prior to the unveiling by Duplessis.⁹⁴ *The Gazette* reproduction, however, was published after the figure had already been draped. The mural could not have existed in that condition at that time, since the figure is draped in the photographs of the work that include the Duchess of Kent, who viewed the mural approximately two weeks before the official unveiling. Criticism of the semi-naked figure had led Filer to return to the work and paint the drape to cover the woman's upper torso. Filer does not remember (or does not elaborate on) who insisted on this change except to say that it was not Wilder Penfield. Speaking of the piece thirty years after its completion, she said "Against Dr. Penfield's feelings and mine, we complied with the prudery of others by draping the semi-nude body. In so doing, Dr.

⁹³ A Cerebral Celebration: The Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital Pamphlet produced to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital, 1984, unpaginated.

⁹⁴ "Medical Progress Unfolded in Mural," The Gazette (Montreal) 13 November 1954.

Penfield's lyrical symbol of Eternal Beauty - and the allegorical message of *La Nature se dévoilant devant la Science* depicted in the foyer of the MNI was destroyed."⁹⁵ Penfield admired Filer's original rendition of the semi-nude patient. For him, it was her semi-draped state and the idealization of her appearance that made the patient a representative of "Eternal Beauty."⁹⁶ As Filer notes, he called the image "Eternal Beauty" but he also called her "The Eternal Problem." The "Eternal Problem" was the female complaint of "headache,"⁹⁷ which can also be interpreted as an excuse that women have stereotypically used to avoid sex. The female patient here is portrayed as sexually active, as evidenced by the prominent positioning of her left hand, which bears a wedding ring. Hence, "The Eternal Problem" for the male doctor becomes how to cure the headache in order to make the patient metaphorically sexually available. Filer also claimed that it was Penfield who insisted that the patient should wear "an enigmatic smile."⁹⁸

The central figure of the patient was also seen as key by Viktor Lowenfeld, Filer's teacher at Pennsylvania State, who had come to Montreal to view the mural in 1955. He commented to Filer in a letter that he found the nude "too fleshy." He felt that the figure of the woman did not provide enough of a contrast to the other people in the mural, and therefore he found the patient to be "not symbolic enough." He wrote: "Make the body as unreal in colour, as vibrating as you can! As it is, it has too much form, is too realistically

⁹⁵ Filer, "The Mural: An Episode in Time," 5.

⁹⁶ Filer, "The Mural: An Episode in Time," 2.

⁹⁷ Filer, "The Mural: An Episode in Time," 2.

⁹⁸ "Artist Paints Self in Hospital Mural," Montreal Star 7 August 1954.

“painted and therefore appears first of all naked.”⁹⁹ Robert Ayre, who saw the mural before its completion and therefore before the figure was draped, called the patient “Botticelli-like.”¹⁰⁰ This was also Penfield’s characterization. Filer describes Penfield’s wish that the “figure of the recumbant [sic] woman was idealized - a beautiful Botticelli-like Venus, semi-draped, Dr. Penfield’s notion of Eternal Beauty.”¹⁰¹

Penfield’s patronizing attitude and the attitudes of both Viktor Lowenfeld and Robert Ayre toward the female patient mark her as a figure of significance in Filer’s mural, guaranteed by her central location to be the focus of the work. One of the roles that she plays is as a visual signifier for the definition of “doctor” as male. The men gathered around the bed in the painting are understood by the viewer to be the doctors, and they are specifically juxtaposed to the object of their gaze, the female patient. The white uniforms identify the female figures at the head of the bed (portraits of Filer and Flanagan) as nurses and, like the patient, they function as tropes to define the significance of the men. Moreover, of all the figures in the painting, it is the patient who remains anonymous. All the others are named, except the women donors. The patient alone is allegorical. It is in this allegorical figure, supine on the table and unconscious, surrounded by the men who pronounce on the diagnosis, that we read the gendering of the medical profession as it was at work at the time of the painting. The patient could not be other than female. In other words, the construction of doctor/patient is fundamentally based on a male/female dichotomy and it is a dichotomy that viewers expected to see, and as a

⁹⁹ Viktor Lowenfeld to Mary Filer, 28 August 1954. Collection of the artist.

¹⁰⁰ Ayre, “Art Notes Mary Filer’s Work in Progress,” 17.

¹⁰¹ Filer, “The Mural: An Episode in Time,” 2.

result it evokes no reaction and is thus perceived as “normal.” This dichotomy can be read in many paintings depicting medical practice. For example, Thomas Eakins’ *The Agnew Clinic* (fig. 54) uses the same signifiers (female patient, male doctors, female nurse). *The Agnew Clinic* is a work that Filer most likely would have seen during her years at Pennsylvania State. In Eakin’s painting, the (male) doctors and a female nurse are grouped around a female patient in an arrangement similar to the one Filer would subsequently use for her own work. Writing about Eakin’s work, Bridget L. Goodbody notes that “an unconscious woman lies in a carefully made bed of medical discourse.”¹⁰² She describes the depiction of the clinic as “the constructions of realism...delineating as ‘real’ that which is perceived by what Michel Foucault calls the medical gaze and glance.”¹⁰³ There are strong parallels between Eakins’ patient (suffering from breast cancer) and Filer’s patient (suffering from headache). Breast cancer is a disease that most frequently attacks women, and headache is a stereotype that has been considered particular to women’s physiology. The gendering of the patient as female serves to clarify for the viewer the roles that men and women were to be assigned within the hierarchy of medical discourse.

The dichotomy that defines women as pathology (and as its corollary defines men as anatomy - i.e., the healthy body to which to aspire) has a long history. In *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, for example, Judith R. Walkowitz describes the social discourses

¹⁰² Bridget L. Goodbody, “‘The Present Opprobrium of Surgery’: The Agnew Clinic and Nineteenth-Century Representations of Cancerous Female Breasts,” *American Art* 8 (Winter 1994): 33.

¹⁰³ Michel Foucault, “What is an Author,” Paul Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101-120. Cited by Goodbody, “The Present Opprobrium of Surgery,” 33.

surrounding the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 in Great Britain. Designed as an attempt to reduce venereal diseases among the soldiers in military institutions, the acts included provisions under which a woman could be identified as a “common prostitute,” and subjected to an internal examination every second week. If evidence of gonorrhoea or syphilis was found, the woman was committed to a hospital for up to nine months.¹⁰⁴ The men who frequented the prostitutes, however, were not subjected to any similar scrutiny. Therefore, any effectiveness that the measures might have had against the diseases they were intended to combat was nullified. More importantly, as Walkowitz notes, the regulations “justified male sexual access to a class of ‘fallen’ women and penalized women for engaging in the same vice as men.”¹⁰⁵ While defining the prostitute as the source of disease, the pathological body, the construction and reinforcement of the behaviour of the men who frequented prostitutes, understood as normative, insisted on the understanding of the male body as anatomy. It is a dichotomy that is often repeated and it has served often, including in Filer’s mural, to maintain the hierarchies of position in public space that men and women are to hold.

Mary Filer has pursued a successful and prolific career. After the completion of her mural at the Montreal Neurological, she painted several murals in England, where she lived between 1955 and 1968. She also completed several other Canadian murals, the majority in glass. One other painted work was an abstract mural entitled *Seasonal Episodes, Sky/Sea* (1977) for Nigel House, a special care facility in Victoria. One of her

¹⁰⁴ Judith R. Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society, 3.

glass murals, titled *Patterned Pinnacles*, 3' x 7', an abstract glass panel, was one of the sixteen works that in 1988 replaced the murals, such as the one by Yvonne McKague Housser discussed in the Introduction, that had hung in the train cars then owned by CP Rail. The sum total of Filer's works makes her perhaps Canada's most prolific secular woman producer of mural work.

WOMEN AND SCIENCE

Within the same set of discourses, defining expectations of men and of women, that shaped *The Advance of Neurology*, Filer's friend Marian Dale Scott had earlier painted a mural, *Endocrinology* (1943), with scientific study as its basis - and in so doing would create one of the most unusual murals painted by a woman in Canada. It was the focus on science, and the conducting of scientific research by the artist herself, that made Scott's work unique. At the time of her painting, in the mid-twentieth century, women had little exposure to, and were considered uninterested in, scientific pursuits. Prior to the mid-to-late nineteenth century, science in general was considered an avocation rather than a profession, practised in private or with only a few friends, in personal museums or in the home.¹⁰⁶ During the last one hundred years, science has increasingly become a profession, with concomitant hierarchies and institutional frameworks. During the pre-professional period, women had limited access to education, and therefore to science. Those who did study the sciences tended to do so through male tutors (relatives, friends) who were willing to support their research. But regardless of the support that might come

¹⁰⁶ For more detailed descriptions of the move from pre-professional to professional studies in science, see Ainley, ed., *Despite the Odds*, 19-21.

from male teachers, most women could not devote the time required to pursue scientific research; their obligations to home and family took precedence and precluded such study.

Women's marginalization from the field of science is, as scientist Margaret Benston notes, "discrimination [which is] in many ways similar to discrimination in other professions." However, she continues, "science is not simply another profession."¹⁰⁷ She argues that rational thought is understood as the quintessentially human activity, and that from its beginnings scientific tradition has argued that therefore only men can become scientists.¹⁰⁸ Stereotypes of male and female behaviour almost perfectly match the conventional characteristics considered essential to the scientist. Men are, or ought to be, "aggressive, strong, independent, logical, dominant, in control of their physical environment, handy with tools...in control of their emotions, and capable of abstract thought." On the other hand, women are, or ought to be, "intuitive, nurturant, emotional, dependent on and with strong connections to those around them, loving and caring, passive and with limited capability for rationality and objectivity."¹⁰⁹ The archetype of the scientist as a logical, rational thinker, with a critical distance from the object of study, parallels the description of the ideal male far more accurately than it does that of the female. Since the basic goal of scientific research is to understand natural phenomena with the final objective being to predict, and therefore control them, a great deal of power is seen to lie in scientific hands. In other words, the marginalization of women from the

¹⁰⁷ Margaret Benston, "Feminism and the Critique of Scientific Method," in Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn, eds., Feminism from Pressure to Politics (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1989): 60.

¹⁰⁸ Benston, "Feminism and the Critique of Scientific Method," 60.

¹⁰⁹ Benston, "Feminism and the Critique of Scientific Method," 61.

field of science is a significant measure of their roles in general in the creation of ideological structures. In this sense, Marian Scott's mural devoted to a scientific subject represents a remarkable incursion into a field seen as a male prerogative. Scott crossed several ideological boundaries with her painting. Not only was it a public commission, it additionally attested to the commissioner's belief in her ability to tackle, understand and portray a subject that had traditionally been maintained as a male bastion.

MARIAN DALE SCOTT

Scott's mural *Endocrinology* (fig. 55) was commissioned in 1941 by Hans Selye (1907-1982), an endocrinologist at McGill University, for the Department of Histology in McGill's Strathcona Medical Building, as an addition to what was at the time planned to be a conference and reading room.¹¹⁰ Scott and Selye had known one another for several years prior to the time of the mural commission, and, according to Esther Trépanier, Selye was an admirer of Scott's work.¹¹¹ Since it was the field of study being pursued by the Department of Histology at the time, and therefore had a particular relevance to the venue, endocrinology (the study of ductless glands and their hormones) was chosen as the subject for the mural.¹¹² Like Mary Filer's work, Scott's mural, still extant, is today in a private office, a room that has been renovated and reduced in size, and that is too small to

¹¹⁰ Selye is best remembered for his work in the area of stress, and he published more than fifteen hundred articles and thirty books on the subject. His best-known work was probably Hans Selye, *Stress Without Distress* (Scarborough: The New American Library of Canada Limited, 1975). For his autobiography see: Hans Selye, *The Stress of My Life: A Scientist's Memoirs* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1979).

¹¹¹ Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pioneer of Modern Art* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000), 161.

¹¹² Marian Scott, "Explanatory Key," *Canadian Art* 1 (October-November 1943): 18.

accommodate it. In addition, the office is closed to the general public - unfortunate, since the mural is a major piece of painting and represents a pivotal point in Scott's career.

Scott (1906-93) was born in Montreal and lived in the city almost all her life. Her artistic training began with William Brymner at the Art Association of Montreal (1917-20) and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (1924-26). At the Ecole she worked with a number of female colleagues, including Lillian Freiman, Jori Smith, and the woman who would become her dear friend, Pegi Nicol McLeod.¹¹³ Her final year of formal study was with Henry Tonks at the Slade in London in 1926-27. After the completion of her studies Scott spent many years working part-time as a teacher of both children and adults. In 1928 she married poet, lawyer, and political activist Frank Scott, who was instrumental in the 1931 formation of the League for Social Reconstruction and the 1933 founding of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The couple had one son, Peter Dale Scott (born 1929), who, as an adult, became a widely published poet and political critic. During the time that her son was a student at St. George's School in Westmount, Scott became interested in the school's art education programme, and she later taught there for a period of three years, 1942-44. During the years 1947-49 and c.1954, she also taught at the Art Association of Montreal's School of Art and Design with Arthur Lismer.¹¹⁴ Scott was also a close friend of Norman Bethune's. When Bethune left for Spain in 1936 to head a medical team during the Spanish Civil War, Scott worked with Fritz Brandtner to take over the management of the Children's Creative Art Centre that Bethune had established

¹¹³ Trépanier, "A Tribute to Marian Dale Scott," *Journal of Canadian Art History* XV (1993): 85.

¹¹⁴ Adele Hayes, "Marian Scott a Painter's Contribution," *Westmount Examiner* 20 April 1967; and Trépanier, "A Tribute to Marian Dale Scott," fn. 5, 91.

in Montreal in that same year.¹¹⁵ Several years after her work there came to an end, Scott taught at the Montreal Museum (c.1949-52¹¹⁶), where Guido Molinari numbered among her students.¹¹⁷ “She respected what I wanted to do,” Molinari remembered, “even if she couldn’t agree with it. She was my real teacher, the best kind of teacher, because she never said I was on the wrong track.”¹¹⁸

Scott showed her first work, a seascape, at the Montreal Museum’s Spring Exhibition when she was only fourteen years old.¹¹⁹ By the late 1930s she was exhibiting widely and by 1967 her work had been collected by most major institutions in Canada. In addition, she was a founding member of the Contemporary Arts Society (1939). Her early work in landscape and still life gave way in the late 1930s and early 1940s to studies in the organization and depictions of space. Her work of this time period, such as *Escalator* (1936), *Tenants* (c.1940), and *Stairway* (1940), all showed her interest in understanding cubist form, and the faceless, stylized human inhabitants of these paintings dramatized Scott’s interpretation of the sense of alienation experienced during the Depression years. By painting local scenes (*Stairway* and *Tenants*, for example, both depicting typical Montreal architectural features), while elaborating on international concerns in the formal

¹¹⁵ Trépanier, “A Tribute to Marian Dale Scott,” 87.

¹¹⁶ These dates are cited differently in different sources. Michael Forster, for example, says 1949-1951 in Michael Forster, “Speaking of Art: Marian Scott’s Painting Attracts Much Interest,” *The Standard* (Montreal) 25 August 1951, whereas Scott herself said 1951-1952 on a biographical information sheet submitted to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1976. Forster’s dates are more likely correct, since he was writing contemporaneously, while Scott was writing from memory twenty-five years after the fact.

¹¹⁷ Henry Lehmann, “Scott Broke Ground for Women Artists,” *The Gazette* (Montreal) 4 December 1993, 18.

¹¹⁸ Guido Molinari cited by Ron Graham, “All Passion Spent,” *Canadian Art* 11 (March 1994): 55.

¹¹⁹ Hayes, “Marian Scott a Painter’s Contribution.”

issues of painting, Scott aligned herself with Canadian issues while simultaneously demonstrating her awareness and grasp of the formal problems concerning the international art world.

In 1941 Selye had the idea for the mural, stating that “[i]t occurred to me that in the medical building a mural symbolizing our scientific activities would be particularly appropriate.”¹²⁰ He selected Scott as the artist, calling his choice “self-evident and spontaneous,”¹²¹ because he believed he saw a scientific quality in her work (although she was given a free hand in interpreting it - she stated that she would not otherwise have accepted the project¹²²) and because she would be willing to do the investigation necessary to the content he required. He wrote:

...the subjects chosen for murals have always been closely connected with the physical and mental activities of those for whom they were painted.... The carefully planned compositions of Marian Scott with their clean-cut lines and meticulously balanced proportions are, I believe, the closest approximation of painting and science.¹²³

It is not necessarily clear, however, that the entire commission unfolded without conflict. For example, Scott prepared preliminary sketches that were approved, but after the work was half-finished Selye wanted her to add another gland to the painting. She refused to do so, but the disagreement is cited in a letter to Scott from Pegi Nicol MacLeod, where MacLeod asks, “How is yours? [i.e., Scott’s mural]. Have you got over

¹²⁰ Selye, “Art as an Inspiration to Science,” *Canadian Art* 1 (October/November 1943), 17.

¹²¹ Selye, “Art as an Inspiration to Science,” 17.

¹²² Ellison Brock, “Symbols of Order and Harmony: Marian Scott 1931-1949,” M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1985.

¹²³ Selye, “Art as an Inspiration to Science,” 17.

the feeling like being asked to change the sex of the child before it's born?"¹²⁴ Scott stated later that she was dissatisfied with the work, finding it "too literal, too commission-based, and lacking in the qualities a true work of art must have."¹²⁵

The dedication to scientific research was an unusual subject choice for a Canadian mural, but there was at least one precedent. In 1934 the American artist Harold Haydon painted a mural, still extant and *in situ*, dedicated to the evolution of human beings from the cell to the complex adult for the gymnasium wall of Pickering College in Newmarket, Ontario. Like Scott, Haydon spent many months preparing before painting his work. He dedicated himself to the study of biology, and the making of preparatory drawings.¹²⁶ His work was admired by Donald Buchanan, who, like numerous critics before him, expressed dismay at the lack of development of Canadian mural painting in general, stating that "[m]ural decoration has been a neglected art in Canada; we have had wall paintings, to be sure, but these usually dull things, pretty in detail.... One thinks especially of those insipid portrayals of romantic, 'ideal' labour, industry and agriculture that are to be found in the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa."¹²⁷ Buchanan was delighted with Haydon's different theme, expressing his hope that the influences of Diego Rivera, Rockwell Kent and José Orozco on this particular mural would "provoke a dispute, if only to enliven Canadian interest in mural painting."¹²⁸ Whether or not Scott or Selye had

¹²⁴ Murray, ed., *Daffodils in Winter*. 182.

¹²⁵ Esther Trépanier, "A Tribute to Marian Dale Scott, 1906-1993," 85.

¹²⁶ Donald W. Buchanan, "Embryology on a Wall: The Pickering College Mural," *The Canadian Forum* XV (January 1935): 154.

¹²⁷ Buchanan, "Embryology on a Wall," 154.

¹²⁸ Buchanan, "Embryology on a Wall," 154.

seen Haydon's mural, or read Buchanan's review, was not recorded, but in Scott's case at least, it seems likely; Buchanan's text was in *Canadian Forum*, which had published reproductions of Scott's work beginning in 1926, as well as writing by her husband.

It took Scott from 1941 until 1943 to research and paint *Endocrinology*. The composition was based on a spiral, at the centre of which was a steroid molecule, a molecule that is the same for both women and men. The spiral had been a central theme in Scott's work prior to the painting of the mural, figuring in such paintings as *Fire Escape* (1937), *Tenants* (1939), and *Staircase* (1942). Scott referred to Norman Bethune's *An Apology for Not Writing Letters* as one of the sources that inspired her to consider the spiral as a central theme, quoting his observation that "[t]he process of change from the old to the new is not a flat circular movement - a turn and return on itself - but helical and ascending."¹²⁹ The spiral radiates out from a central figure described by Scott as "man, the seeker,"¹³⁰ who reaches out toward the steroid molecule.¹³¹ That the central figure representing both humanity and the search for scientific knowledge was a male figure painted by a female artist is a point of some significance and I shall return to it shortly. Revolving around the central nucleus are "three stages in the development and multiplication of a cell."¹³² The lines of force holding the composition together represent

¹²⁹ Scott quoted Bethune in a letter to Ellison Brock, February 1984. Brock, "Symbols of Order and Harmony," 36. For a detailed discussion of the use of the spiral, crystal, and cell-*caul* in Scott's mural, see Brock's thesis.

¹³⁰ Scott, "Explanatory Key," 18.

¹³¹ There is no particular reason to believe that Scott had seen the work, but her mural stylistically resembles some work painted in 1927 by the American artist Aaron Douglas, particularly *Go Down Death* and *Let My People Go*. See: *Harlem Renaissance Art of Black America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987). I would like to thank Dr. Catherine MacKenzie for pointing this out to me.

¹³² Scott, "Explanatory Key," 18.

the hormone activity from one gland to another.¹³³ At the outside edge of the work are various female and male figures representing both the normal and the abnormal functioning of the endocrine system. For example, on the lower left is the thyroid gland in its normal and abnormal states (fig. 56). Surrounding it are three figures that illustrate the effects of under-activity and over-activity - myxedema, congenital cretinism and toxic goiter.¹³⁴ Items such as a microscope and a sacrificial rat represent scientific research. The word “why” appears at the bottom in several languages on the front of volumes of scientific knowledge, referring to the scientific quest to investigate the unknown.

In 1943, the year of the mural’s completion, Selye and Scott published back-to-back articles in *Canadian Art* entitled “Art as an Inspiration to Science” (by Selye) and “Science as an Inspiration to Art” (by Scott).¹³⁵ According to Scott, “The chance to paint this mural coincided with the deep wish, on my part, for just such a chance.... I, like so many painters of today, was feeling disturbed and inadequate in the isolation of the studio.”¹³⁶ It was a feeling that Scott had developed after living in the United States for a short period in 1940-41, where she admired the mural works from the Works Progress Administration because they showed “a way for the painter to leave his studio and become part of society.”¹³⁷ Scott also attended the Kingston Conference in 1941, and was

¹³³ E.G. “McGill’s New Mural Medically Accurate,” *The Standard* (Montreal) 3 July 1943.

¹³⁴ Scott, “Explanatory Key,” 18.

¹³⁵ Selye, “Art as an Inspiration to Science”; Scott, “Science as an Inspiration to Art.”

¹³⁶ Scott, “Science as an Inspiration to Art,” 19.

¹³⁷ Handwritten reply to questions posed to Scott by Ellison Brock. Marian Scott fonds, National Archives of Canada, MG30 D 399 Volume 10, Business Correspondence, 1984. It is possible that during this period of time in the United States Scott may have seen a mural or murals devoted to scientific topics, but it seems unlikely. The murals painted for the WPA were devoted to past and present history, local industry or

most likely influenced by speakers such as Thomas Hart Benton and the U.S. Treasury Board's Edward Rowan, who spoke specifically on the subject of mural painting. During his presentation, Rowan stated, "I think our greatest importance has been in the fact that we have taken the artists out of their ivory towers; we have encouraged them to cut their hair, to put both feet on the ground and meet the public. In other words we have once more introduced the studio hermit to the public...."¹³⁸ Scott saw the emergence of the artist from the studio and the engagement with social problems as the death of an old era and the birth of a new, in which society and the artist would be reintegrated. Tired of being dissociated from the aims and ideals of fellow humans and of painting subject matter from the immediate environment, Scott believed that science was a wonderful and new source of inspiration.¹³⁹ She suggested that the scientist and the artist "have in common the perpetual search for meaning," and that science offered a way for the artist to reconnect with the "moving forces of his age."¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the painting of the mural was not completely problem-free. Scott observed that the most difficult part of the process was her tendency to sacrifice accurate representation to the aesthetic requirements of the design and Selye's insistence on accuracy of illustration at the expense of aesthetic values.¹⁴¹ She also met "strong prejudice" from those who felt that endocrinology was unsuitable as material for a mural

landscapes. Francis V. O'Connor, *The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), 36.

¹³⁸ *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1991 [1941]), 89.

¹³⁹ Scott, "Science as an Inspiration to Art," 19.

¹⁴⁰ Scott, "Science as an Inspiration to Art," 19.

¹⁴¹ Scott, "Science as an Inspiration to Art," 19.

painting because it was not aesthetically pleasing. Her reply to this was that the artist's first concern should be with *significance*, and that she should simultaneously push back the boundaries of beauty.¹⁴² She also faced the problem that, because the subject was new to most people, few understood the interpretation of the forms, though she nevertheless hoped to convey, even to the lay viewer, the "spirit and significance" of the subject.¹⁴³ Originally, a chart that explained in simple scientific terms the medical meaning of each of the elements of the design accompanied the mural, although it is not known whose idea this was.¹⁴⁴ Each of the glands in the work was enumerated on the chart, an outline of the normal and abnormal functioning of each was described, as was the fact that the strong lines that link all the elements in the mural symbolized complex endocrine interrelationships. The chart functioned then as a written "bridge" between the viewer and the work, explaining the meaning of the painting in a way not common in the visual arts.

Both Scott and Selye were seeking a way that science and art might intersect. Mural painting provided an ideal forum for the prospect and the final product was described as being "as scientific as it is artistic."¹⁴⁵ A brief article describing its medical

¹⁴² Scott, "Science as an Inspiration to Art," 37.

¹⁴³ Scott, "Science as an Inspiration to Art," 37.

¹⁴⁴ The explanatory chart no longer exists beside the mural, but two versions of it still exist. There is one copy in Scott's archives, MG 30 D399 v. 10, Business Correspondence, 1960-1964, National Archives of Canada. The second version was published following Scott's article "Science as an Inspiration to Art." A numbered schematic accompanied the published chart. This version does not entirely correspond with the version in Scott's archives, but it was more likely this version that accompanied the mural for two reasons. First, the schematic is essential for the association of the written description with the images in the mural, and secondly, media sources quoted from this chart pieces of information that do not exist in the chart in Scott's archives.

¹⁴⁵ E.G. "McGill's New Mural Medically Accurate."

significance appeared in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* in September 1943.

The author held that “there is a good deal to be said for the view that art may present aspects of science to us, just as it has presented religion and other sides of human sociology,”¹⁴⁶ and admired the complex scientific accuracy of the image: “The accoucheur’s hand of tetany,” the author tells us, “reminds us of the parathyroids.”¹⁴⁷

Endocrinology marked the beginning of an artistic path that Scott would follow in her easel paintings for years afterwards. Following the two years of study that she did for the mural (1941-43), she was given access for three months to a room and a microscope in the Genetics Department at McGill.¹⁴⁸ Later, she spent some time studying at the Redpath Museum.¹⁴⁹ The series that developed from the mural study, including *Cell and Crystal* (1944), *Cell and Fossil* (1945-46), and *Stone and Protoplasm* (1948) all combined cubist form with abstracted renditions of cells, protoplasm, embryos and crystals. Robert Ayre described Scott’s work as having “the searching and organizing spirit of the scientist,”¹⁵⁰ and again, ten years later, likened Scott’s approach to her work

¹⁴⁶ H.E. MacDermot, “The Artist Looks at Endocrinology,” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 49 (September 1943), 224.

¹⁴⁷ MacDermot, “The Artist Looks at Endocrinology,” 224.

¹⁴⁸ There is no confirmation, but several sources report this period of study after the completion of *Endocrinology* to have been a time of preparation for another mural - a work that never materialized for unknown reasons. See, for example, Josephine Hambleton, “Canadian Artists - II Marian Scott,” *Kingston Whig-Standard* 11 November 1947.

¹⁴⁹ “Exhibition of Paintings by Marian Scott at the Dominion Gallery,” Typescript, Marian Scott file, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Ayre, “Art Notes Two Exhibitions: Scott, Neumann,” *The Montreal Star* 27 February 1954.

to that of a scientist “in his laboratory, trying to find out something about life as it may be apprehended in color and form.”¹⁵¹

Scott’s mural painting, then, marked a turning point in her career. Critics found feminine “virtues” even in Scott’s mural - a work that might be considered, because of its scientific content, to be stereotypically masculine. Describing the work for the *Montreal Standard*, one reviewer noted that “Mrs. Scott used earth colours which produced a light, even femininely immaculate result.”¹⁵² The critic did not think, however, that Scott’s “feminine” hand affected the scientific accuracy of the work, which was described as being “as scientific as it is artistic,” and within which “nothing lacks medical significance.”¹⁵³ However, to return to a point that I introduced earlier, possibly the most significant fact about *Endocrinology* in terms of this dissertation is that Scott represented the central figure in her mural painting as male. Given the small number of figures in the painting - and the weight of Selye’s influence - her choice is perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, with her dedication to change and to social concerns, and though she sought an interaction between the artist and science, the “seeker” at the centre of her work remained a man (fig. 57). Scott engaged with the study of science, a study that had traditionally marginalized her gender, and simultaneously kept its marginalizing stereotypes in place. By reiterating the scientist as a male figure, she elided her own role in creating the mural in the first place, but also clarified how her work would be accepted and understood. That is to say, she had no difficulty penetrating the scientific world in

¹⁵¹ Robert Ayre, “New Paintings by Marian Scott,” *Montreal Star* 3 October 1964.

¹⁵² E.G., “McGill’s New Mural Medically Accurate.”

¹⁵³ E.G., “McGill’s New Mural Medically Accurate.”

her role as an artist, but she did not make any fundamental challenge to science's understanding of its principal researchers as male. It should be noted, however, that for some critics her gender presented a problem not only in terms of science, but also in terms of her status as an artist. Prior to the painting of the mural, an article by G. Campbell McInnes in *The Canadian Forum* grappled with an attempt to understand how Scott could be a woman and yet paint so well. The author began by explaining that "even if the 'greatest' artists of the world number among them no women, nevertheless the artistic creations of women have a unique flavor and have enriched greatly art as a whole."¹⁵⁴ Women take one of two routes to face "the creator's problem." Either they are "completely and enchantingly feminine," or, like Scott, "a valiant, impersonal, cold fury masks their femininity, which nevertheless comes through, as a sort of re-agent, suffusing everything they do.... Her painting, as a result of these warring forces...is rich, taut, intense, and curiously lovely."¹⁵⁵ Scott had succeeded as an artist, according to McInnes, in spite of being a woman. She had accomplished it because she had "male" qualities, which, nevertheless, did not fully mask her femininity.

Scott lived most of her life during years when men's superiority in the public arena went unquestioned. For a short period during the Second World War, women ventured into well-paying jobs as men were called to serve in the fighting forces, but after the end of the War, women were reassigned to what was considered their rightful place as homemakers and mothers. Described by Betty Frieden as "young and frivolous, almost

¹⁵⁴ G. Campbell McInnes, "Contemporary Canadian Artist No.10 - Marian Scott," *The Canadian Forum* XVII (November 1937), 274.

¹⁵⁵ McInnes, "Contemporary Canadian Artists No.10 - Marian Scott," 274.

childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home,”¹⁵⁶ women at the end of the War - shortly following the time that Scott completed her mural - were cast into roles that were anything but that of the serious scientist. This particular view continued on well into the end of the 1960s. In 1969, for example, Scott won the Baxter Purchase award (\$1500 - by far the largest of the ten prizes awarded) at the ninety-seventh exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists. The media reacted by praising her as “a housewife” who had had some success as an artist. “Housewife’s Prize Means Larger Studio,” the headline in the *Globe and Mail* proclaimed.¹⁵⁷ The text of the article described Scott as “the Montreal housewife-artist, excitedly clutching an armful of yellow chrysanthemums...” as she accepted her award. Similarly, the *Montreal Star* announced Scott’s success with the headline “Montreal Housewife Wins Award.”¹⁵⁸ Ghitta Caiserman-Roth expressed her dismay in a letter to the *Star*. “The ‘housewife’ referred to is Marion [sic] Scott,” she wrote, “an artist of long-standing stature and reputation, and this should be her designation.”¹⁵⁹ The media reflected the general belief that a woman’s primary role was as wife and mother, even in the case of an artist who had achieved a reputation of some significance and one of whose better-known works was the most ambitious and successful mural ever undertaken in Canada on the theme of science.

¹⁵⁶ Betty Frieden, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 30.

¹⁵⁷ Kay Kritzwiser, “Housewife’s Prize Means Larger Studio,” *Globe and Mail* 6 October 1969.

¹⁵⁸ “Montreal Housewife Wins Award,” *Montreal Star* 8 October 1969.

¹⁵⁹ Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, “‘Housewife’ Obsolete?” letter to the editor, *Montreal Star* 22 October 1969.

Although Scott was married to a man with a busy schedule, and some of her time was necessarily devoted to the duties of her household, she found time every day to paint, never abandoning her career in order to devote her life to her family. “Most women painters have something that pulls them away from their painting” she wrote, “and many women are bitter.”¹⁶⁰ Scott felt fortunate to have been able to set aside part of each day and devote it to painting. Many of her contemporaries were not so lucky. Paraskeva Clark, Pegi Nicol McLeod and Jori Smith were all forced to paint less as family responsibilities drew on their time.¹⁶¹ Similarly, as Esther Trépanier notes, artists such as Regina Seiden and Marguerite Lemieux gave up their careers entirely in order to help their husbands.¹⁶² Like all the artists in this dissertation, Marian Scott found a way to bridge the expectations on her as a woman, and simultaneously to develop a successful artistic career. In 1980, a brief article in the *Montreal Gazette* described in a succinct way Scott’s legacy. Listing the artists participating in a show at Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, the article places the melancholy words “a neglected artist” in parentheses after Scott’s name.¹⁶³ It is a legacy that could equally, and sadly, be applied to the lives of all the women discussed in this dissertation. Much work remains to be done before the stories of their many successes will have been told.

The discourses that surround education, then, have functioned to define meaningful or valued scholarship as that which occurs as a result of access to formalized

¹⁶⁰ Cathy Hobart, “Art Transformed,” *Branching Out* XII (1980): 13.

¹⁶¹ Hobart, “Art Transformed,” 13.

¹⁶² Trépanier, *A Tribute to Marian Dale Scott*, 86.

¹⁶³ *The Gazette* (Montreal) 5 January 1980.

and institutionalized knowledge created and disseminated in public. The parameters of this knowledge have been reinforced by juxtaposing women's experiences against more esteemed knowledge by simultaneously keeping women from its ranks and diminishing the value of their contributions. The work of the four artists in this chapter, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Rosemary Kilbourn, Mary Filer and Marian Dale Scott, serves to illustrate how women, especially twentieth-century women, have functioned both inside and outside dominant educational discourses, simultaneously contributing to their structure while undermining their basic tenets. The understanding of the ways in which women's art production both fit with and subverted education as constructed in the public domain represents in a larger context the association between women's art and women's relationships to the public. Slipping from, yet firmly entrenched in the mainstream, women's murals devoted to the topic of education clearly illustrate the uneasy dichotomies - man/woman, public/private, home/school, or culture/nature - that are used to elaborate gender expectations. At the same time, the appearance in public of those works elides the juxtapositions and offers a more complex means of reading the meanings of public and private spaces.

CONCLUSION

The notions of nature and culture can only be formulated inside an *already established* cultural order. As a result, if one believes that the nature/culture opposition is *real*, one must be blind to the role of language and enunciation. Rather, I see in it one of the most persistent formulas of our culture and its discourse: nature is a cultural construction, the dream of Western theoretical discourse and its chosen moral code; and I can hardly understand the political interest of this opposition for it offers no possible way out.¹

This dissertation has been organized around a constructed set of categories into which I have inserted a selected number of mural works by women. By definition this has meant that many works that would otherwise have qualified for inclusion were eliminated primarily because there simply was insufficient room to discuss all of them. Of the excluded works, however, there are a number that cannot remain unmentioned in a dissertation about women mural painters. Some I wish to go no further than briefly to mention, but others I would like to examine in somewhat more detail. My motivation in concluding with these works is twofold. First, I want to emphasize that, although women have not been prolific as mural painters, they have painted a significant number of works - and the importance of the number is reflected in the fact that I could not come close to including them all in the main chapters of this text. Second, I would like to make clear that my chapter divisions are constructions and are not intended to convey any sort of "truth," either about the topics to which murals *should* be dedicated, or about the topics to which murals actually *are* dedicated. In other words, I hope to clarify that, although I have constrained my writing within a structure, the structure itself must be understood as

¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 129.

both permeable and flexible. I wish to ensure, however, at least in this conclusion, that hitherto excluded works are identified.

The availability of mural works connected directly to the Second World War had suggested a tantalizing opportunity to include “War” as one of the iconic divisions that designated my chapter topics. A substantial amount of writing has been dedicated to women’s relationships to war, and the potential for the use and interpretation of this material through women’s murals was tempting.² In particular, women’s war murals, along with monuments in other media such as the sculpted war memorials by Frances Loring (1887-1968) and Florence Wyle (1881-1968), highlight a gender split in the relationships between women, men, and war. That is to say, in general men record scenes of battle, while women construct memorials: men fight, women remember and mourn. The mural, now lost, designed by Nancy Burden for Toronto’s Union Station (as discussed in Chapter Two), would have provided a linchpin. The disappearance of Burden’s major memorial, however, combined with insufficient space to incorporate all the potential chapter divisions, led to the difficult decision to abandon the topic. Nevertheless, other paintings bear mentioning. A war memorial by Kingston artist Martha Greening Jamieson (b.1918), for example, is of interest. Jamieson painted, in 1949-50, *A Memorial to Queen’s Men and All Canada’s Men Who Served in the Second World War, 1939-1945* (fig. 58) for the Queen’s Contingent, Canadian Officers Training Corps, Queen’s University. The office that held the mural was renovated in 1968, and the

² See, for example, Ruth Roach Pierson, *“They’re Still Women After All”: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

work was slated for destruction. It was an integral part of the wall and the expense of moving it was prohibitive. Prior to its dismantling, however, a photograph was taken and the reproduction was enlarged to ten feet and relocated to the John Deutsch University Centre at Queen's, where it remains. The mural documents Allied campaigns during the Second World War in Europe. It consists of maps of European countries across the face of which a jagged white band records campaigns and the brigades and divisions that fought them, each group identified by its own badge.³ Close examination of the whole reveals operation plans, troop deployments, and won and lost battles. The mural, however, is more a map than an artistic interpretation.

Jamieson studied at the Ontario College of Art and at the Art Students League in New York. In addition, she studied set and costume design at the Old Vic Theatre in London, England, and thereafter continued her studies in France, Germany and Italy. The main focus of her artistic career was on design for theatre productions, and an exhibition of seventy-six of her costume drawings and watercolours took place at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in 1968.⁴ Jamieson's history as a costume and set designer suggests no explanation of why she was commissioned to execute this particular mural, and no record appears to have survived that might provide a rationale. However, her experience in paying close attention to small detail, particularly in the designing of costumes, might indicate why she was considered a suitable candidate for the rendition of the highly detailed badges in the mural painting.

³ The individual badges are not identified on the mural itself, but a document describing each of them exists in the Martha Jamieson file, Queen's University Archives.

⁴ "Jamieson Exhibition Opens Dec. 8 at Centre," Kingston Whig-Standard 5 December 1968.

In addition to Jamieson's mural map, a second case exists in which a mural (or in this case a series of murals) relating to the Second World War was excluded from the main chapters of this dissertation because of space constraints. The series, consisting of seven portraits by Marion Long (1882-1970) was, like Jamieson's work, painted as a war memorial for Queen's University. Unveiled in 1949 in the Memorial Room of the John Deutsch University Centre, Long's works, representing the women and men of Canada's armed forces (four portraits of women, three portraits of men; oil on canvas; approximately 3 1/2' x 3' each; *in situ*) are set in oak panels (designed by sculptor Ted Watson), each covered with glass. Although the works are representations of specific people, Long did not identify the sitters in the titles of the paintings, making the final works less portraits of individuals and more symbolic representations of the women and men of the army, navy and air force (as is appropriate for a mural rather than an easel painting). In addition, it is of some significance that, in choosing how to symbolize the armed forces Long selected four portraits of women and only three of men. This would not have been statistically representative of the comparative numbers who served,⁵ and the reason why this particular sample was chosen would make an interesting study. In addition to the questions posed by the works themselves, the artistic career of Marion Long has been little recorded. She studied at the OCA with George Reid and Laura Muntz and in New York with Robert Henri and William Chase and was a member of the Ontario Society of Artists (1916) and the Royal Canadian Academy (Associate, 1922; Academician, 1934). As only the second woman admitted to the Royal Canadian

⁵ Women constituted 2.8 percent of the total strength of the Army at the time of the German surrender, for example. No women occupied roles in combat. Pierson, "They're Still Women After All", 104.

Academy as a full Academician, her career raises important questions in the history of Canadian art. Why, for example, was she chosen for the prestigious task of creating this memorial from such a large field of potential candidates? While her reputation and talent as a portrait painter certainly qualified her for the task, it would be of value to explore the selection of a woman artist as the guardian of war records, especially in light of the fact that so few women were recruited to document the War itself.⁶ In spite of this and the number of other interesting questions that could have been examined around the three murals by Burden, Jamieson, and Long my dissertation could not accommodate this extensive topic. I believe nonetheless that there remains a vast potential for the exploration of Canadian women's artwork as it relates to the Second World War.

In addition to the discourses surrounding the production and understanding of "war" as a potential chapter, a second topic that came under consideration for inclusion in this dissertation was organized around labour issues. The number of politically-charged murals found in Mexico and the United States, and the known relationships between the art and artists of Mexico, the United States and Canada led me to search for similar works in Canada. In this regard I was most interested in murals by Elizabeth Sutherland (1920-84) and by Ghitta Caiserman-Roth (b.1923).

An important mural by Elizabeth Sutherland, painted for the Department of Fine and Applied Art at Saint John Vocational School in 1940 and extant, is unusual in its

⁶ The only Canadian woman to work as an official war artist during the Second World War was Molly Lamb Bobak (b.1920), although Paraskeva Clark was also offered a commission that she refused. Among the other records that she made of the War, Bobak began, but did not complete in Vermilion, Alberta, a mural "showing the various trades in which C.W.A.C. members could be trained." Brian Foss, "Molly Lamb Bobak: Art and War," in *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993), 96. The National Gallery of Canada did give contracts to a number of women to record the War on the home front, and artists such as Clark, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Liliias Torrance Newton and Alma Duncan painted such subjects as women working in aircraft production and in munitions factories.

depictions of people at work, one of only a small number of murals by Canadian women devoted to the topic. Closer examination of the gendered roles played by the figures in the mural would provide an interesting study of the ways men and women were seen in relationship to the workplace during the course of the Second World War. I did not, however, have the opportunity to examine this mural in person, and since I considered such an examination to be crucial to the research process Sutherland's mural could not be included. I mention it here simply to acknowledge its existence and to suggest that there is scope for further study of this type of work.⁷

A second mural focusing on labour issues was painted by Ghitta Caiserman-Roth. In 1950, she painted an untitled mural for the Fine Children's Wear factory, owned by her mother and situated on St. Lawrence Boulevard in Montreal (fig. 59). The one large and two smaller panels of her work were dedicated to the manufacture of clothing particular to the factory - children's wear. The main panel faced the door in the entrance lobby, with the two additional panels flanking it on the left and right walls. The left-hand panel showed bolts of material, completed dresses on a rack, and a cutting table. The large central panel showed children at play, wearing the clothes presumably created in the factory, during the four seasons. The final panel on the right-hand side showed the children at school. Caiserman-Roth designed the mural full-size on paper first, and she executed it with the assistance of her husband at the time, Alfred Pinsky. Appropriately, one reviewer saw the work as primarily hers; in the *Montreal Standard* Miriam Chapin acknowledged Caiserman-Roth's primary role in the painting, writing that "Miss

⁷ The mural was reproduced in *Toronto Saturday Night* 16 November 1940.

Caiserman made full-size drawing [sic] first; then she and her husband worked several weeks at the actual painting.”⁸ However, another (and better-known) critic attributed it more definitively to Pinsky: Robert Ayre noted in *Canadian Art* that, “In Montreal, Alfred Pinsky and his wife Ghitta Caiserman, have had the experience of working in a children’s clothing factory,”⁹ his implication by placing Pinsky’s name first being that the commission belonged to Pinsky and that his wife assisted him, rather than vice versa. Thus, Ayre kept intact the understanding of the woman artist - Caiserman-Roth in this case - as most suitably relegated to the position of assistant to the main artist, the man on the project.

Caiserman-Roth studied with Alexandre Bercovitch in Montreal (1932-33), beginning when she was a child of only nine years. She received an Honourable Mention at the Art Association of Montreal Spring Exhibition when she was only about thirteen.¹⁰ As an adult, she studied at the Parsons School of Design and the Art Students League in New York City. In 1951 she won a scholarship to study at the Institute Allende in Mexico, but she could not accept and did not go. She taught extensively at Canadian institutions, including the Nova Scotia College of Art and Concordia University. She has participated in a number of major artists’ organizations over the course of her career,

⁸ Miriam Chapin, “Murals in a Factory is Latest Trend,” *Montreal Standard* 31 March 1951.

⁹ R.A. [Robert Ayre], “Murals in a Factory,” *Canadian Art* 7 (Summer 1950), 146.

¹⁰ Caiserman’s age when she won the Honorable Mention is given variously as eleven, twelve and thirteen. Thirteen seems most accurate. See “Women Artists in Canada: Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, http://collections.ic.gc.ca/waic/ghcais/ghcais_e.htm; Colin S. MacDonald, *A Dictionary of Canadian Artists* (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1972), 111; Don Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View/Un Aperçu Rétrospectif 1947-1980* (Montreal: Sir George Williams Art Galleries, Concordia University, 1981), 12.

becoming a member of the Canadian Group of Painters (1954), the Royal Canadian Academy (1956), and the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers (1965).

Both Caiserman-Roth and Pinsky were associated with left-wing causes and women had much to gain from the links those causes created between politics and labour. Despite this Caiserman-Roth did not attribute a specifically political or socialist meaning to her mural, either at the time or in a recent interview.¹¹ She argues instead that her intention in creating the work was personal, and that the mural was designed to pay tribute to her mother's talent as a designer and to celebrate the success of her business, applauding the work of her mother as a participant in the predominantly male world of business. Caiserman-Roth, like many, if not most, of Canada's artists, did not exploit the potential of her mural as a socialist intervention. Nevertheless, by attributing a gendered significance to the work - that is, by stating that its meaning was to celebrate a female success in a male business world - Caiserman-Roth suggests an avenue of exploration that is of interest to a feminist examination of her work. The relationship between women and work as a feminist issue has many avenues left to explore, and the murals by Sutherland and Caiserman listed here represent only a portion of the material available for the study.

Another example of a muralist who would certainly have been included in this dissertation had space permitted is the Toronto artist Sylvia Hahn (1911-2001). Between 1935 and 1946 Hahn painted no fewer than eleven mural decorations, most of a didactic nature, for various rooms in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Hahn's works were

¹¹ Author's interview with Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, 21 February 2001.

intended to educate the viewer, sometimes specifically a child viewer, on such topics as ancient Greek dress or how antique ships might have looked. At least four of these works remain *in situ*. The others have been rolled up and stored and one has been covered over, but none are lost or discarded.¹² Foregrounding issues related to women as educators of children, work such as Hahn's creates a tension that vacillates on the point where women's professional careers intersect with stereotypes of women as most suited to child rearing. Since women are often commissioned to paint murals directed at children, I would suggest that the associations between women and children, and women and caregiving supercede in these cases the precedence normally given to work by men. In other words, the necessity to hold in place the social structure that insists that women are the only suitable caregivers for children dominates such that women are also considered the most suited to create murals (and other media) directed at the child viewer. Although I addressed the relationships between women and children and between women and caregiving to some extent in separate parts of this dissertation - women and children coming under discussion in the section on issues surrounding *maternité*, and women and caregiving being examined in light of the gendering of medical practice - murals directed towards to the child viewer required a larger study.

As the daughter of artists Gustav Hahn (who painted murals on the upper walls and ceilings of the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 1890s) and Ellen Smith Hahn, Sylvia Hahn was introduced early not only to various artistic media

¹² For more information on these murals see "The Greeks Loved Colour," *Varsity Graduate* 9 (March 1962): 43-50; Penny Longley, "Favorite Work Takes 6 Years," *The Daily Star* (Toronto) 24 December 1962; Pearl McCarthy, "New Mural at Museum Copy of Etruscan Scene," *The Globe* (Toronto) 2 December 1953.

but also to the study of folkloric tales.¹³ Knowledge of folklore would translate in her later life to the study and rendition of lives of ancient peoples in murals for the ROM. Hahn studied at the OCA, was awarded the Governor-General's award for achievement when she graduated in 1936, and she subsequently worked in a variety of media, ranging from wood engraving for book illustration to the carving of ivory. In addition to her mural paintings she completed many church commissions for items such as the altar screen for the Air Force base at Aylmer, and the altar cross and candelabra worked in brass for the Chapel of the Holy Child in Toronto.

Of particular interest are two paintings by Hahn for a room in the ROM called Armor Court. At one end of the room Hahn painted a mural representing a jousting scene (fig. 60). At the other end she painted an image of a Saracen being pursued by a Crusader. In 1990 renovations to the room resulted in the tops of the murals being obscured, and a decision was made at that time to completely cover both works with walls. In 1997 a further renovation led to the uncovering of the jousting scene, but not its partner on the opposite wall. The scene depicting a Saracen being pursued on horseback by a Crusader was deemed, it would seem, politically incorrect. Apparently, even a mural with a decorative and educational intent and non-iconic content could become politically charged.

The jousting scene shows knights on horseback engaged in competition, with a row of spectators behind them. The spectators are close to the picture plane and the

¹³ "Portrait: Sylvia Hahn," *Alumnus*, Ontario College of Art, Spring/Summer, 1980, unpaginated. An exhibition devoted to four members of the Hahn family, Gustav Hahn (1866-1962), Ellen Smith Hahn (1869-1965), Hilda Hahn Hooke (1898-1987) and Sylvia Hahn, took place at D.E. Lake Fine Arts and Little-Lake Fine Arts, Toronto, 14 March to 5 April, 2001.

figures are life-size, so the faces are readily identifiable. Hahn used portraits of people who worked at the Museum, including herself, to create these images. A text appearing across the bottom of the mural describes the scene as a “friendly competition” with blunt weapons, partially sawn-through to prevent injury. The battle between the Crusader and the Saracen on the opposite wall was not similarly qualified. Here, the weapons were real, and the battle between Christian and Muslim was to the death.

The intent of a number of Hahn’s works to entertain and educate children (albeit as she simultaneously made interesting statements about ethnic hierarchies) is representative of works with similar goals by other artists. Well-known artists such as Isabel McLaughlin (b.1903) and lesser-known painters such as Eva Prager (b.1912) and Dorothy Cole Ruddick (b.1925), for example, created works that were aimed specifically at child viewers. Isabel McLaughlin painted her only mural (untitled; 1954; oil on canvas; 63.4" x 71.6", *in situ*) for the children’s book room of the R. S. McLaughlin Public Library in Oshawa. It consists of a collage of animals and plants, with a cartoon-like quality designed for children’s entertainment, and was considered of sufficient importance to merit a brief mention in *Canadian Art*.¹⁴ Unfortunately the work was installed over a fireplace and in direct sunlight, and consequently the colour has been almost completely lost. The artist has declined permission for restoration, so the work today has deteriorated to black and white and no colour image remains to show it in its original form.¹⁵

¹⁴ “Murals in a Library,” *Canadian Art* XII (Summer 1955), 170.

¹⁵ Author’s conversation with Ms. Elizabeth Brighton, Head of Graphics, Oshawa Public Library, 21 April 1997.

In 1925 McLaughlin studied briefly at the OCA with Yvonne McKague Housser, but as a student she was more actively involved with the Toronto Art Students League. In 1920 and again in 1929-30 she studied in Paris, and in 1930 she studied child art with Housser, in Vienna under Franz Cizek. Most of her *oeuvre* is devoted to landscape, still-life, and city views. Like many other women artists, McLaughlin chose to remain unmarried and without children. As the daughter of wealthy parents - her father was Colonel R.S. McLaughlin, first president of General Motors - she had no financial need to work to support herself.¹⁶ The exploration of the complexities of her relationships with the children's mural as it pertains to the social discourses surrounding expectations of women would have addressed many issues that this dissertation was unable to investigate, but that have significant potential for their relevance to women's issues.

Eva Prager and Dorothy Cole Ruddick both painted murals for the Montreal Children's Hospital during a 1959 project wherein seven artists contributed murals to the building. Prager's work (oil on canvas; 8' x 12'; no longer extant), located in the waiting room for the X-ray Department, represented the City of Montreal filled with the activities of young people. The store windows were filled with toys, small animals frolicked throughout, the clientele in the restaurant consisted only of children, and a wolf directed traffic.¹⁷ The same project that saw the addition of Prager's mural also included three works by Dorothy Cole Ruddick. These consisted of a circus scene, a zoo and a farm (each oil on canvas; 5' x 6'; no longer extant). Prager and Ruddick are seemingly the only

¹⁶ Alicia Boutilier, 4 Women Who Painted in the 1930s and 1940s: Rody Kenny Courtice, Bobs Cogill Haworth, Yvonne McKague Housser, Isabel McLaughlin (Ottawa: Carleton University Gallery, 1998), 10.

¹⁷ "Première Murale de Mme Prager," La Presse (Montreal) 30 April 1959.

two artists who received press coverage for their Children's Hospital murals.¹⁸ Murals of this genre, often painted for private homes as well as public venues (Ruddick, for example, also painted a child's mural for her daughter's room in the family home), bridge the gap between public and private in an interesting way. Because they conflate the stereotyped relationships between women and children with the public art of mural painting, they would be an interesting addition to a study of women's art practice in Canada.

My final example of works that have been excluded from this dissertation - and the list of exclusions is by no means intended to be comprehensive - focuses on paintings devoted to religious themes. The large number of mural works that were painted by women artists for religious venues meant that only a handful could be selected from a broad field for inclusion in my writing. The two final artists to appear in this dissertation, however, are two unknown painters working in small towns in southwestern Ontario. Both were identified in the press by their husband's names as "Mrs. R.J. Haslett" and "Mrs. Robert Forsyth."¹⁹ Both painted landscape murals as church decorations - Mrs. Haslett in the nursery in the basement at the Church of St. Andrew Memorial in London, Ontario (1959), and Janet Forsyth (b. 1931) on the back wall of the baptistery at the Church of Christ (Disciples) in Ridgetown, Ontario (1969; oil on plaster; 11' x 11', *in situ*). Both these murals show landscape views. That of Haslett has flowers in the

¹⁸ "Première Murale de Mme Prager," La Presse (Montreal) 30 April 1959; Robert Ayre, "The Two Worlds of Dorothy Cole Ruddick," The Montrealer (November 1956).

¹⁹ "Finishes Mural for Church," London Free Press 8 May 1959; "Puts Finishing Touches to Painting," Ridgetown Dominion 8 May 1969.

foreground and a church in a landscape background behind it. Forsyth's represents an area just west of Banff on the north side of the Trans Canada Highway. In the foreground is the Bow River.²⁰ Forsyth has also painted murals in Chatham, Wallaceburg, Brantford and Honolulu. The two works by Haslett and Forsyth appear to be competent, although conservative, and both are good representations of the extensive amount of decoration of this sort that amateur women artists have completed, presumably without financial compensation, all across Canada. They are simple, decorative and intended to add a pleasant aspect to their surroundings.

I chose to end my dissertation with these works for particular, politically-motivated reasons. In the first place, the two artists represent for me the numbers of women who may have had the talent necessary to the pursuit of an artistic career, but who have instead devoted their lives to their families. The genteel, amateur woman artist has always been an acceptable figure in patriarchal discourse. Perhaps more importantly, however, I want to reiterate an idea elaborated by cultural theorist Raymond Williams - that is, that culture is ordinary.²¹ Williams suggests that culture should be an integral part of everyday life, not something enjoyed only on special occasions. He describes traditional art history thus: "When I now read a book such as Clive Bell's *Civilization*, I experience not so much disagreement as stupor. What kind of life can it be, I wonder, to produce this extraordinary fussiness, this extraordinary decision to call certain things

²⁰ The mural is situated in the baptistery, and the artist reports that when the lights are turned on for a baptism ceremony, the real water of the baptism reflects in the water of the painting, creating the illusion that the painting is animated. Telephone interview with Janet Forsyth, 1 February 2002.

²¹ Raymond Williams, "Culture is Ordinary," (1958) in Raymond Williams, Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism (New York: Verso, 1989), 3-18.

culture and then separate them, as with a park wall, from ordinary people and ordinary work?"²² Although Williams' intent was not specifically to address feminist issues, his suggestion that culture should be broadly understood has a feminist application. But in order for the culture of women to become integrated into the culture of Canada, to become "ordinary," or to become the norm, to make inroads into the discipline of art history and, by extension, into social systems generally, we have to continue the search for the answer to the questions "Why is women's history missing, and what are we going to do about that loss?" Simultaneously, however, the rhetoric of public and private cannot be permitted to eliminate the existence of women's art practices. As works of art they range aesthetically from naïve to practised and in a range of styles; as artists, the practitioners are diverse - amateur, professional, old, young, married, unmarried, and so on. As ideas expressed in public, murals by women are imbued with ideological significance. It is at the intersection of the lives of the women who painted them and the ways in which those lives were shaped that I have sought some further understanding of the meanings of "public," and I have suggested that the simple relegation to the private provides too little information about the individual's life.

²² Williams, "Culture is Ordinary," 5.

**APPENDIX I
THE MURAL PAINTING OF CANADA, MEXICO
AND THE UNITED STATES: AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY**

CANADIAN MURAL PAINTING

In the Province of Quebec between the late eighteenth and the late nineteenth centuries it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance to artists of mural commissions for church decoration. Large numbers of Quebec painters during this period earned their livings either as church decorators, as portrait painters, or most commonly as both. The list of artists engaged in mural decoration for the churches of Quebec included those who practised in Canada but who were born elsewhere. Artists such as William Berczy (1744-1815), for example, born in Saxony but resident in Quebec (after 1795), were known as portrait painters but also as church decorators. Berczy was responsible for the restoration of the altarpiece in the Ursuline Chapel, Quebec (*in situ*). His contemporary, Louis Dulongpré (1754-1843) was born in France but resident in Quebec after the mid-1780s. Dulongpré was most noted as a portrait painter, completing over four thousand portraits during the course of his career, but he also completed a number of church decorations throughout the province, including the ceiling of Notre-Dame Church in Montreal, destroyed during the 1820s. Louis-Chrétien de Heer (1760-before 1808) was born in Alsace and came to Montreal around 1783, working after his arrival primarily in the field of church decoration. The contract documenting his commission for the Church of Saint-Charles in Bellechasse is still in existence, providing archival details of the extent of the work such a painter might have undertaken and the prices he charged.¹

¹ J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*, 2nd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 65.

The painting of church decorations was not limited to immigrant artists. Many Canadian-born painters spent time studying and sometimes working abroad, most commonly in Paris, to perfect their skills and gain experience in the painting of classical subjects that, upon their return to Quebec, became part of their mural painting *oeuvres*. François Malepart de Beaucourt (1740-94), for example, worked during the early part of his career in Bordeaux. When he returned to Montreal in 1792 he began work as a portraitist and church decorator, drawing on his French practice as a design source for his Canadian topics. François Baillairgé (1759-1830) studied at the Académie Royale in Paris in 1779 and returned to Quebec in 1781 to pursue a career as a portrait painter and church decorator. Not all Canadian-born artists studied abroad, however. Jean-Baptiste Roy-Audy (1778-c.1848), for example, was educated in Quebec. He traveled widely following church commissions, and completed work not only in his hometown but also in New York (1834-37) and Toronto (1838).

A large percentage of the church work by these early Canadian artists consisted of copies of European paintings, the Catholic Church maintaining its conservative traditions through the reiteration of standard imagery (as discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation). The next and subsequent generations of Quebec painters also primarily chose to make copies to fulfill church commissions, with pupil following teacher in a repeating heritage of images. Joseph Legaré (1795-1855), for example, supplied Quebec churches with paintings copied from French originals. Legaré was apprenticed as a decorative painter in 1812, and this study seems to have constituted his sole artistic

education.² His pupil, Antoine-Sébastien Plamondon (1804-95), who would become the only French-speaking member of the Royal Canadian Academy at the time of its formation (1880), also copied French originals to supply church decorations. Plamondon spent four years studying in Paris (1826-30) before returning to Quebec to open a studio and to accept church commissions. When he strayed from the standard imagery demanded by conservative church leaders, however, as he did in 1839 with a commission for fourteen paintings to form a *Stations of the Cross* for the Church of Notre Dame in Montreal, his completed work was not accepted, as it did not conform to the prototypes selected by his clients.³ Before delivering the paintings to Notre Dame, Plamondon exhibited them in Quebec City, to positive reviews. Joseph-Vincent Quiblier, Superior of the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice of Montreal and responsible for commissioning the series, subsequently informed him that, for reasons of religious orthodoxy, eight of the fourteen subjects he had chosen were not acceptable. Although they represented scenes of the Passion, they did not conform to what had come to be standard inclusions for this type of work. For example, Plamondon painted *The Agony in the Garden of Olives*, but excluded *Jesus Condemned to Death*. He had strayed from the traditional *Stations*, and was ultimately forced to offer to replace the eight paintings; however, he never completed the work.⁴ The original fourteen paintings eventually found their way in 1847 into St.

² Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* 2nd edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 43. J. Russell Harper suggests that some writing supports the contention that Legaré may have studied in Europe. Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*, 70.

³ Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 45.

⁴ Yves Lacasse, *Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895): Le chemin de croix de l'église Notre-Dame de Montréal/The Way of the Cross of the Church of Notre-Dame de Montreal* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1984), 35-41.

Patrick's Church in Montreal. Eight disappeared following a renovation in 1895, and the final six found their way in 1933 to the Institute des Sourds-Muets in Montreal and were purchased in 1961 by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, where they remain today.⁵

Plamondon's experience highlights the control that the Catholic Church held over Quebec mural commissions, and the difficulties involved in moving beyond the prescribed iconography it demanded. His church work can be seen today at Sainte Anne de Beaupré and on Ile d'Orléans in the Churches of St. Anselme and St. Peter.

Plamondon's pupil, Théophile Hamel (1817-70) also completed a number of church decorations in the form of mural paintings, including a work for the main altar of the Church of Notre Dame du Bon-Secours, Montreal, representing the Sisters of Charity ministering to the victims of typhoid fever. The ceiling of the same church was decorated with a Life of the Virgin series, painted in 1886-91 by a pupil of Napoleon Bourassa's (1827-1916), Edouard Meloche (1855-1914). Meloche is credited with the decoration of forty churches in Canada, including Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation de Champlain, executed in 1882-83 and still intact. Bourassa himself painted some thirty murals for Eglise Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Montreal, beginning in 1875. He also painted murals for the Nazareth Chapel (1870), demolished for the construction of Place des Arts, Montreal, and made designs for murals for Saint-Hugues Church, Montreal (1879) and Sainte-Ours Church, Montreal (date unknown), that were never executed.⁶ In addition to his church

⁵ Lacasse, Antoine Plamondon (1804-1895), 48-52.

⁶ Raymond Vezina, Napoléon Bourassa (1827-1916): Exhibition and Accompanying Catalogue (Ottawa: Public Archives, 1976); Raymond Vezina, Napoléon Bourassa (1827-1916): Introduction à l'étude de son art (Ottawa: Editions Elysée, 1976).

decorations, Bourassa also designed a large mural, *The Apotheosis of Christopher Columbus*, for the Legislative Assembly Building (now the National Assembly Building) in Quebec, that was never completed. The preliminary painting (1904-12), an oil on canvas and of substantial dimensions (16' x 26') is today in the Musée du Québec.

By the turn of the twentieth century mural painting in Quebec was no longer dedicated exclusively to the Church. Nevertheless, Ozias Leduc (1864-1955), who painted well into the century, made his principal income through church decoration, his other canvases selling only sporadically during his lifetime. Leduc completed mural cycles in twenty-seven religious institutions, for a total of approximately one hundred and fifty works,⁷ plus the accompanying ornamentation, including the decoration of the cupola of the Église du Saint-Enfant-Jésus in Montreal (c.1916) and the chapel of the Bishop's palace in Sherbrooke.⁸ Leduc also worked in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, Shawinigan, the Maritimes (Antigonish, Halifax), Manitoba (Saint-Boniface), and the

⁷ Leduc's earliest work was in collaboration with Adolphe Rho (1835-1905) for the Yamachiche Church, Maskinongé County (destroyed by fire in 1958). He also painted works for the Church of Saint-John-in-Montana (near Jerusalem, 1890); Church of Saint-Paul-l'Ermite., Assomption County, Quebec (1892); Joliette Cathedral (1893); Church of Saint-Hilaire (c.1898); Church of Sainte-Julie, Verchères (1900); Saint Ninian's Cathedral, Antigonish (1903); Chapel of the Convent of the Sisters of the Congregation, Antigonish (1900); Chapel of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, Halifax (1904); Church of Saint-Romuald, Farnham, Quebec (1905; 1919); Saint Mary's Church, Manchester, New Hampshire (1906); Saint Mary's Church, Dover, New Hampshire (1908); Notre-Dame de Bon-Secour, Montreal (1908); Saint-Hyacinthe Cathedral (1912); Church of Saint-Edmond, Coaticook, Quebec (1911); Church of Saint-Barnabé, Saint-Hyacinthe County, Quebec (1911); Church of Saint-Enfant-Jésus, Mile-End, Montreal (1916); Saint-Raphael, Ile Bizard (1922); Church of Sainte-Geneviève-de-Pierrefonds, Montreal (1926); Chapel of Saint-Hilaire Convent (1926); Dollard Church, Montreal (1926); Baptistery of Notre-Dame, Montreal (1927); Church of Saint-Jude, Saint-Hyacinthe (1927); Sherbrooke Cathedral, Sherbrooke (1932); Chapel of Notre-Dame, Montreal (1930); Church of Saints-Anges-Gardiens, Lachine (1930); Church of Saint-Michel, Rougemont (1935-36); Chapel of the Convent of the Soeurs de la Présentation, Saint-Hyacinthe (1938); Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Présentation, Shawinigan (1942). Note also that after 1940 a woman, Gabrielle Messier, assisted Leduc. She completed the canvases for the Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Présentation after Leduc's death.

⁸ Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 114.

United States).⁹ Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-60), a man who would later profoundly affect the course of Quebec art through his participation in the Automatist movement and the writing of *Refus Global*, worked as Leduc's assistant and was first inspired to paint by Leduc's decoration of the parish church in Saint-Hilaire. Borduas himself spent the first years of his artistic career as a church decorator.

Notwithstanding the work of Leduc, mural painting for Quebec churches had declined as a means of livelihood for most Quebec artists by the turn of the twentieth century. Canadian authorities, however, were disinclined to subsidize artists in the painting of other public projects, making the completion of murals outside the church rare events. Nevertheless, artists such as Charles Huot (1855-1930), along with his work as a church decorator, painted political and history murals for the decoration of public buildings. Huot studied and worked for an extended period in Paris (1874-90), and returned to Canada as a mature artist with a developed reputation. Throughout the length of his stay in Paris, Quebec newspapers regularly published news of his accomplishments.¹⁰ During a brief return to Canada in 1886, he contracted to paint a cycle of thirteen murals for Saint-Sauveur Church in Quebec City. Returning to Paris to execute the commission, Huot exhibited one of the works, *The End of the World* (c.1890; 9.15 x 18.3 m; oil on canvas; Saint-Sauveur Church), in Neukrug, Germany prior to its installation at Saint-Sauveur. Jean-René Ostiguy suggests that Huot's decision to show this particular work was most likely based on the fact that, of the thirteen murals, this one

⁹ Laurier Lacroix, *Ozias Leduc: An Art of Love and Reverie* (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), 299-303.

¹⁰ Jean-René Ostiguy, *Charles Huot (1855-1930)* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1970), 7.

was the only original work, the others being copies after Renaissance painters.¹¹ Huot followed for the most part the traditional method of creating decorations for Quebec churches in his copies, but it was his original work that he considered worthy of exhibition.

In 1900 Huot was given a retrospective at the Legislative Assembly Building in Quebec. The exhibition included at least one history painting, the *Battle of the Plains of Abraham* (no longer extant). Subsequent to the retrospective, Huot was invited to complete commissions for three murals for the same building. The first of these works, *Le débat sur les langues: séance de l'Assemblée législative au Bas-Canada le 21 janvier 1793* (oil on canvas; 12' 9" x 28' 6"; *in situ*), painted 1910-13, depicts the officials of Lower Canada debating language issues. In 1920, he completed *Je me souviens* (oil on canvas; 5' 11" x 22' 7"; *in situ*) an image of a young girl holding aloft a laurel wreath, for the ceiling of the same room. His third and final commission in 1926 was entitled *Le Conseil souverain* (oil on canvas; 14' 6" x 30' 10", Galerie Charles Huot, Quebec City). Huot died in 1930 before completing the work, which was finished by local artists from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Québec.

Although it is almost certain that women as well as men were engaged in the decoration of Quebec churches their involvement has been little documented. What sparse literature does exist attributes all this work to nuns rather than to secular painters. Survey texts on Canadian art generally do not mention the work done by nuns to embellish the churches, monasteries and convents of Quebec, although Maria Tippett in

¹¹ Ostiguy, Charles Huot, 13.

By A Lady does make reference to early church work by women (not necessarily mural painting), noting that “[t]hey all sought to translate the French Classical Baroque, a style they had known in France during the formative years of their careers, into the architectural environment of the new country.”¹² She describes La Mère des Anges (active 1671-95), for example, who arrived in Quebec in 1671 for the purpose of creating decorations for Quebec churches. Between 1671 and 1691 she carved and decorated several altars, such as *La Vierge Druidique de Québec* in Ste Marie Beauce. Perhaps more importantly, she taught other nuns and lay pupils to carve and paint “so that they in turn could adorn the convents and churches of New France with statues, altars, choir stalls and other religious artifacts.”¹³ The tradition of passing knowledge of painting and other artistic techniques through teachers with religious affiliations was maintained in Quebec for generations, guaranteeing that the members of religious orders would continuously contribute to the decoration of houses of worship. The workshop of the Sisters of Bon-Pasteur, for example, executed between 1860 and 1960 more than four hundred works for church decoration.¹⁴ (See Chapter Two for more on this subject.)

The Catholic Church in Ontario had a far less significant influence than in Quebec, and as a result Ontario lacked Quebec’s nineteenth-century church-sponsored mural tradition. It was not until the late-nineteenth century that mural painting in Ontario would begin to progress. Gustav Hahn (1866-1962), for example, completed a number of

¹² Maria Tippet, *By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), 3.

¹³ Tippet, *By A Lady*, 3.

¹⁴ Ginette Laroche, “Oeuvres d’art,” Commission des Biens Culturels, *La chemin de la mémoire* (Québec: Les Publications du Québec, 1990), 72.

late-nineteenth-century mural commissions for churches, public buildings and private residences. In 1893 he received a commission to paint the upper wall of the Legislative Assembly at Queen's Park. Hahn, known more to Canadian art history for his teaching than for his artistic production, taught interior design at the OCA and the ROM, working at the College until the age of eighty.¹⁵ While a number of artists, including Hahn, Franklin Brownell (1857-1946), William Brymner (1855-1925), F.S. Challener (1869-1959), William Cruikshank (1848-1922), and Edmond Dyonnet (1859-1954) all expressed an interest in the painting of murals, no Canadian artist did more to promote the development of a mural tradition than George Agnew Reid (1860-1947) husband to Mary Hiester (1854-1921) and later to Mary Wrinch (1877-1969). He was personally responsible for the completion of many mural works and actively promoted mural painting in both speeches and publications. George Reid's early enthusiasm for mural painting dated from the time of a trip he made to Paris in 1888-89, concurrent with the commissioning by the Paris Ministry of Fine Arts of decorations for the Paris City Hall.¹⁶ Ninety-six artists, including Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, an artist Reid greatly admired, were selected to tell the history of the city. Reid studied the Paris experiments in mural decoration carefully and returned to Canada with the idea of proposing a similar scheme for the Toronto Municipal Buildings (later renamed Toronto City Hall).¹⁷ He did nothing to further his plans during the following few years, but during an 1893 trip to Chicago he

¹⁵ Colin MacDonald, A Dictionary of Canadian Artists vol. 2 (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1989), 341.

¹⁶ Muriel Miller, George Reid: A Biography (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1987 [1946]), 68.

¹⁷ George Reid, typescript of retirement address to the Ontario College of Art, George Reid scrapbooks, E.P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario: 379.

saw, and was impressed by, the murals of John Singer Sargent and Edwin Austin Abbey for the World's Fair taking place in that city.¹⁸ Although he made no written reference to them in later years, Reid would presumably have seen at the same time the murals *Modern Woman* by Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) and *Primitive Woman* by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (1858-1946) in the tympana of the Woman's Building of the same fair. Mary MacMonnies was a student of Puvis de Chavannes, and the subdued tones and representations of mythological figures in her mural were stylistically similar to those of Puvis. Mary Cassatt, on the other hand, worked closely with Degas, and her work reflected his influence, using stronger colours and more detailed renderings than those employed by MacMonnies.¹⁹ There is nothing in George Reid's career to suggest that he was not fully supportive of the women artists in his milieu, but if he did indeed see the two murals, perhaps their appearance confirmed for him the idea that women as professional mural painters were well-accepted in other communities.

In the year following his 1893 trip to Chicago, Reid assembled seven Canadian artists who shared his interest in the painting of murals and together they formed the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators (1894-95).²⁰ The seven (Frederick Challenger (1869-1959), William Cruikshank (1849-1922), Harriet Ford (1859-1938), E. Wyly Grier

¹⁸ Miller, *George Reid: A Biography*, 70.

¹⁹ Frances K. Pohl, "Historical Reality or Utopian Ideal? The Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 5, no.4 (September/October, 1982): 303. After the Fair ended, Cassatt's mural, the only one she ever painted, disappeared. John D. Kysela, "Mary Cassatt's Mystery Mural and the World's Fair of 1893," *The Art Quarterly* 29, no.2 (1966): 142-143.

²⁰ The formation of the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators predated the formation of a similar organization in the United States by one year. The National Society of Mural Painters (including Charles Lamb, William Hunt, Frederic Crowninshield, and others) was formed in 1895. However, unlike the short-lived Canadian Society, the American organization is still in existence.

(1862-1957), George Reid, Sydney Strickland Tully (1860-1911) and Curtis Williamson (1867-1944), did not limit their mandate to the painting of murals in public buildings, but intended in addition to “devise some means of concerted action to influence municipal art, especially to guard the new public buildings from any inadequate interior decoration which might be adopted.”²¹ They cited similar leagues in New York, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati and other places as models for their plans. The league was to take action on “the merits of all works of art either presented, bought, or otherwise acquired by the city, such as public buildings, statues, paintings, mural decorations, parks, fountains, arches, bridges, etc..”²² In other words, the Society of Mural Decorators was taking it upon itself to monitor and approve all public artworks for display in public circumstances in Toronto. The Society suggested that it would not *initially* have such a far-reaching influence, but rather that it would become the *future* source for the control of all the public art purchased for or otherwise added to the city’s collection.

Of particular interest for this dissertation was the inclusion by Reid of two women members, Sydney Strickland Tully and Harriet Ford, in the ranks of the Canadian Society of Mural Decorators. In two typescripts by him that remain in his scrapbooks, he describes the founding moments of the group and the attempts they made to secure mural commissions, but he does not comment on the gender of Ford or Tully, suggesting that he did not feel any need to explain their inclusion. The two women, however, particularly Tully, did not pursue careers as mural painters to any great extent. Harriet Ford’s career

²¹ George Reid, typescript, George Reid scrapbooks, E.P.Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario: 199.

²² Typescript, George Reid scrapbooks: 199.

as a mural painter and as a lecturer on the subject of mural decoration is referenced in a handful of sources, and she has one extant over-mantle mural in the Charles Porteous house on Ile d'Orleans, Quebec, discussed at greater length in Chapter One of this dissertation. Sydney Strickland Tully has not been written about as a painter of murals, nor is any mural work by her known to exist, although she is documented as having submitted sketches to two of the original schemes proposed by the Society of Mural Decorators. It might seem unlikely that George Reid would have invited Tully to participate in the founding of the Society if she had no experience in the field of mural painting. However, the genre was so undeveloped in Canada at the time that none of the participants actually had much, if any, experience. If Tully did bring any mural painting background to the group's meetings, that experience is now lost. It is also noteworthy that Reid's first wife, Mary Hiester Reid, to whom he was married from 1885 until her death in 1921, although she was known to have painted several murals, was not included as a member of the Society. By whose choice this decision was made is not known, but it seems highly unlikely, considering George Reid's attitude towards both Ford and Tully and his support of women artists in general, that he was responsible for the decision to exclude Mary Hiester Reid from membership.

Six of the seven members of the Society of Mural Decorators (Challener, Cruikshank, Ford, Tully and Williamson, along with Reid) made their first proposal in 1894 for a decorating scheme consisting of paintings for Toronto's Union Station.²³ The artists made plans and sketches for the project, but the Station management rejected the

²³ Miller, *George Reid: A Biography*, 71.

proposal on the grounds that there was no money available to carry it out.²⁴ The Mural Society then turned its attention to Toronto's Municipal Buildings, under construction at the time. In a letter dated 1895 and addressed to the architectural firm that designed the building, Reid remarked on his Chicago experiences and professed his wish to propose a similar scheme.²⁵ Although Ford and Tully had both participated in the earlier plans for Union Station they do not appear to have submitted sketches for this later plan; of the seven members of the Society of Mural Decorators only George Reid, E. Wyly Grier, William Cruikshank and F.S. Challener participated in the proposal. The four artists decided that about one hundred places existed in the building where mural decorations would be appropriate and they suggested historical subjects for the staircase and hall and allegorical and symbolic subjects for the main entrance, court rooms and council chamber. The press supported the plan, noting, "We trust something will come of the scheme that has been advanced by some of our artists for the decoration of the new City Hall buildings, but it seems premature to say much about it at present."²⁶ Some council members were also supportive, but the murals were once again considered too expensive, and the commission was turned down. The sketches were subsequently exhibited at the Applied Arts Exhibition (before 1901) and were described as being "universally admired."²⁷ The failure of this second enterprise caused the Society of Mural Decorators to disband after only a little over a year in existence. However, the assembly of many

²⁴ Miller, *George Reid: A Biography*, 72.

²⁵ George Reid to R.J. Lennox, Toronto, 27 March 1895. George Reid scrapbooks: 199.

²⁶ *The Week* 8 February 1895, 259.

²⁷ Quiller, "Mural Painting in Toronto," *Toronto Saturday Night* 14, no.40, 17 August 1901, 6.

artists, critics and other interested persons in the promotion of the scheme to paint the Toronto Municipal Buildings did result in the formation of the Toronto Guild of Civic Art, a group loyal to the idea of promoting civic works to embellish Toronto. In 1898, a member of the group, James Mavor (Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto), would publish a short manifesto, *Notes on the Objects of the Toronto Guild of Civic Art and on the Exhibition of Prints of Mural Paintings*, stating that the Guild planned to take over responsibility for civic purchases for the city of Toronto. Mavor wrote that “[t]he Guild of Civic Art, while not arrogating to itself the position of a Court of Art, does attempt to provide the machinery by means of which, as occasion arises, a consultative committee might be formed which would aid the public authorities in arriving at a decision upon designs which may be submitted to them.”²⁸ Thus, the Guild of Civic Art carried on the attempt to control public art for the City of Toronto, as begun by the Society of Mural Decorators. George Reid was active in both organizations.

Subsequent to the failure by the Society of Mural Decorators to obtain a commission to decorate Toronto’s Municipal Buildings, George Reid made an offer to the city that could not be refused, and between 1897 and 1899 he painted a series of murals, two panels entitled *Hail to the Pioneers*, and four spandrel decorations for the building, at no charge. Those murals remain *in situ* in the building, the panels showing scenes of pioneer life and the spandrel decorations consisting of images of winged figures over an arched entranceway. The artists who had made the original proposals along with Reid followed different paths. Challenger, who studied at the Ontario College of Art and

²⁸ James Mavor, *Note on the Objects of the Toronto Guild of Civic Art and on the Exhibition of Prints of Mural Paintings* (Toronto: Privately published, 1898), 2.

privately with George Reid, went on in the following two years to paint a number of murals that were greatly admired. Included among them were a ceiling for McConkey's restaurant in Toronto (c.1900, no longer extant), some panels in two steamers, the *Toronto* and the *Kingston* (c.1901, no longer extant), and a mural for the Royal Alexandra Hotel in Winnipeg (1908-12, demolished 1971). In 1902 he replaced an American muralist who was working in the King Edward Hotel in Toronto, under construction in that year. The American artist had squabbled with the architect and Challener was hired to complete the work. Challener also wrote about mural painting, publishing at least one article on the subject.²⁹ The other two artists, Grier and Cruikshank, on the other hand, did not pursue careers as mural painters.

The series of challenges that characterized the initial stages of the development of Canadian mural painting must have seemed at best disappointing and at worst defeating, but George Reid, like Challener, persevered. In later years he painted murals in many private homes, including several in Onteora, New York, where he and Mary Hiester Reid had their summer home, and for various private venues in Toronto. In addition, he painted many other public murals in and around Toronto, including decorations for the Earls court Public Library (1925-26, now demolished) and two series for Toronto's Jarvis Collegiate (1928-30; 1949).

The impetus that started with Reid's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century interventions, however, had largely lost its momentum by the end of the First World War, and few mural commissions were being completed by 1920. During the decade of prosperity between 1920 and 1930 there was a brief revival of interest that accompanied

²⁹ F.S. Challenor [sic], "Mural Decoration," *The Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1904): 90-92.

the affluence of the time and the building boom that accompanied it.³⁰ The increase in the number of mural commissions in the 1920s also accompanied the development of an interest in Canadian identity, an interest that held particular sway during the twenties. In part, there was a public desire to recognize Canada's contributions to the Great War, as evidenced by, for example, the 1922 murals painted for Currie Hall Auditorium at the Royal Military College in Kingston by Percy Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair.³¹ In the same vein were George Reid's works that formed part of the cycle he painted for Jarvis Collegiate Institute.³² Also in 1923, Arthur Crisp's decorations for the new Parliament Buildings in Ottawa were unveiled, and almost immediately the Royal Canadian Academy held a mural competition for more murals for the Parliament Buildings.³³ A second competition was held in 1924-25, with mural commissions being awarded at that time to six artists in Montreal and Toronto.³⁴ Although Canadian artists continued to paint murals throughout the 1930s, the number of murals painted in Canada could not compare to the number commissioned in the United States. Following the end of the Depression mural painting remained a sporadically supported craft, supplying a small number of

³⁰ Hodgkinson, Arthur Lismer's Drawings for the Humberside Mural: Development of a Grandiose Patriotic Scheme (Kleinburg: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1992), 8.

³¹ Traquair's mother, Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852-1936) was a prominent painter of murals in Edinburgh.

³² Hodgkinson, Arthur Lismer's Drawings for the Humberside Mural, 8.

³³ Sixty artists competed and J.E.H. MacDonald won the competition.

³⁴ Hodgkinson gives the winners as George Reid and C.W. Simpson (Hogkinson, Arthur Lismer's Drawings for the Humberside Mural, 9), but the \$2000 prize money was divided among six artists (Reid, Simpson, Hal Ross Perrigard, Robert Pilot, Donald Hill, and H. Leslie Smith). "Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Mural Competition," The Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (September-October 1926): 182. Reid and Simpson won slightly higher awards than the other artists (\$450 each as compared to between \$225 and \$350).

artists with work. It would not be until the 1960s that more work, particularly in the form of large-scale exterior murals, would become available to Canadian artists.

MURAL PAINTING IN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

In addition to European influences such as those exerted by Puvis de Chavannes on George Reid, Canadian artists, particularly those of the generations following Reid's, were shaped to a certain extent by their counterparts in both Mexico and the United States. In spite of the often democratic-socialist politics of many of Canada's twentieth-century artists, however, Canadian painters did not commonly express their political beliefs through mural painting in the way manifested by their Mexican, and, to a lesser extent, their American counterparts. Shared mural influences between Mexico and the United States are far clearer than any effect that either country had on Canada.

The work of the most famous of the Mexican mural painters, Diego Rivera (1886-1957), José Clemente Orozco (1863-1949) and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1898-1974) began in the early 1920s and ended in the early 1970s with the death of Siqueiros. The fifty-decade span was paralleled in Mexican society by a dramatic social transformation, in which the rural population became largely industrialized.³⁵ The ten-year battle, 1910 to 1920, of complex bids for power following the resignation and self-imposed exile of the dictator Porfirio Díaz, formed the basis for the emergence of a society in which the quest for a Mexican identity combined with a cultural renaissance. Against this highly political background, the Mexican mural movement of the twentieth century grew.

³⁵ Desmond Rochfort, Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros (San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1993), 11.

In spite of Christine Boyanoski's claim in the catalogue to the exhibition *The Artist's Mecca: Canadian Art and Mexico* to the effect that Mexican mural painting had a significant influence in Canada, there was little impact on Canadian art from this branch of Mexican painting.³⁶ The lack of influence was not due to want of exposure. Mexican mural painting was well-known in Canada. Exhibitions of Mexican art were shown in Canadian venues,³⁷ and many Canadian artists traveled to Mexico (especially to San Miguel de Allende) to study and work, among them Stanley Cosgrove (who worked with Orozco on the frescoes of the chapel of the Hospital Jesus of Nazareno in Mexico City), R. York Wilson, Arnold Belkin, Alberto Tommi, Suzanne Guité and Reva and Leonard Brooks. In addition, scholarships were available to Canadian artists who wished to study in Mexico, and advertisements for the art school at the Instituto Allende appeared often in *Canadian Art* during the late-forties, fifties and early-sixties.³⁸ Canadian artists valued travel and study in Mexico. In the words of Donald Andrus,

It is perhaps rather easy today to forget the importance that Mexico held for Canadian artists at one time, when to travel or live there for a period was something akin to a pilgrimage. Virtually every issue of *Canadian Art* published over a four year period between 1949 and 1953 contains articles dealing with Canadian artists' visits to Mexico, or reports of exhibitions of work based on these visits.³⁹

³⁶ Christine Boyanoski, *The Artist's Mecca: Canadian Art and Mexico* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1992), 24.

³⁷ There was, for example, an exhibition of Mexican art in Montreal at the Art Association Galleries in September 1943 that was so popular - 3000 people visited the gallery over ten days - that a newspaper article begged those with a catalogue to return it to the gallery for a one-dollar refund so that it could be recycled to other users. "Mexican Art Exhibit so Popular that Catalogue Shortage Exists," *Montreal Daily Star* 20 September 1943, 4. See also "Coast to Coast in Art: Ottawa," *Canadian Art* 1 (October-November 1943): 27.

³⁸ See, for example, Léon Bellefleur, "Coast to Coast in Art: From Mexico - An Art Scholarship Exclusively for Canadians," *Canadian Art* 9 (Autumn 1951): 40.

³⁹ Donald F.P. Andrus, *Ghitta Caiserman-Roth: A Retrospective View/Un Aperçu Retrospectif 1947-1980* (Montreal: Sir George Williams Art Galleries of Concordia University, 1981), 21.

The acknowledgement of the importance of the art and culture of Mexico make its lack of influence on Canadian art perhaps difficult to completely understand or explain, particularly given the flow of artists and artworks between the two countries. In part, Mexican muralism became more widely known in Canada only following the Depression years, missing the moment when it might have been expected to have the greatest impact. As Charles Hill has noted, "In spite of the high degree of political activity among artists, surprisingly little overt political or social content appears in Canadian painting at this time."⁴⁰ Mexican mural painters may have shaped the way a certain number of Canadian murals looked - i.e., the way the figures in the murals were represented in space and juxtaposed one to the other - but the politics behind the Mexican mural movement did not play a major role in Canadian art history and there was no financial support for Canadian artists emanating from Government sources in the 1930s. In 1937, André Biéler explained this difference by citing "the comparatively simple racial pattern of Mexico and its rich artistic background [which] have enabled that country to develop a strong national art much before us in Canada and even before the United States."⁴¹ Regardless of the obvious problem of identifying any country as having a "simple racial pattern," the date of Biéler's statement underlines the fact that even at that time Canadians were aware that there were differences between the two countries in terms of the development of a mural tradition.

⁴⁰ Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 16.

⁴¹ André Biéler, "National Aspects of Contemporary American and Canadian Painting," in Reginald Trotter, et al, *Conference on Canadian-American Affairs* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1937), 135.

Similarly, mural painting activities in the United States did not have a notable effect on Canadian painting. The mural-painting campaign of the Depression years in the U.S., for example, was not paralleled by any similar support for the arts in Canada. Its southern neighbour, on the other hand, directly influenced depression-era painting in the U.S. The art of Mexico was well-known to American artists. Its presence there dated back at least to the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, where reproductions of Aztec art and other works from the Museo de Bellas Artes in Mexico were shown.⁴² In addition, Mexican muralism of the 1920s and 1930s was a moving force in the history of art in the United States, most especially during the Depression years of the 1930s. The Mexican mural movement became better known in the U.S. during the 1930s as a result of the simultaneous opening up of trade relationships and tourism between the two countries.⁴³ During those years of hardship, American supporters of Roosevelt's Federal Art Project, a subsection of the Works Progress Administration, looked to the Mexican mural movement as a model for a new, democratic art. The Federal Art Project paid over four thousand artists to produce approximately 2,500 murals over a period of eight years for American venues during the Depression. Artists such as Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975), Ben Shahn (1898-1969), and Marion Greenwood (1909-70) created murals that were similar in intention to the work of the Mexican muralists. However, most of the WPA murals had little or nothing to do with Mexican mural ideologies. Greenwood, for example worked in Mexico City with Rivera and the shift in her ideological thinking that

⁴² "Art Notes," *The Week* (Toronto) 6 May 1892, 362.

⁴³ Linda Downs, "The Rouge in 1932: The Detroit Industry Frescoes by Diego Rivera," *The Rouge: The Image of Industry in the Art of Charles Sheeler and Diego Rivera* (Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1978), 47.

is seen in her U.S. murals was imposed by U.S. organizations. The work of U.S. artists was specifically designed to be accessible to the average citizen and to promote beliefs in the value of family, hard (but honest) labour, and traditional rural values.⁴⁴

In Canada no support for artists such as that offered by the American Federal Arts Project developed during the Depression years. Although Ontario artists such as Stanley Cosgrove painted church decorations (Church of St. Henri, Montreal, 1938) and Edwin Holgate (assisted by Cosgrove, Albert Cloutier and Will Ogilvie) painted the murals for the Canadian exhibition at the New York World's Fair in 1939⁴⁵, these small commissions in no way paralleled the extensive mural work completed in both Mexico and the United States during the same decade. In fact, the only Canadian artist during the thirties to have the opportunity to work on a number of mural projects was Charles Comfort (North American Life Building, Toronto; 1932, Toronto Stock Exchange, 1936; International Nickel Company, mural commissioned for the Paris International Exposition, 1937; Hotel Vancouver, 1939). Comfort relied in these paintings on a socialist tradition inspired by the work of Rivera and by the American Thomas Hart Benton,⁴⁶ but his use of Mexican and American traditions in the painting of his mural works set him apart from his peers rather than establishing precedents for other Canadian

⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the goals of New Deal mural painters see Barbara Melosh, Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theatre Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, especially pages 1-4.

⁴⁵ This was Holgate's last mural commission and he painted a large frieze to go around the room at ceiling height. It was filled with life-sized figures engaged in "typical work." He completed the work in Montreal and installed it, with Cloutier's assistance, in New York. Dennis Reid, Edwin Holgate (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1976, 19.

⁴⁶ Hill, Canadian Painting in the Thirties, 93.

artists to follow. The direct effect on an influential artist like Comfort of both Mexican and American mural painting perhaps makes the lack of further development of a mural-painting tradition in Canada in the 1930s all the more puzzling. As Charles Hill remarks, Canadian artists were well aware of the activities of the Works Progress Administration in the U.S. and in 1940 there had been an exhibition of designs for murals for U.S. Federal Buildings at the National Gallery of Canada. But Hill also notes that geographical isolation prevented Canadians from organizing, and Canada in any case had a relatively small number of artists when compared to the U.S. In addition, the government of the United States had itself initiated and organized the W.P.A., but the government of Canada expressed no similar interest in promoting the arts.⁴⁷ Prior to the much later 1957 formation of the Canada Council, the Canadian government offered little support to the artistic community. The shortage of mural paintings in Canada was consistently bemoaned, and the lack of political content in those works that did exist was also considered a subject for regret. Paul Duval, for example, wrote in 1949 that “[p]olitical art has virtually never existed in Canada.... Mural art, the most characteristic manifestation of political art, has been especially barren.”⁴⁸ Artists such as André Biéler found Canadian artists “obsessed by geography with no reflection of social concerns or idealism.”⁴⁹ In spite of the fact that few Canadian murals were painted in the thirties, however, the Ontario College of Art (OCA) considered mural painting to be of sufficient

⁴⁷ Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 17.

⁴⁸ Paul Duval, “Murals - A Political Art,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 26, no. 1 (January 1949): 9.

⁴⁹ Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 116.

importance to establish a mural painting department - albeit toward the end of the decade - with Charles Comfort as its head. Mural painting was taught at OCA between 1938 and 1946.⁵⁰ Murals in Canada might never have achieved the monumental importance of those of their Mexican and American counterparts, but Canadian murals by both women and men nevertheless form an integral and important part of our cultural heritage.

⁵⁰ Although Comfort remained head of the department, he did not actually teach between 1943 and 1946. During those years he served in Italy as Senior Official War Artist.

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Fig. 1: Yvonne McKague Houser, [*Sibley Provincial Park*], 1954, *toile marouflée*, 44" x 82". Collection of The Canada Science and Technology Museum.



**Fig. 2: Alfred Casson, *Algonquin Provincial Park*, 1954, *toile marouflée*, 44" x 82".
Collection of The Canada Science and Technology Museum.**



Fig. 3: Harriet Ford, *La Moisson*, c.1896, toile marouflée 5' 3" x 3'. Charles Porteous House, Ile d'Orléans, Quebec.

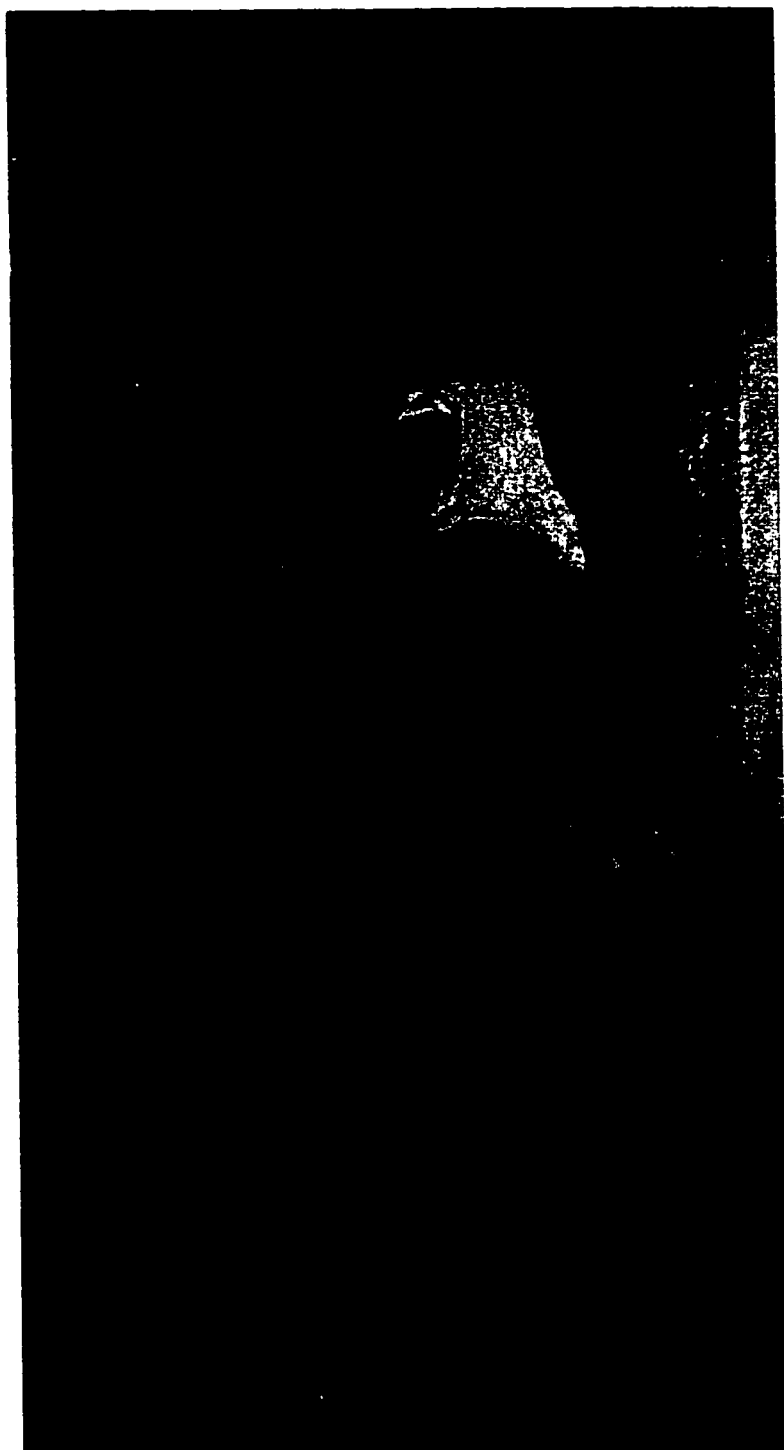


Fig. 4: Harriet Ford, *Mother and Child*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 75" x 36", Saint John's Convalescent Hospital, Toronto.

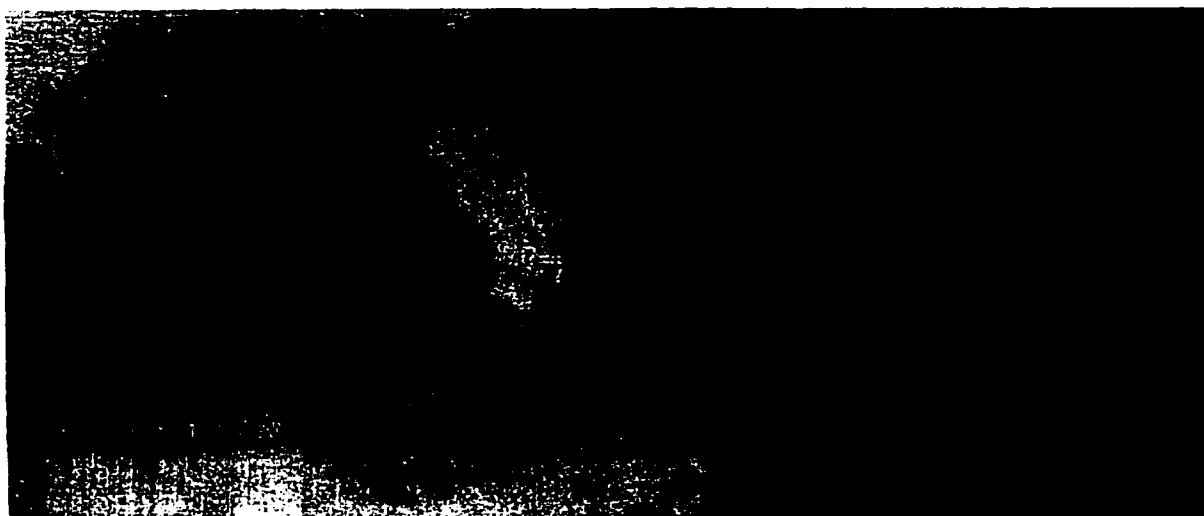


Fig. 5: Mary Hiester Reid [*Over-mantle Mural for Upland Cottage, Wychwood Park, Toronto*] undated, *toile marouflée*, 20" x 57", Upland Cottage, Wychwood Park, Toronto.



Fig. 6: Mary Hiester Reid, *Castles in Spain*, c.1896, oil on canvas, 21" x 54".
Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario.

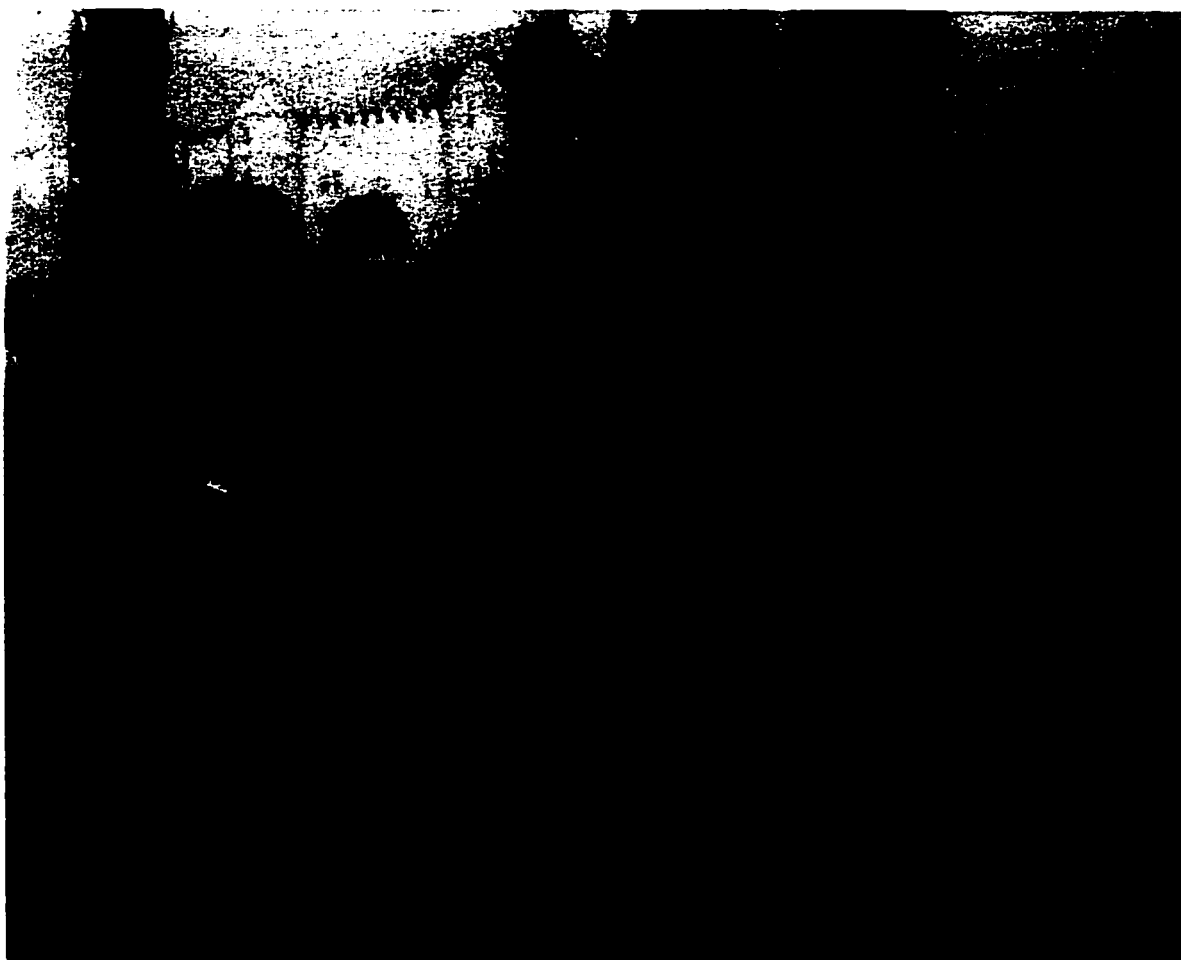


Fig. 7: Mary Hiester Reid, [*Mural for the Canadian National Exhibition - shown 1922 as *The Enchanted Castle**], c.1912, oil on jute, cut to 25" x 30" (original size unknown). Private collection, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 8: Mary Hiester Reid, *The Humber River*, c.1912, *toile marouflée*, approximately 8' x 20'. Location unknown.



Fig. 9: Elizabeth Annie Birnie, *A Relic of the "Old Village"*, c.1900, watercolour, 24" x 18". Collection of Collingwood Public Library.



Fig 10: Elizabeth Annie Birnie, [*Lord and Lady Simcoe and the Signing of a Land Deal With the Chippewa*], detail: [*Lord Simcoe and two unidentified Chippewa*], 1910-14, *toile marouflée*, 26' 4" x 4' 6". Collection of Discovery Harbour, Penetanguishene.



Fig. 11: Elizabeth Annie Birnie, [*Lord and Lady Simcoe and the Signing of a Land Deal with the Chippewa*], detail: *Lady Simcoe*, 1910-1914, toile marouflée, 26' 4" x 4' 6". Collection of Discovery Harbour, Penetanguishene.



Fig. 12: Elizabeth Annie Birnie, [*John Franklin on his Second Polar Expedition*], 1910-14, *toile marouflée*, 23' 10" x 4' 8". Collection of Discovery Harbour, Penetanguishene.



Fig. 13: Nancy Burden (Philips), *[Mural Commemorating the Contributions of the R.C.A.F.]*, 1944, oil on canvas, 28' x 52'. Location unknown.

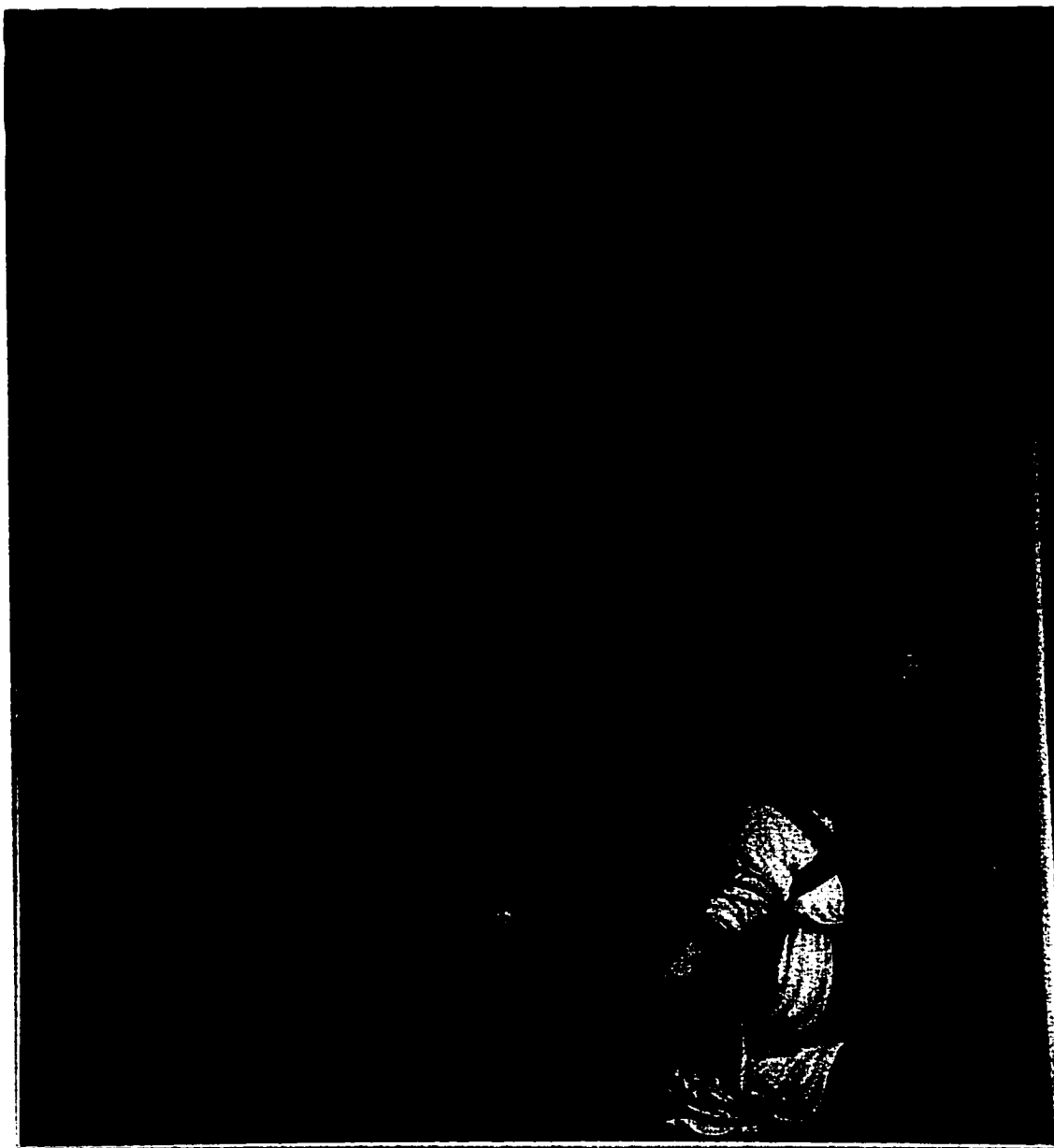


Fig 14: Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion, *St. Jerome*, c.1888, *toile marouflée* approximately 7' x 4'. Chapel of the Convent of Précieux-Sang, St. Hyacinthe.



Fig. 15: Domenichino, *Last Communion of St. Jerome*, 1614, oil on canvas.
Vatican Museum.

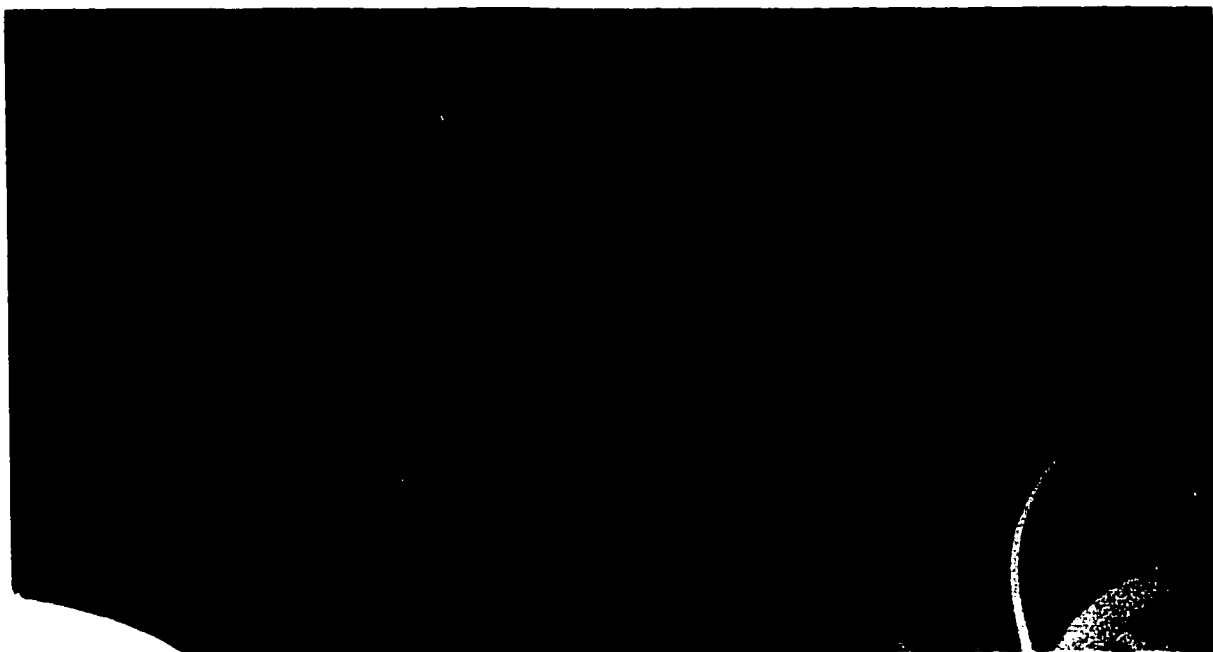


Fig. 16: Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion, [*Souls being lifted from Purgatory by Angels*], c.1888, *toile marouflée*, approximately 7' x 7'. Chapel of the Convent of Précieux-Sang, St. Hyacinthe.



Fig 17: Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion, *Sainte Rose de Lima*, c.1888, toile marouflée, approximately 7' x 4'. Chapel of the Convent of Précieux-Sang, St. Hyacinthe.

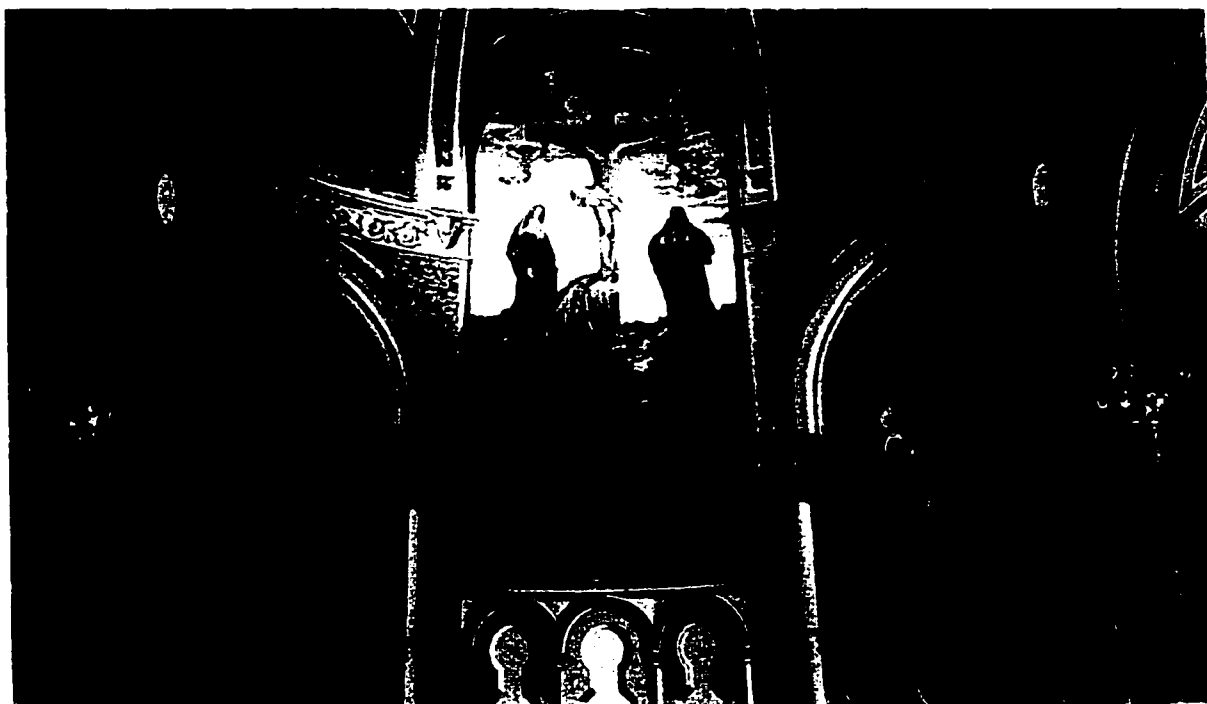


Fig. 18: Soeur Véronique-de-la-Passion, [*Over-altar triptych*], c.1888, *toile marouflée*, centre panel approximately 9' x 4', side panels approximately 7' x 4' each. Chapel of the Convent of Précieux-Sang, St. Hyacinthe.



Fig. 19: Madeleine Delfosse, [*Christ Healing the Sick*], 1945, *toile marouflée*, approximately 10' x 10', St. Pierre Claver Church, Montreal.

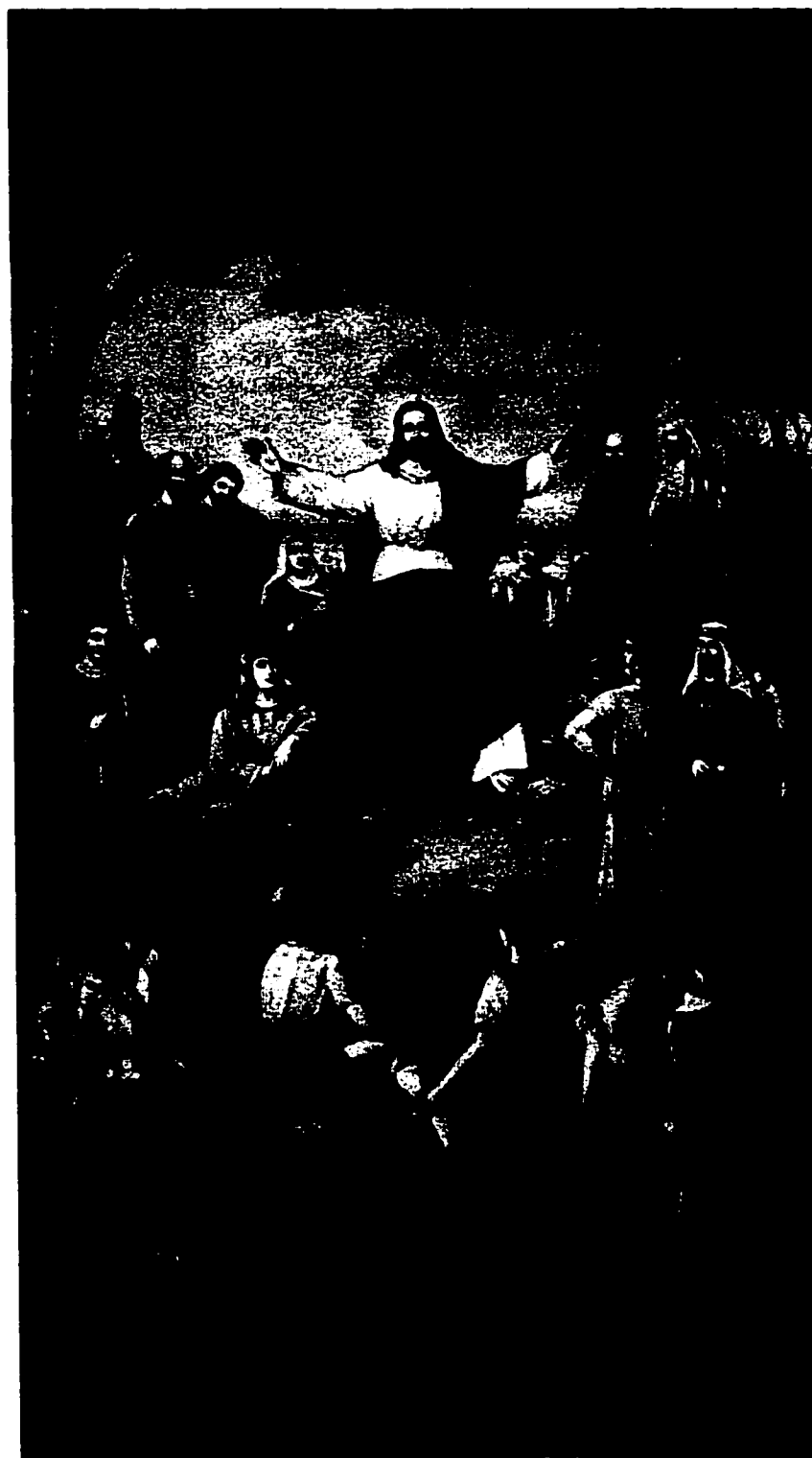


Fig. 20: Madeleine Delfosse, [*Christ Preaching*], 1945, toile marouflée, approximately 10' x 30'. St Pierre Claver Church, Montreal.

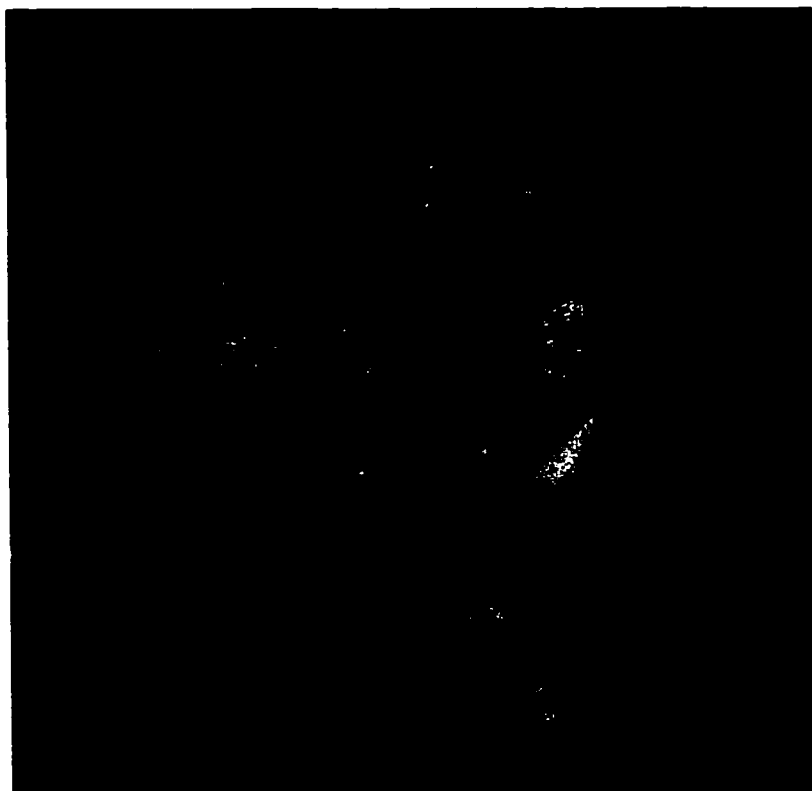


Fig. 21: Madeleine Delfosse, *Christ Blessing the Children*, 1945, toile marouflée, approximately 10' x 10', St. Pierre Claver Church, Montreal.



Fig. 22: Marian Scott, *The Tree of Life*, 1956, oil on plaster (?), approximately 5' x 7'.
Chapel of the Montreal General Hospital.



Fig. 23: Marian Scott, *The Tree of Life*, detail: [Central figure], 1956, oil on plaster (?), approximately 5' x 7', Chapel of the Montreal General Hospital.



Fig. 24: Marian Scott, *Community 7*, c.1956, oil on masonite, 27" x 30", Private collection.

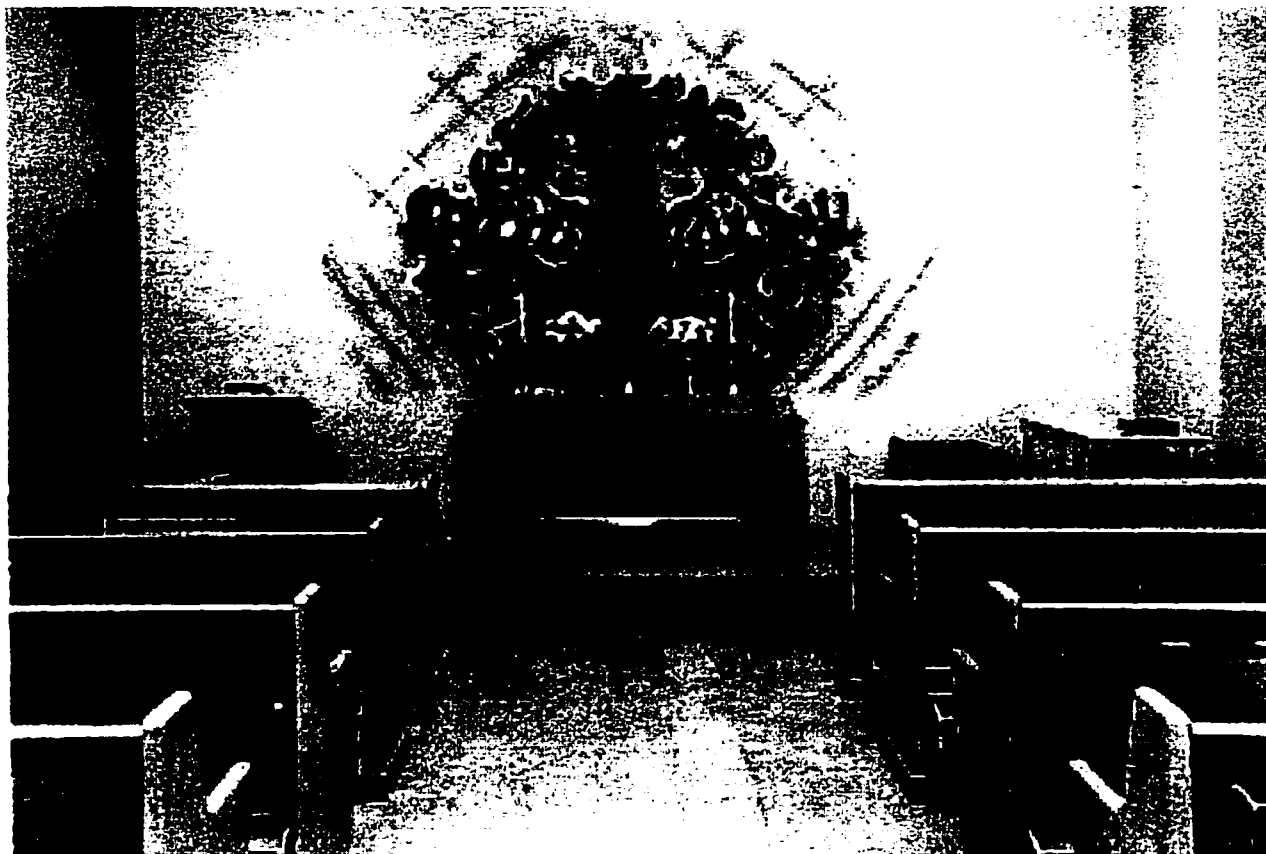


Fig. 25: Marian Scott, *The Tree of Life*, 1956, oil on plaster (?), prior to renovations, approximately 6' x 7', Chapel of the Montreal General Hospital.

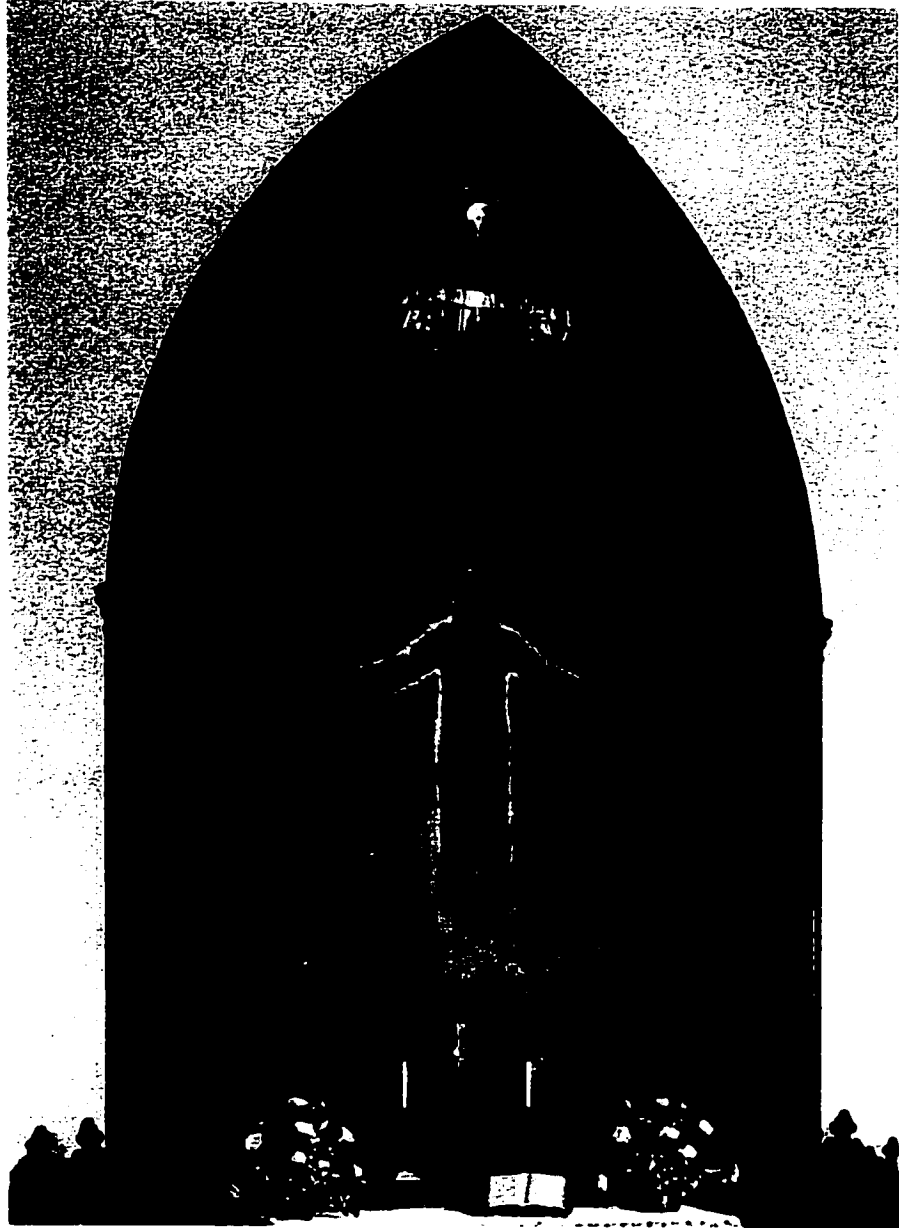


Fig. 26: Otilie Palm Jost, *Resurrection*, 1908, *toile marouflée*, 21' x 11.5', St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hamilton.



Fig. 27: Otilie Palm Jost, [*Preliminary drawing for Resurrection*], c.1908, pencil and chalk on brown paper, 15" x 10", Private collection.

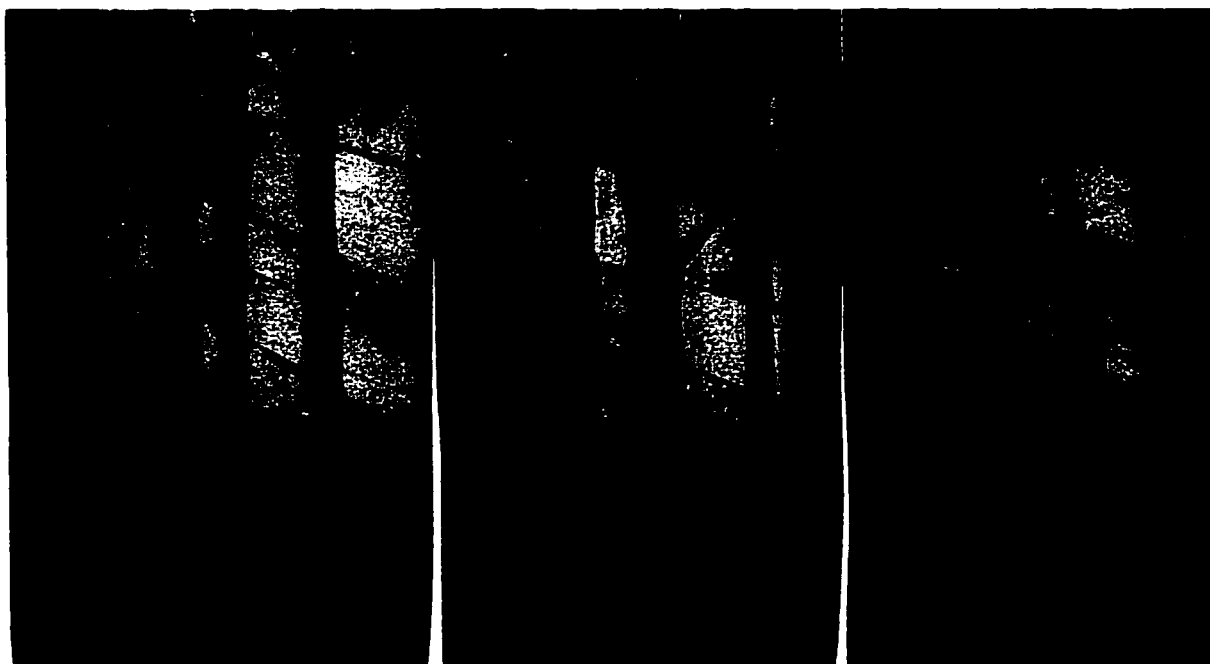


Fig. 28: Anne Savage, [*Landscape I*], 1922-1948, oil on panel, set of three, each panel 72" x 34". Collection of the Montreal English School Board.



Fig. 29: Anne Savage, *After Rain*, 1941, oil on canvas, 30 1/4" x 40", Collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

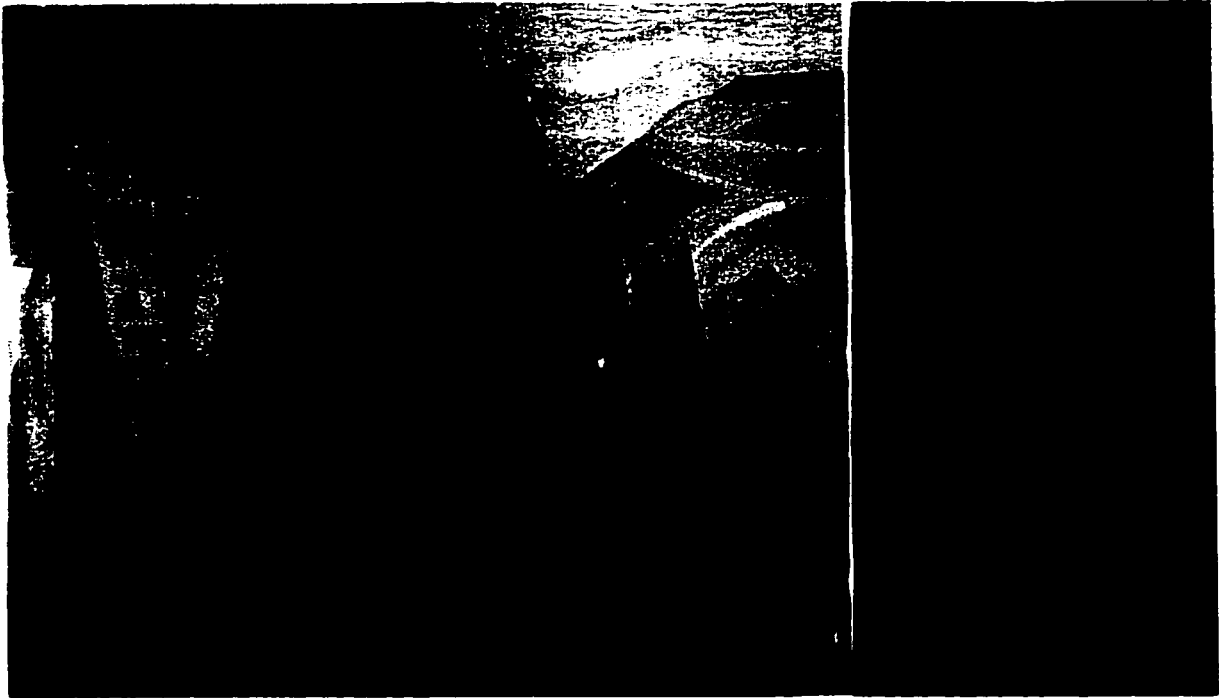


Fig. 30: Anne Savage [*Landscape III*], 1922-1948, oil on panel, set of three, each panel 72" x 34", Collection of the Montreal English School Board.



**Fig. 31: Arthur Lismer, *Isles of Spruce, Algoma*, 1922, oil on canvas, 47" x 64",
Collection of Hart House.**



Fig. 32: Anne Savage, *Indian Fur Traders*, 1922-1948, oil on panel, 54" x 48",
Collection of the Montreal English School Board.

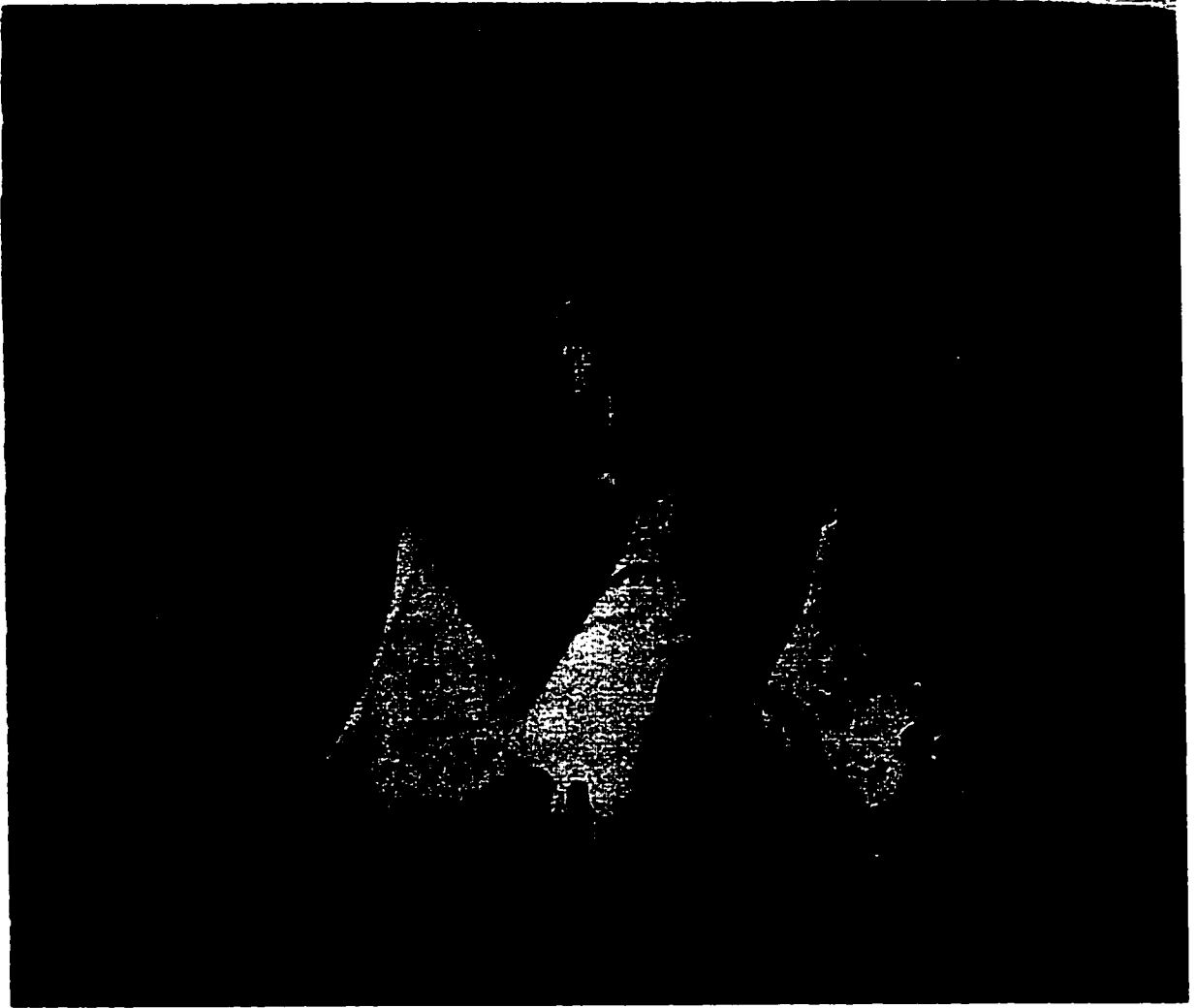


Fig. 33: Anne Savage, *Indian Camp*, 1922-48, oil on panel, 65" x 73", Collection of the Montreal English School Board.



Fig. 34: Anne Savage, *Preliminary Painting for Indian Fur Traders*, 1922-48, oil on panel, 54" x 48", Collection of the Montreal English School Board.

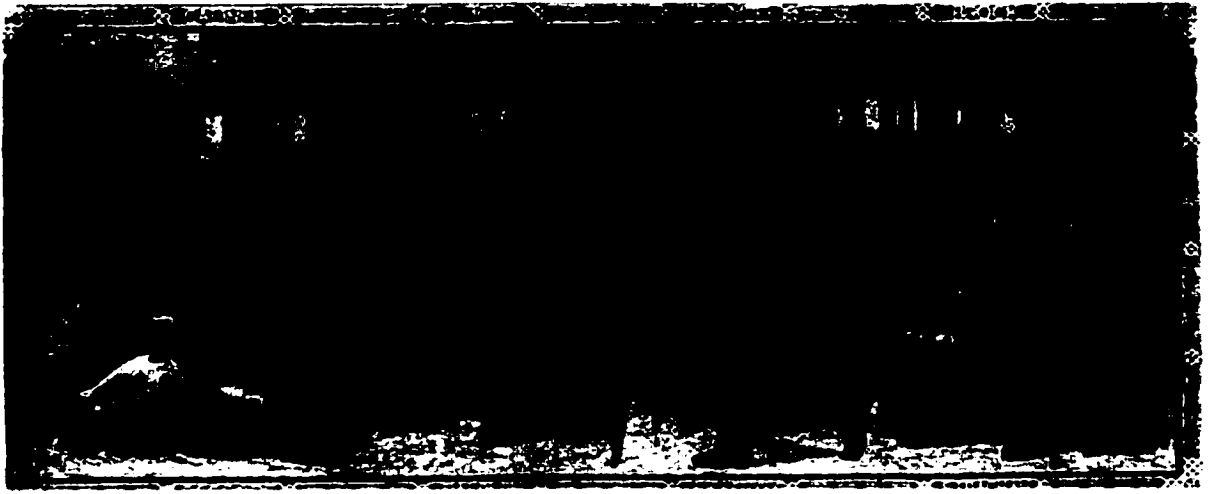


Fig. 35: George Reid, *Staking a Pioneer Farm*, 1899, oil on canvas, approximately 3' x 7', Old City Hall, Toronto.



Fig. 36: Lorna Claire, [*First Nations Camp*], 1928-30, *toile marouflée*, approximately 4' x 3', Jarvis Collegiate Institute, Toronto.



Fig. 37: Jane Lippert Birchall, [*The Arrival of Champlain*], 1956, vinylite on plaster, approximately 5' x 15'. Now destroyed.



Fig. 38: Edith Grace Coombs, *The Sky Woman: They Shall Come to Me On Their Journey to the Land of the Little People*, c.1930, oil on canvas, 88" x 40". Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.



Fig. 39: Edith Grace Coombs, *The Sky Woman: The Council of the Animals*, c.1931, oil on canvas, 60" x 50", Collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.



Fig. 40: Jori Smith, *The Games of Quebec*, detail, 1940-1941, oil on plaster wall, 5' x 60', Mont Tremblant Lodge. Now destroyed.



Fig. 41: Pegi Nichol MacLeod, [*Mural for Fisher Vocational School*], 1941, oil on curtain fabric, irregular shape and dimensions. Collection of Fisher Vocational School, New Brunswick. Now in fragments.



Fig 42: Pegi Nicol MacLeod, [*Mural for Fisher Vocational School, New Brunswick*], detail, 1941, oil on curtain fabric, irregular shape and dimensions. Collection of Fisher Vocational School, New Brunswick. Now in fragments.



Fig. 43: Pegi Nicol MacLeod, [*Mural for Fisher Vocational School, New Brunswick*], 1941, oil on curtain fabric, irregular shape and dimensions. Collection of Fisher Vocational School, New Brunswick. Now in fragments.



Fig. 44: Rosemary Kilbourn, [*Mural for the dining-hall of the University of Western Ontario*], 1957, oil on canvas, 15' x 10'. Somerville House, University of Western Ontario.



Fig. 45: Will Ogilvie, [*Mural for Hart House Chapel, Toronto*], 1936, oil on plaster. shape irregular, approximately 5' x 20'. Hart House Chapel.

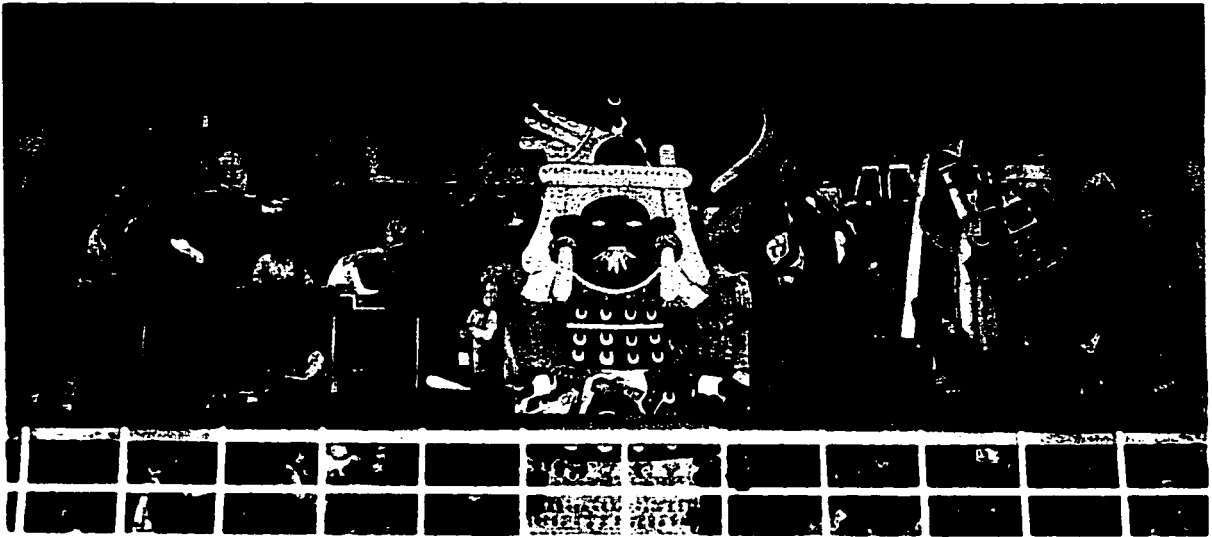


Fig. 46: Diego Rivera, *The History of Medicine in Mexico: The People's Demand For Better Health*, 1953, fresco, approximately 7.4 m x 10.8 m. Hospital de la Raza, Mexico City.



Fig. 47: Mary Filer, *The Advance of Neurology*, 1954, tempera on casein on a plaster base, 21' x 6' 7", Montreal Neurological Institute.



Fig. 48: El Greco, *Burial of the Count of Orgaz* 1586, oil on canvas, 15' 9" x 11' 10". Church of Santo Tomé, Toledo, Spain.



Fig. 49: Mary Filer, *The Anguish of Decision*, 1953, egg tempera on a casein base on plaster, Pennsylvania State University, now destroyed.



Fig. 50: Mary Filer, *The Role of the Administration in the University and Community*, 1954, egg tempera on a casein base on plaster, 5' x 8'. Pennsylvania State University.

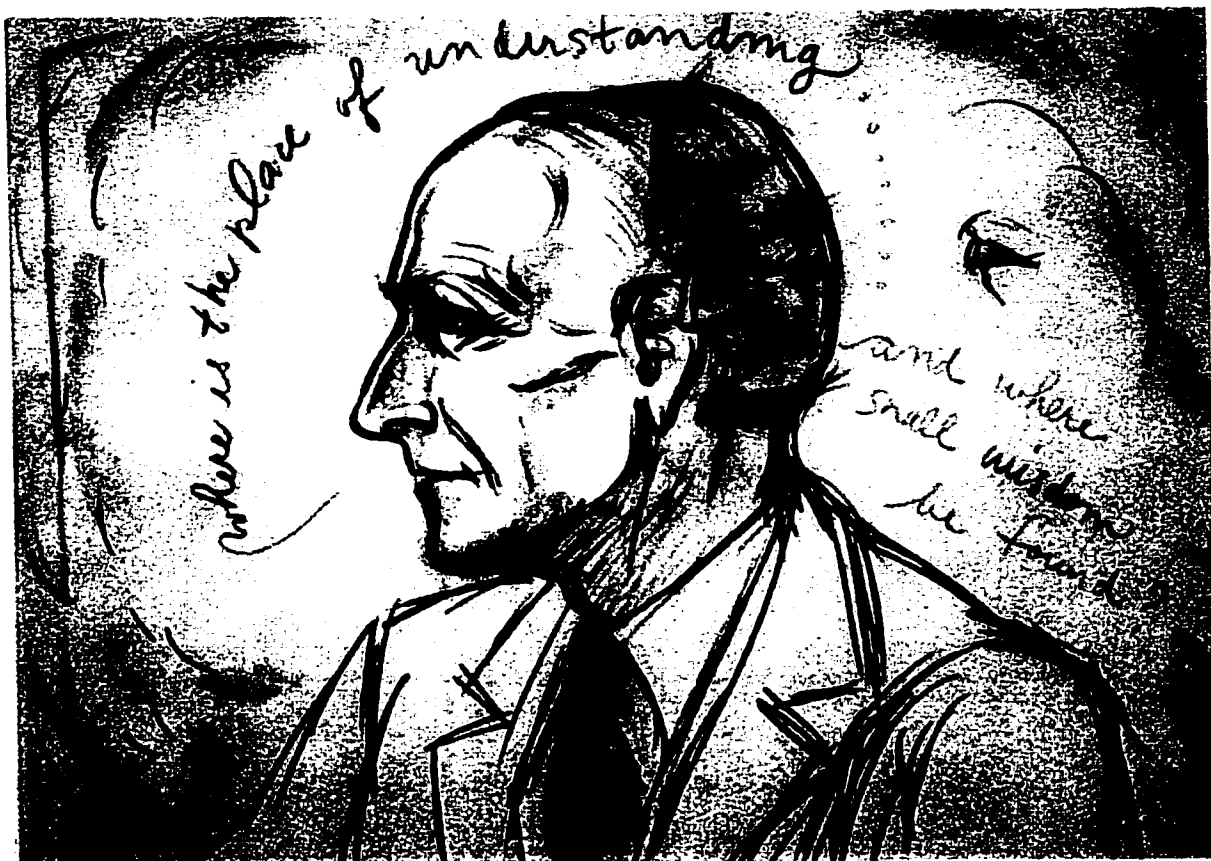


Fig. 51: Mary Filer, *Portrait of Dr. Wilder Penfield*, 1954, pencil on paper, 19" x 25".
Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



Fig. 52: Mary Filer, *The Advance of Neurology*, detail: *Wilder Penfield*, 1954, tempera on casein on a plaster base, 21' x 6' 7". Montreal Neurological Institute.

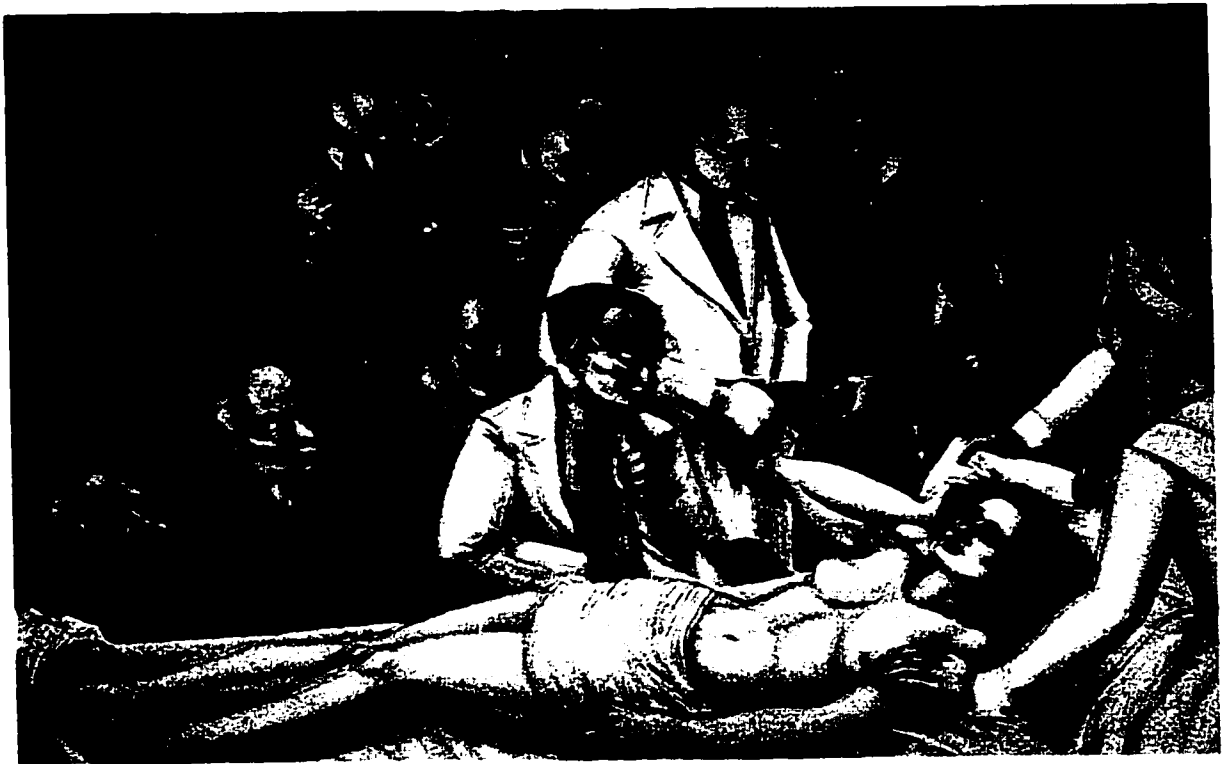


Fig. 53: Mary Filer, *The Advance of Neurology*, detail: [Central figure before the addition of drapery], 1954, tempera on casein on a plaster base, 21' x 6' 7". Montreal Neurological Institute.



Fig. 54: Thomas Eakins *The Agnew Clinic*, 1889, oil on canvas, 74 1/2" x 130 1/2".
Collection of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

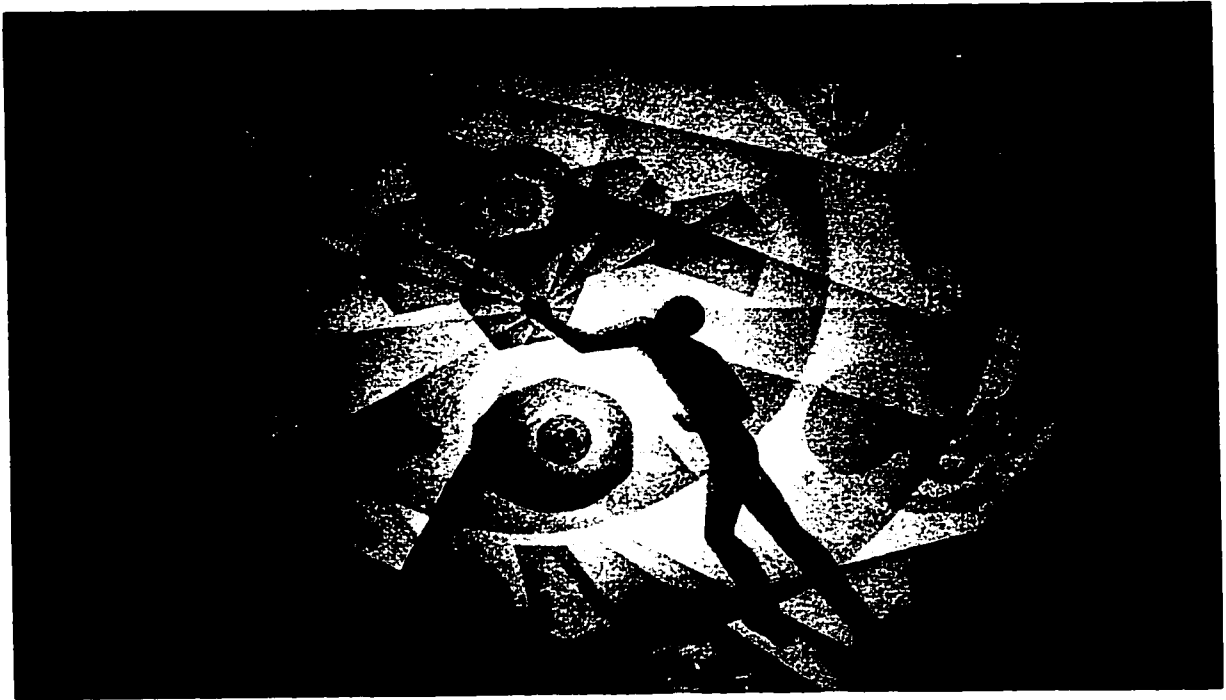


Fig. 55: Marian Scott, *Endocrinology*, 1943, oil on plaster, 12' x 16'. Strathcona Medical Building, McGill University.



Fig. 56: Marian Scott, *Endocrinology*, detail: [Thyroid gland], 1943, oil on plaster, 12' x 16'. Strathcona Medical Building, McGill University.



Fig. 57: Marian Scott, *Endocrinology*, detail: *The Seeker*, 1943, oil on plaster, 12' x 16', Strathcona Medical Building, McGill University.

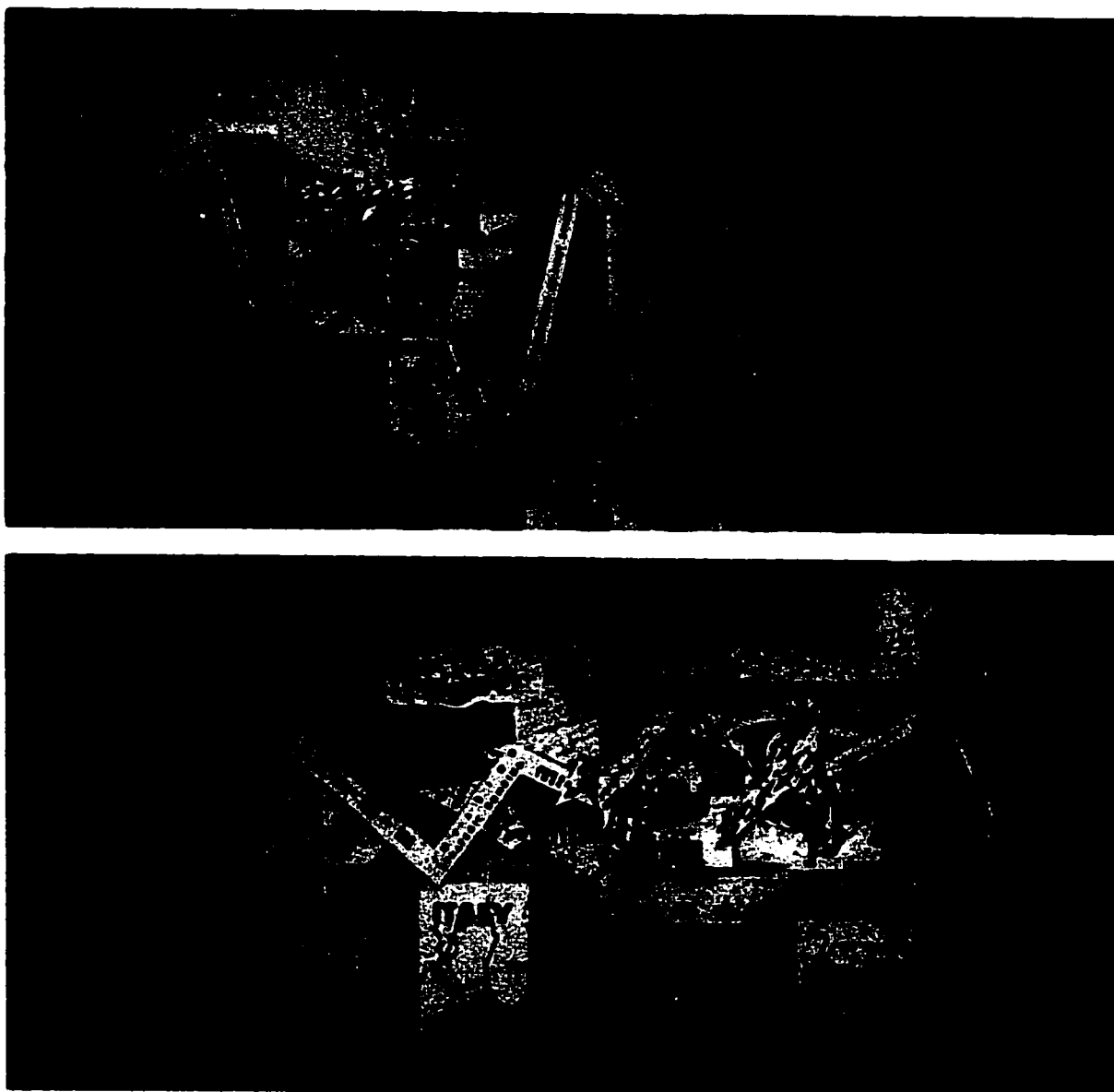


Fig. 58: Martha Greening Jamieson, *A Memorial to Queen's Men and All Canada's Men Who Served in the Second World War, 1939-1945*, left and right sides, 1949-50, enlarged photograph, 8' x 30', John Deutsch University Centre, Queen's University.



Fig. 59: Ghitta Caiserman-Roth and Alfred Pinsky at work on [*Mural for the Fine Children's Wear Factory, Montreal*], 1950, casein on gessoed plaster, 16' x 6 1/2', plus two side panels 6 1/2' x 6 1/2' each. Fine Children's Wear, Montreal. Now destroyed.

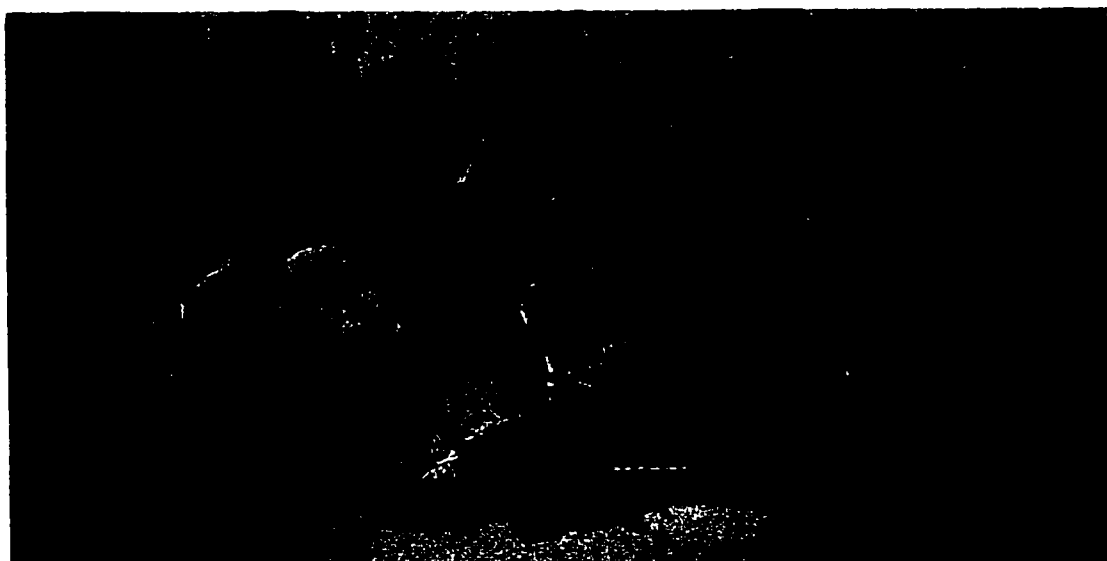


Fig. 60: Sylvia Hahn, [*Jousting Scene*], detail: [*Knight*], *toile marouflée*, approximately 11' x 16'. Royal Ontario Museum.