

UNDERSTANDING EMILY CARR:  
A LOOK AT THE FASHIONING OF AN AUTONOMOUS SELF

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I argue that Emily Carr's books reveal her quest to define herself as an artist and as a person, drawing inspiration from an Authority manifest in the Pacific Northwest forest and pushing against conventions that would have limited her and suffocated her as well as her art. I endeavour an original exploration of print culture, in examining how this author discovered herself through books, and Canadian modernism, in charting how this talented woman found a vocation in the early twentieth century. As Emily Carr's conflicted public image has complicated critical discussion of her literary oeuvre, my thesis investigates how this specific artist figure has been constructed and (mis)understood. I begin with an overview and brief discussion of Carr's critical reception history, and then focus on a detailed examination of Carr's individual writings. Thus, I probe two often clashing perspectives while I argue that only in submitting to Carr's personal gaze, regardless of her subjectivity, can we approximate a better understanding of the artist's thought processes and motivations. By applying Stephen Greenblatt's theory of "self-fashioning" to the premise of my analysis, Carr's early formed self-image and ensuing self-representation in writing become both apparent and legitimate. In this study, I uncover and trace the fascinating development of Carr's self-concept, as an artist and as a person, as it unfolds in and beyond the three cornerstones of her literary oeuvre: *Klee Wyck* (1941), *The Book of Small* (1942), and *Growing Pains* (1946). By way of interpreting the corpus of almost all of Carr's books, and considering most of the diverse criticism on them, I demonstrate how she made herself into who she needed to be – artist, outsider, Canadian, Indigenous ally, advocate of animal and child, author, friend.

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette thèse, j'argumente que les livres d'Emily Carr révèlent une quête d'autodéfinition en tant qu'artiste et en tant que personne. Cette poursuite est inspirée par l'Autorité manifeste de la forêt du Pacifique Nord-Ouest et dérivée d'une opposition aux conventions qui auraient limitée et suffoquée sa personne autant que son art. J'œuvre pour une exploration originale de la culture de l'imprimé en examinant comment cette auteure s'est découverte à travers ses livres et le modernisme canadien, et en retraçant comment cette femme talentueuse a trouvé sa vocation dans le début du vingtième siècle. Puisque l'image publique d'Emily Carr est de nature conflictuelle et complique une discussion critique de l'ensemble de ses œuvres littéraires, ma thèse examine comment sa figure d'artiste fut spécifiquement construite et (mé)comprise. Je débute avec un aperçu général et une discussion courte de l'historique de la réception critique de Carr, puis je me concentre sur une étude détaillée de ses écrits individuels. Ainsi, j'observe deux perspectives souvent contradictoires tout en soutenant l'argument que, peu importe sa subjectivité, seulement en analysant le regard personnel de Carr peut-on approximer une meilleure compréhension du raisonnement et des motivations de l'artiste. En appliquant la théorie d'« auto-façonnage » de Stephen Greenblatt à la prémisse de mon analyse, l'image de soi naissante de Carr ainsi que sa représentation d'elle-même qui suivit dans ses écrits deviennent toutes deux apparentes et légitimes. Dans cette étude, je découvre et je poursuis le développement fascinant de la notion de soi de Carr en tant qu'artiste et en tant que personne dans son déroulement durant et au-delà des trois piliers de ses œuvres littéraires : *Klee Wyck* (1941), *The Book of Small* (1942) et *Growing Pains* (1946). En interprétant le corpus quasi total des livres de Carr et en considérant la plupart des critiques sur ces mêmes livres, je démontre comment elle s'est façonnée dans la personne qu'elle a voulu être : une artiste, une exclue, une canadienne, une alliée des peuples indigènes, une défenseuse des droits de l'enfant et des animaux, une auteure, une amie.

## DEDICATION

Carol Pearson said that Emily Carr dubbed her little guest bedroom

under the eaves in her attic her “mostest favourite” room.

Carr also considered Ira Dilworth her “belovedest friend – [...] Trustor & Editor”

while her alter ego Small called him her “Belovedest Guardian.”<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is

for Nassim –

the “bestest” and “belovedest” sister anyone could ever have,

and she certainly is mine;

and

for Emily Carr –

in humble admiration.

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Pearson, *Emily Carr As I Knew Her*, 137.

Emily Carr, *Corresponding Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth*, 184, 197, 225.

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## PREFACE

All chapters of this thesis are the original, unpublished, independent work of the author, Hedy Berdjis-Kamranpour.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*BS – The Book of Small*

*Corresp.Infl. – Corresponding Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth*

*FS – Fresh Seeing: Two Addresses by Emily Carr*

*GP – Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr*

*HAS – The House of All Sorts*

*HT – Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*

*KW – Klee Wyck*

*P – Pause: A Sketch Book*

*TT – This and That*



## INTRODUCTION

### **In Search of Emily Carr**

In 1971, when the Vancouver Art Gallery mounted *Emily Carr, a Centennial Exhibition Celebrating the One Hundredth Anniversary of Her Birth*, the exhibition's curator Doris Shadbolt argued that Carr's "self-image was that of a *rebel*" (Shadbolt 5). However, almost fifty years of scholarly criticism later, Carr's image – self-constructed or imposed by others – is not as unequivocal as that. First, what marks a rebel? The *OED* defines "rebel" as "[a] person who [...] resists authority or control[,] esp. in early use with reference to a person who resists divine or spiritual authority," or "[a] person who refuses allegiance or obedience to, or who fights against, an established government or ruler" ("rebel" *OED Online*). Carr resisted following or submitting to whatever did not make sense to her yet seemed undisputed by others, such as her father's (and then older sister's) autocratic exercise of authority, or the rigidity and absolutism of various religious affiliations she encountered. While Carr indeed described herself as rebellious on numerous occasions, I would argue that she did not really want to be a rebel, much less the misfit she often felt herself to be. An independent thinker from early childhood, she wanted to know and understand the reasons why she was expected to fall in line with any kind of direction, as well as be understood and respected when she disagreed and chose a different path. But her surroundings were slow or, rather, reluctant, to grant Carr either understanding or respect. Instead, the epithet of the nonconformist and eccentric rebel became a fixed label that continuously ignored her perspective. This thesis posits that, to try to understand Emily Carr, we must submit to her gaze, even if it is as biased as all personal perspectives are. To this end, I examine Carr's major writings in detail in Chapter 2 of my thesis, after reviewing the critical gaze of scholars in Chapter 1.

As academic critics tend to focus on individual aspects when they consider an author, the image that emerges of the subject can be incomplete and, at times, distorted. Biographers, by contrast, may purport to present a complete and comprehensive image, yet, in the interest of telling a story that flows, may neglect a dialogic or even polyvocal critical approach in favour of a biased slant. Stephanie Kirkwood Walker aptly points to the “composite image” of Emily Carr that both critics and biographers have assembled – an image that is still under discussion (S.K. Walker 71). After taking stock of Carr’s reception history, I intend to let Emily Carr speak for herself. I will show that, in her careful construction of herself in writing, she meant to explain her individual self and her world view, as a person and as an artist: first, to her family and her hometown (that is, the people and places whose understanding, respect, and approval she craved most), and second, to the (primarily Canadian / New World) public at large. So, who was Emily Carr and how did she define herself? A consummate artist, Carr designed, anchored, and offered to the public her self-concept and its development in three cornerstones of her writing. First, *Klee Wyck* (1941) transforms specific sketching experiences into a *Künstlerroman*, starring herself as Klee Wyck (as argued by Gerald Lynch). Then, I argue, *The Book of Small* (1942) supplies Carr’s / Klee Wyck’s origin story, and, finally, *Growing Pains* (1946) delivers Carr’s comprehensive and conclusive artist statement. Carr’s other writings fill in some of the blank spaces in between these cornerstones. All writings combined, they give us, both as scholars and as general audience, the opportunity to see the world with her eyes, thus enabling us to gain some insight into her perspective and, perhaps, then understand her reasoning.

Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of “self-fashioning” as an individual way to shape one’s identity and its projection into a public sphere underwrites the methodology of my analysis of Carr’s written oeuvre (Greenblatt). More directly than her paintings, the discursive features of

Carr's writings illustrate the artist's sense of her innate character and the gradual formation of her self in society as life unfolds. Each of Carr's published works deals with specific times or aspects of her life, from childhood to relatively shortly before death. Published during Carr's lifetime, *Klee Wyck* represents her early artistic ambition and outlook in the guise of a *Künstlerroman*, *The Book of Small* illustrates Carr's childhood and thus the beginning of Carr's formation as a person, and *The House of All Sorts* (1944) deals with Carr's frustrations and self-healing methods as a middle-aged landlady. Her autobiography *Growing Pains*, per Carr's request held back from publication until after her death, attempts to comprise all parts of Carr's life while privileging what she saw as the important stations in the integral fusion of her personal and artistic paths.

However, the chronological sequence of publishing does not correspond to the chronology of Carr's writing process, nor does Carr's writing exhibit a chronological sequence of subject matter. The order of Carr's writing is impossible to ascertain with certainty. Carr biographer Paula Blanchard states that "[n]early all of Emily's published works [...] were finished in draft form between 1937 and 1941" (Blanchard 273). In other words, most of Carr's preliminary or perhaps essential versions (except for her autobiography) were extant before *Klee Wyck*, her first book, was published in 1941. According to Blanchard, at least the "base" of *The Book of Small* (1942) stems from as early as 1934 (273). Yet, in Carr's habitual drive for excellence, her revisions would continue until the books were readied for print.

In support of my argument, my analysis will follow the order of publication, as its logical progression first introduces the young artist Klee Wyck / Emily Carr in *Klee Wyck*, then reaches back to tell the informed reader (that is, the reader who is now acquainted with the artist) Klee Wyck's / Emily Carr's background in *The Book of Small*, and, after the adverse waystation of

*The House of All Sorts* in middle age, culminates in the overall summation of the artist's life and self in *Growing Pains*. Nevertheless, I will preface Carr's main works by first considering the more private, posthumously published *Pause: A Sketch Book* (1953), which illustrates the paralyzing yet pivotal effects of Carr's identity crisis when she was in her early thirties, as well as attests to her characteristic efforts to always try to keep up her spirits.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, scholars and biographers alike have grappled with Carr as an inevitably subjective and therefore often unreliable narrator of self. While interviews with Carr's friends and foes – all also potentially highly subjective and not necessarily more reliable sources – may have revealed fictionalized and dramatized elements in Carr's writing, some critics argue that the “real” Emily Carr shines through nonetheless. I concur, particularly in the way Gerta Moray, in her introduction to Carr's journals, describes Carr as “a forceful yet sensitive and highly complex woman” (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 14).

I also agree with the critical assessment that Carr's personal journals and correspondence further elucidate her personality, especially because, in Carr's case at least, both are more spontaneous and less polished categories of writing and expression. In her journals, Carr thought to or at herself, and in her wide correspondence, she held and expected a conversation that the addressee actively participated in. Doreen Walker quotes one of Carr's friends commenting that reading letters by Carr ““was as if she was talking to you”” (D. Walker xxxiii). While there is always a higher level of self-construction in a letter than in a journal, considering that a letter is directed at someone who will read and react to it, it seems that Carr stayed true to herself both in

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, I will disregard, for the purposes of this study, *The Heart of a Peacock* (1953), a mixed collection of Carr's more fictional short stories and animal observations that are of limited pertinence to my argument.

stance and in her “unorthodox manner of expression” (xxxiii). Carr’s correspondence with Ira Dilworth, her literary executor and closest friend, will serve as the best example here.

Ultimately, like most critics who did not know Emily Carr personally, I must let my deliberations rest on what I have gleaned from her words. In this thesis, I examine how critics – most of whom did *not* meet Emily Carr – have perceived, shaped, and extrapolated Carr’s public image, and how Carr herself translated her self-perception into self-representation in writing. Reversing the gaze within the mosaic of Carr’s “composite image” to Carr’s own perspective will certainly help us understand her better.

## CHAPTER 1

**The (Un)Critical Lenses That Shaped the Image: How Others Constructed Emily Carr**

“These critics give for fact what they can only surmise.” Emily Carr<sup>3</sup>

This chapter reviews the critical assessments and definitions of Emily Carr as an artist and historical personage. Tracing and appraising Carr’s reception history and considering how critics have constructed Carr, and thus her public image, over the years, reveals a variegated discourse. Critics and scholars have investigated what they regard as fact versus fiction in Carr’s predominantly autobiographical writings. At the same time, they have studied and interrogated external accounts of Carr’s personality and her work by private individuals who had met her. Through tracking and examining the evolving critical perspectives, I am able to uncover shifting frames of reference as well as interpretive distortions. I show that, taken together, these lines of inquiry generate a contradictory picture that I hereby try to dissect into its parts.

Few critics will dispute that Emily Carr has become the figure of a myth that is larger than life, but the general consensus ends there. At the same time, while Carr’s visual art has been carefully studied and more widely appreciated since the 1930s, not much scholarly criticism materialized on Emily Carr’s writings until the 1990s. Before that, academics pursued rather scattered avenues of research. In the 1980s, Eva-Marie Kröller situated Emily Carr with Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill as models of (relatively) early Canadian women writers who resurface or, rather, are “resurrected” as unreliable characters in contemporary Canadian literature – particularly in terms of autobiography (Kröller, “Resurrections”). Not only did Kröller identify these resurrections as a literary trend, but she also went on to describe a variety of new interpretations of Emily Carr by other artists (Kröller, “Literary Versions”). However, in

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<sup>3</sup> Letter to Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, dated 1936, printed in Hembroff-Schleicher’s book *m.e. A Portrayal of Emily Carr*, p. 101.

terms of the factual reliability sought after by critics, the difficulty that in my view emerges from Kröller's discussions is that these writers' "presence in Canadian literature has provided a mythic framework and/or catalyst for feminine self-definition" as well as "a challenge, model, or touchstone for those who conjure them" ("Resurrections" 42, 45). To "explore her [Carr] as a *literary* phenomenon," as Kröller also aims to accomplish in her essay, transforms Emily Carr, the artist and person, as much as her paintings and writings, into an assemblage of textual objects that are further fictionalized, i.e. constructed, and thus removed from any "real" self ("Literary Versions" 88). These fictionalized, "complementary versions of her life" and work, while striving, through artistry, to provide spiritual or metaphorical insights into the icon Emily Carr, nevertheless complicate how an audience may read and receive the artist and her work, as well as possibly alienate that audience by enlarging rather than adjusting a mythical image (96). In contrast, non-academic and subjective personal reminiscences by Carol Pearson, for example, and Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, are able to illuminate aspects of Emily Carr that scholarly critics can only dream of describing and which I will consider later on in this chapter.

Peter Sanger's attack on Emily Carr's veracity, as Timothy Dow Adams phrases it, stands out as part of 1980s criticism and therefore needs to be briefly mentioned. In an unprofessionally acerbic tone, Sanger accuses Carr of lying in her autobiographical writings, not only by sins of omission, but also through fudging dates and misrepresenting herself as a younger and more innocent woman than she actually was, in order to "reconstruct the past in her favour" (Sanger 221). Subsequent critics such as Roxanne Rimstead (1991), Timothy Dow Adams (1992), and Nancy Pagh (1992) aptly refute Sanger's narrow-minded, speculative, and outdated claims, hence eliminating the need to further discuss Sanger's criticism here. Case in point: Susan Huntley Elderkin's (1992) and later 1990s scholarship by Stephanie Kirkwood Walker (1996),

Robert Thacker (1997, 1999) and Gerta Moray (1999) deal with the issues of self-construction and fictionalization in Emily Carr's autobiographical writings without any reference to Sanger's essay.

Rimstead moves beyond what she calls "the limited context of naive autobiography" in criticism of Emily Carr's *Klee Wyck* and seeks to increase "appreciation of the power of this text to challenge dominant values," as well as highlight its "nature [...] as female life-writing" that ultimately "validate[s] Carr's autobiographical works as subjective art" (Rimstead 29-30). As such, Rimstead distinguishes between the author attempting to communicate an essential "truth" through a partly fictionalized account, and a "'true' definite story" based on unassailable facts (30). Accordingly, Rimstead focuses on uncovering and analyzing Carr's themes in *Klee Wyck*, while Adams responds more directly to critical claims of Carr's alleged lack of factual truthfulness. Like Rimstead, Adams accepts the separation of a more literary "autobiographical" mode of writing and the idea of a supposedly more factual "autobiography," but he also points out that the various Carr biographers grappled with this distinction of genre and therefore contributed to the critical dilemma of Emily Carr's personae (Adams 38-39). Yet Adams "argue[s] that [...] only *Growing Pains* is autobiography, the remainder constituting a literary 'house of all sorts,' a mixture of genres and approaches somewhere between fiction and nonfiction," and he responds particularly to Sanger's charges "that in her self-portraits, as in her painting, Carr was interested less in pictorial representation and more in what exists beneath the surface. She was also trying to write marketable stories" (40-41). However, Adams cites Carr's "lack of formal education or literary background" as an additional complication in reading and analyzing her work (38). Although Carr had attended writing courses and worked hard at improving her authorial skills, she would read only a few authors and therefore drew limited



insight or, rather, intellectual instruction from literary sources. At the same time, I would add that Carr's individual, lifelong search for meaning and her professional path as a painter, as well as her life experiences, supplied her with plenty of knowledge and insight to provide a sound, if somewhat unconventional, basis for her writing and for what she wanted to convey about herself and the world both in painting and writing. Adams contends that, since Carr's paintings often act as a correlative to her writings (and vice versa), they further complicate the reading of her work as autobiographical (40), whereas I would argue that they mutually illuminate each other in Carr's effort to "reconcil[e] [...] life with self" (46).

Nancy Pagh continues Adams's approach in terms of legitimizing Emily Carr's literary self-portraits from their shared critical standpoint of contemporary autobiographical theory, but Pagh discusses Carr within a more specific feminist framework of women's life writing. Similar to Adams, Pagh recognizes the conflict between "the self and the self-image," but theorizes further that women writers have had to contend, moreover, with a male bias of literary authority which makes it even more difficult for female autobiographers to convince critics of their autobiographical authenticity (Pagh, "Passing Through the Jungle" 65). Emily Carr broke the established mold of female "thematic content" because she did not adhere to the standards of female expression of her time. Neither "domesticity" nor "romance" featured in her life writing: instead, she wrote about her "adventures" and "professions," that is, traditionally male domains, rendering herself "'unfeminine'" yet "'[attentive to others]'" in the process (66-67). Carr's anecdotal narrative style anticipated the currently popular short story cycles, but critics frequently did not recognize Carr's careful arrangement of sections as rising and falling action or an escalating build-up and, instead, labeled her (and other female writers) as "producing fragmented narratives" (67). Nevertheless, Pagh cautions against "gender [...] [as] privileged

consideration in autobiography criticism” and suggests that “theories [...] as a whole [...] seek to inform and supplement rather than completely to destroy the traditional ‘male’ theories of inscriptions of the human self” (68-70). In Carr’s case, Pagh compares “the evolution of women’s autobiography theory” to “Carr’s own process of self-discovery as she wrote and rewrote her life, allowing several versions to stand at the same time” (70). And yet, according to Pagh, *Growing Pains* “connects most closely with the traditionally masculine esthetic of autobiography,” as it chronicles Carr’s “professional development as a painter” and contrasts with her other writings in its linear structure (70-71). But even so, Carr develops her own distinctive voice as she strives to articulate “internal truths [...] and is willing to accept the distortion of external facts [...] for the purpose of communication” (75). Like Adams and Rimstead, Pagh rejects the rigidity of fact-fanatic critics and argues for the legitimacy of a more fluid form of “self-inscription,” insisting that “Carr’s narratives are daring and sincere explorations of self; instead of moving farther and farther from self into a false construction, her writing works in stages to carve away the façade” (78). While I would concur that Carr’s intent was to identify and dismantle the façade, the previously mentioned conflict between self and self-image returns to the forefront: writing about one’s self, especially with an eye to publication, can hardly ever be completely objective – or entirely sincere, for that matter.

In a similar vein, Susan Huntley Elderkin argues that the uncritical assumption of Emily Carr’s writings as non-fiction, or, as Elderkin puts it, “transparent documents unproblematically chronicling her life as a struggling artist in a hostile cultural environment,” lies at the core of the conflicting views about Emily Carr’s trustworthiness (Elderkin n/p):

[T]he story of her life and art sometimes appears to eclipse the woman and her experiences[,] [...] [in] multiple (and sometimes competing) versions of a biography that

seems to be self-perpetuating. Apparently rejecting the modernist notion of a unified self, Carr opts for polyphonic self-portraiture [...] [and] constructs a series of voices/personae whose historic specificity is uncertain, at best. [...] Each collection of autobiographical prose fiction constitutes a unique return to and re-visioning of personal history which intensifies the conflation of historical and fictional subjects. Collectively, these works posit multiplicity, fragmentation, and dynamism as answers to the intricately patterned, yet static, models of life writing that translate private action into public product. (n/p)

Elderkin suggests that Carr constantly re-analyzes herself and her lived experience, and that she “seek[s] to project a very particular and carefully (re)constructed version of herself to counteract [an] ‘unappreciative’ public gaze” (n/p). But, as Carr’s contentious reception history makes evident, this strategy partly backfires. Carr’s “keen interest in self-disclosure and disguise[,] [...] revelation and self-protection” that, in practice, obscures dates and other factual elements, causes confusion and doubt among critics, and can only be reconciled by accepting that both unwitting and deliberate self-construction as well as fictional components are integral to Carr’s writing. To that end, Elderkin describes Carr’s use of the “‘fragmented’ anecdotal form” as ingenious, as “anecdote ideally presents the unstable collage of self in autobiography that resists (mis)interpretation[,] [...] deflect[s] negative response [...] and [allows Carr to] perpetually re-vision herself” (n/p). In consequence, Carr is both able to “free herself from linearity” and to “[reject] oppressive self-historicizing gestures” (n/p). As such, Carr controls the aspects of herself and her life that the reader (and critic) has access to while leading her audience to each particular point she wishes to make, and inconspicuously skips over events or issues she wants to conceal. Although Carr presents herself in various, seemingly fragmented guises, from her childhood self, Small, to the landlady in *The House of All Sorts*, she manages to convey

“dynamic and fluid representations of identity” (n/p). However, like previous critics, Elderkin points out that Carr’s writings constitute a process that aims to gradually uncover hidden depths of meaning, rather than simply recount a life, and, consequently, open rather than close avenues of thought and interpretation.

Writing a few years later, in the mid-1990s, Susanna Egan takes a more critical stance towards the quality of Emily Carr’s writings. In terms of the various forms of critical discourse, Egan initially calls attention to “the increasingly heated language that permeates the media discussion” of Emily Carr, and characterizes it as a “language [that] replicates the extremes of sentimentality and resentment with which Carr articulated her relationships with family, friends, critics, and the public and that have been central to constructions of Carr by friends, biographers, and critics since her death” (Egan n/p). Egan strives to “explore the contentions that surround the construction of Carr as *originating* in her autobiographical work, as central to her construction of herself, and as seeking resolution in the performance of both her visual and her verbal art” (n/p, my italics). While accepting “all of [Carr’s] autobiographical writings as equally authentic,” Egan insists on “recogniz[ing] the part that [Carr’s] own writing plays in the repeatedly conflicted readings she receives” (n/p). Locating the root of Carr’s contentious image in her written self-construction – a self-construction that could not always avoid self-revelation – and her often emotionally charged commentaries, rather than in what history or essential truth Carr was trying to convey in her writings, I believe should remind any literary critic of the (involuntary) coded facets of a dramatic monologue. Although writing gave Carr distance from immediate, potentially quarrelsome, personal interaction, as well as time to work on the precise and ostensibly objective “wording,” as Carr called it, “[h]er narratives [...] repeatedly describe a woman who asserted herself in anger and created alienation or whose shyness reduced her to

silence” (Egan n/p). In her determination “to control self-territory,” Carr refused would-be biographers like Dorothy Livesay and made provisions for *Growing Pains* to be published after her death, in order to “[provide] a narrative perspective that remains above ensuing debate and grounds subsequent understanding” (n/p). Yet this strategic attempt at presenting posterity with a last(ing) crafted concept or image of herself backfires as well as the initial self-construction, and may in good part originate, as Egan implies, in Carr’s lack of literary expertise – hence my analogy of Carr’s narrator persona as the unwitting speaker of a dramatic monologue. Carr’s “protective secrecy” (already pointed out by Elderkin) most likely served to veil her sensibilities more than to prevent possible onslaughts from critics, yet ultimately produced “conflicted readings” and critical contention (Egan n/p).

Nevertheless, I agree with Egan that “[Carr’s] writing in the end is about how to free herself of her own limitations” and that Carr succeeded in some areas, but not in others (n/p). Egan contends that

[t]he autobiographies developed form and purpose as she struggled to identify the heart of the matter and the form in which she might best apprehend it. [...] Carr’s autobiographies reveal her continuous struggle for adequate expression and her equally continuous sense of frustration and failure. With language as with paint, Carr seems to have felt that her medium threatened to overlay the essence, to block rather than access experience, to provide surface meaning rather than apprehensions of hidden depths. (n/p)

Carr continuously strove to prune superficial details in order to distil and render both her painting and her writing crisp and clear. While she was able to convert the deep emotions, evoked by the majestic grandeur she perceived in nature, into enlightened visual art, her personal hurt and grudges occasionally biased her in her written work and obstructed its clarity. Her

frustrations may have included a view of herself as failing to find conclusive or absolute cognizance or, simply, as failing to rise above setbacks while she attempted to shed light on her life and her struggles from different angles. Accordingly, Egan points out that

Carr seems to construct her selves along a variety of tangents with varying degrees of satisfaction. In her writing, she seems to lack the critical acumen that kept her continuously unsatisfied with her paintings: her portraits and characterizations tend to assume an absolute point of view that [...] becomes problematic in autobiography, a genre that requires a more comprehensive narrator. Similarly, her dialogues establish absolute positions that affirm the narrator's integrity so entirely by means of her resistance to opposition that the implied seriousness or complexity of any given situation actually challenges the narrator's reliability. Again, a ploy that can be useful in fiction becomes problematic in autobiography. (n/p)

In these various “tangents” of self, Carr frequently understands and paints herself as the victim, such as the child and young woman oppressed by patriarchal and social restraints, or the middle-aged landlady and struggling artist nobody seems to respect. As Egan indicates, Carr brooks no opposition to her opinions and indirectly demands the reader's compliance, yet her frustration may be as much with her own stubbornness as with her circumstances, while her sense of insecurity wars with her sense of self-righteousness. In her literary self-constructions, Carr cannot create sufficient distance to escape their molding by commentaries that, by nature of its medium, appear to be more explicit and therefore potentially more aggressive in their messages than any visual counterpart (typically caricatures like in *Pause* that would poke fun yet lose some of the combative edge through humour). Carr's autobiographical narratives, therefore, present a spectrum of diverging degrees of subjectivity that complicate the reader's perception of her

reliability. Regarding “these formal weaknesses as exposing material that is autobiography in the raw,” Egan identifies the crux of the matter as Carr’s lack of social skills, which manifests itself particularly in awkward dialogue and thus

suggest[s] that her writing, like much of her life, fails when Carr positions herself in relation to other people. Dialogue, for example, is sometimes [...] inauthentic or unconvincing, because it reveals a snobbery insufficiently controlled by technique, or [...] because it does not represent two voices speaking; Carr’s discomforts and resentments obstruct the realistic or freestanding characterization of both speakers [...]. Her rendering [...] demonstrates Carr’s own feelings about each character and situation more adequately than it creates a character or situation convincing in its own right. Her narrative [...] does not achieve complete credibility but does reveal varieties of accommodation between pretextual experience and textual form that are characteristic of autobiography. (n/p)

So, whenever Carr fails to establish a critical distance from her own emotions, these interfere with the impression she makes on the reader in terms of narrative reliability, but, at the same time, the reader should accept her subjectivity as a component of the genre of autobiography. Egan also grants that “[t]he literary quality of *The Book of Small* and of *Hundreds and Thousands* suggests both that Carr was capable of paring away intrusive elements of implicit commentary in her narrative and that her thinking put onto paper, untrammelled by narrative imperatives, unaffected by ulterior motives of persuasion or justification, could be clear and telling” (n/p). In other words, Carr could write well, even in her more spontaneous and less crafted journal entries.

Nevertheless, while Egan allows that “[a]s artist and autobiographer, Carr worked with issues of realism and its apparent objectivity, and with issues of interpretation and its foregrounding of the subjective element,” Egan criticizes Carr’s occasional “sentimentality [that] tends to obscure the general in the overweighted particular,” referring to “Carr’s use of the nicknames she was given” in a sentimental categorization of “lived relationships” where she would adopt a certain role (like the defenseless “Small” mouse in Ira Dilworth’s pocket). Egan contends that “these nicknames introduce a coy element into narrative that has lost its focus. [...] Carr’s writings become trapped in the weaker conventions of her time whenever they lose sight of the deeply internalized, the secret ‘essence’ that she recognized as the purpose of all artistic vision” (n/p). Subjectivity can, indeed, slide into sentimentality as well as into expressions of anger, laying the author bare and vulnerable to criticism, rather than convincing the reader of her point of view. In the ensuing debate, the literary critics establish themselves as the authorities that “set the record straight” – each in his or her own way. Despite her own very specific perspective, Egan realizes that both authorship and criticism must move beyond the weakness of details, take a step back and look at the larger picture: “[Carr’s] work in both print and paint is most vital and convincing when she exercises her abstracting focus [...]. For autobiography, this involves focusing above an incident [...] on what has remained central to the writer’s understanding of herself” (n/p). A certain measure of detachment from pain is necessary for distilling an analysis of one’s life into a larger, more essential or universal concept, yet any autobiography will by its very nature be self-centered and define its subject against others.

While Egan considers Carr’s autobiography *Growing Pains* to be weak, she points to Carr’s entire oeuvre and “asks whom these pages construct” and “who emerges from the core of every text” (n/p). Egan finally finds that



Carr's language, like her finest paintings, responds in terms of landscape; [...] in every text, Carr remembers her vision of place, abstracts her gaze [...] into the smells and feels of climate and the textures of growth. Repeatedly, she uses from her own experience the organic imagery that connects her body to that of the natural world. [...] [H]er struggle to fulfil the largest capacities of her talent, which in writing meant to word the unwordable, involved fairly commonplace expression of human affairs and relationships but moved into an altogether different realm when her experience sifted into language through her vision and sensation of the natural world. [...] [I]n her constant mystical connections between life and art, Carr invites a reading unobstructed by the personal and the particular, one expanding into the possibility she longed for, soul to soul. (n/p)

In essence, Egan argues, and I concur, that Carr's art and her writing are philosophical, even if she gets sidetracked at times by fixating on something she cannot seem to let go.

Arguing in this deeper, more philosophical vein, Robert Linsley finds Carr's "stance toward history" more important than the debate about subjectivity or objectivity in art or autobiography and, to illustrate, sharply distinguishes Carr's view of the forest from that of the Group of Seven (Linsley 91):

When she singles out a solitary tree, as in *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky*, [...] the title plays an important role in designating the tree as an autobiographical symbol; her own social marginality finds a parallel in the economic uselessness of the tree. [...] Carr's anthropomorphizing of the tree strikes a different balance between the subjective and the universal, one that is at once more personal and yet more concretely historical [...] Her emotional universal is governed by pain, but it is nevertheless entirely social.

Carr is always down among the trees; she rejects the authoritarianism implicit in the view from the height as she rejects the heroism of the mythic North. (91)

Because Carr is aware of her marginal status, both in terms of artistic and social authority, she situates her viewpoint as the outsider that looks in from the periphery and so creates a tension that is at once more appealing and more conflicted than the more static images of Lawren Harris's work, for example. Linsley sees the "critical edge" in Carr's tree "in its groundedness," its more essentialist outlook than the Group's ideological flights of fancy (91-92). Though thoroughly Canadian, Carr does not attempt to press Canadian nature into a stylized artistic mold. Rather, "want[ing] to turn herself into a channel," Carr seeks for a way Northwest Coast nature can speak to the audience through her and the medium she employs (92). Linsley insists that

[a]lthough her works are more personal and less obviously public in their address than those of Harris, they say more about historical experience in this former colony, and in this sense they may be truly called political. [...] Carr's work is always seeking definition, and her concept (the transitoriness of phenomena and the ubiquity of 'God') is more conducive to the emergence of historical truth. [...] [I]n her writings, vitalist aesthetic theories are always contaminated by historical reflection[.] [...] Carr's works are not fantasies of reconciliation, but openings toward the heterogenous. (92-93)

This open-mindedness towards diversity, coupled with her awareness of steadily moving change in the fluidity of time, let Carr outgrow Harris's and the Group's mentorship. It also underscores the value of her individuality. Through setting herself yet again apart from a particular ideology, in this case a nationalist rigid (and very masculine) art form, Carr created a space for herself and her art, both in paint and in word.

Lizbeth Goodman and Stephen Regan cite the importance that feminist theory allots to the concept of space and argue that among the First Nations, Emily Carr “found a space [...] in which she could paint and write freely” (Goodman, Regan 157). In an earlier article, Nancy Pagh had already discussed both the need for female space and various aspects of Emily Carr’s space (Pagh, “The Silent, Awe-Filled Spaces”). Goodman and Regan also point to Carr’s search for “the clearing [as] a female space” in her writings, thus adopting the image of forest clearings as symbols for spaces that are open to women and which they can therefore inhabit (Goodman, Regan 172). Like Linsley, they discern “female metaphors” in Carr’s visual depictions and worded descriptions of trees (172).

Robert Thacker, in turn, understands Carr’s space as her inseverable connection to her geographic home; that is, he defines Carr in relation to the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. In two separate instances (Thacker, “[Auto]Biographical Home Places”; “Being on the Northwest Coast”), Thacker takes up Carr’s “emphatic union with her home place” and argues, much like Linsley, that “hers is an art that outstrips nationality” and that, rather, Carr reimagines landscape, akin to Egan’s line of thought, in an autobiographical manner, both in painting and in writing (“Northwest Coast” 190, “Home Places” 135). Thacker sees this “autobiographical and biographical urge” as “paramount” to “a process that [...] had her own self-definition at its end, a self-definition seen always in relation to where she was” and that “remained focused on the creation of identity” (“Northwest Coast” 186-87). *Klee Wyck*, Thacker argues, “spells out its author’s single-minded determination to find the forms to express her particular purpose” and “teaches her reader how to see, and so understand, the landscape and the figures within it; that is, she teaches how to read the landscape. To do this, she envelopes her readers in the same sensations that she herself feels – hence experience becomes reminiscent understanding becomes

projected feelings become autobiographical identification” (187-88). “[T]he melding of natural details [...], autobiographical experiences [...], and the pared-down essentials of Carr’s texts illustrate her ability to situate place within the very core of *Klee Wyck*,” and show that “this is Emily Carr’s place, a place experienced, understood, meditated on, and finally acknowledged as her own” (“Northwest Coast” 189, “Home Places” 138). “[A]t its core is the notion of ‘belonging,’” and it “is less a matter of experience than it is one of an experience made articulate through a text. The recounting of the experience, years later, is more important than the experience itself” (“Northwest Coast” 189).

While Linsley takes a predominantly art historical approach, Thacker points out that “Carr the writer has remained something of an anomaly – embedded within her primary role as a painter and [...] as biographical subject; her writing has illuminated these other issues but has remained subordinate to them” (“Home Places” 136). Thacker takes issue with the mythos surrounding Emily Carr and calls it “a Canadian intellectual construct” (“Northwest Coast” 182). He asks for “distinctions between [...] the Carr who emerges from her own writings[,] [...] the Carr who is revealed in her paintings, and the Carr who is responded to and written about critically” (184). In addition, he says, “there is a maternalism about Carr’s reputation [...] that complicates such a distinction” (184). Thacker contends that, in the mixture of handed-down “old lady” images and impressions of Emily Carr, critics have difficulties reconciling Carr’s eccentric reputation with the greatness of her art and, therefore, wrestle with biographical (and impossible-to-prove) details in order to help them with their evaluation of the artist and her work.

Stephanie Kirkwood Walker published her dissertation on Emily Carr’s biographical image(s) in book form in the mid-1990s, essentially taking up and expanding Elderkin’s previously quoted comment about Carr’s varying and self-perpetuating biographies. Walker

shows that even diverging accounts entrench themselves into the critical discourse through repetitions, and consequently solidify into a complex biographical image that is hard to shake. In her study, Walker engages with the genre of biography and employs Emily Carr as example in her aim to demonstrate how approaches to life-writing have evolved and diversified within cultural and secularizing developments of the last century. A brief overview of Carr criticism shows that between the 1940s and 1960s, scholars and commentators mainly expressed praise regarding Carr's art and her declarations of Canadian identity, then shifted to a more feminist focus (particularly in terms of female autobiography) in the 1970s and 1980s (hence the publications of the three major biographies by Doris Shadbolt, Maria Tippet, and Paula Blanchard), and in the 1990s exhibited rising tension regarding charges of artistic appropriation of Indigenous culture. Walker points to Ira Dilworth, Carr's friend and executor, as instrumental in crafting and putting in motion Carr's initial public image, yet deftly pries apart the diverging interpretative slants the various (self-appointed) Carr biographers contributed to the picture over the years that followed. According to Walker, "few biographies are written with sufficient detachment to lay bare the processes of their own constructions" (S.K. Walker 95). Rather, most biographers tell their own interpretative versions of the subject's life and may even be suspected of a hidden agenda, such as "setting the record straight" – according to them. And therein lies the rub, because to allow "her any self-determination," Carr "must be reconstituted," as a female artist, not "simply be recovered" in narratives that follow patriarchal models – one may recall this and the following argument as echoes of Rimstead and Pagh (95). Quoting theorists Carolyn Heilbrun and Rita Felski, Walker contends that all (auto)biographies are essentially fictional(ized) stories that nevertheless acknowledge the literary value of narrative as "symbolic production of meaning" (96). While this notion may not apply to all (auto)biographies, it

certainly validates Emily Carr's various constructions of herself. Ultimately, Walker says, a multitude of equally worthy Carr biographies exists because critics, "[t]hrough repetitious re-evaluation, using the lens of their own preoccupations," have attempted "to make sense of her life" – "speculations [...] more or less supported by evidence" notwithstanding (115-116). It is these speculations, however, together with the literary interpretations of Emily Carr – which can be read as another form of speculation – that construct and reconstruct Emily Carr, her life and her work, and may both perpetuate and blur her image in a way that should send us hastening back to her original work for answers.

Gerta Moray's criticism of Emily Carr is at once the most comprehensive and the most incisive one of the 1990s. Moray demystifies Carr's legend by way of contextualizing and analyzing the significance of the totem pole figure D'Sonoqua,<sup>4</sup> both in Carr's paintings and her writings. Unlike most critics, who typically reduce Carr's interpretation of D'Sonoqua to an aggressive expression of repressed emotional or sexual conflicts and accordingly speculate about Carr's personality, Moray argues on the basis of Carr's (art-)historical position: "Carr, in her paintings, claimed stylistic territory and types of content that were at the time coded as masculine, while she found ways within them to assert a female identity and to explore concerns that arose from her experience as woman.[...] [S]he positioned herself in relation to the prevailing constructs both of gender and of the modern artist" (Moray, "'T'Other Emily'" 73). Though Carr had to confront male art teachers and colleagues who believed in their artistic superiority, she postulated a strong femininity that was not dominated by the virility claim of masculine (modern) art or a male predatory gaze. In D'Sonoqua, Carr found an image, a signifier, and a channel through which she began an approach towards a formulation of identity.

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<sup>4</sup> Emily Carr's spelling of "Dzonokwa," a figure in Kwakwaka'wakw mythology.

In her various renderings of D'Sonoqua, "Carr could make a virtue of her otherness, of her gender, of her geographic territory, and of her experience of Native culture," through her advancement of "[t]wo themes, [...] a frightening, assertive and ambiguous femininity, and [...] a nurturing and powerful motherhood" (75). Carr's transformation of the figure, from "hesitantly rendered [...] sketch" into compelling oil canvas, illustrates the development and change of Carr's vision of D'Sonoqua (76). Moray contends that the tension in Carr's paintings is "more assertively abstract than the concurrent work of the Group of Seven, [...] her eclectically analytical approach" evidencing "a defiant affirmation both of Carr's commitment to modernism and of her difference. That difference turns upon her gender and on her self-identification with Native culture, to which Carr attributed a privileged relation to modernism in its style and a special acknowledgment of women's powers through its imagery" (76). In Carr's corollary writings, the artist's encounters with D'Sonoqua evolve into "a cathartic experience" that modifies her view of the figure "as not necessarily malign" (77). In D'Sonoqua's "dual nature," which is good as well as bad in First Nations mythology, Carr sees reflected her "own picture of herself" (77). However, rather than continuously bemoaning a female difference that places restrictions on the painter and the woman, Carr transmutes her fascination with D'Sonoqua into embracing this difference and feeling empowered as a consequence. If the mythical, godlike figure is whole yet divided, then Carr can allow herself to be not only different from other females, but also humanly flawed while simultaneously striving for a form of "betterment" that is free of caging Victorian precepts. Moray suggests that "[i]n the Dzonokwa figure [Carr] seems to have found both a mentor and a self-image, one as ambivalent as she felt herself to be" (78). In *Klee Wyck*, "Dzonokwa finally turns into a powerful and benign persona, becoming a guardian spirit who offers her protection from her fears" (78). Moray interprets further that "Carr has

achieved union with Dzonokwa [...]. The story can be read as a quest narrative, [...] as Carr's vision quest, her initiation [...] into an appropriate identity for herself as a female who crosses the boundaries of femininity prescribed by her culture" (78). One could debate what Moray means by "appropriate identity" – a re-invention of traditional roles or a prerogative of biological nature? "Carr's references to artistic creation through metaphors of giving birth and of maternal nurturing [...] show that Carr was conscious of herself as simultaneously artist and woman, and accepted the domestic and the maternal as her domain, though in a highly nonconformist way" (84). In her art, she eschewed the "academic" tradition and advocated "'fresh seeing,'" and in her life, "animals replaced children, and so did her paintings" (87).

Moray points out that Carr's gender nevertheless affected her contemporary critical reception: "Her supporters and colleagues [...] were slow to accord her the same professional rank and rewards as members of the Group of Seven" (86). Between 1927 and 1937, "the [National] Gallery steadily added to its already significant holdings of work by the now canonical Group of Seven, [but] they bought none of Carr's new works. Some of her later work was finally acquired in 1937, only after Carr had a severe heart attack and friends pressured the gallery to make a purchase so that she could pay her medical bills" (86). To this day, and despite the success of the 2007 Emily Carr traveling exhibition, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts still sidelines its meagre possession of two early Emily Carr paintings into a dark niche in the anteroom of the Group of Seven paintings. In 2013, when I asked a volunteer museum guide why Carr's paintings did not receive more prominence, she casually dismissed Carr as a Fauvist and of less importance than the Group of Seven. I was too flabbergasted to point out that the two paintings in question were hardly representative of Carr's later style and brilliance.



It seems that Carr criticism comes with its fair share of personal perceptions and opinions. Just as mine clashed with that of the museum guide, so did Carr's (well-meaning or not) contemporaries' cloud her critical and public reception. Moray indicates that "[t]he critical commentary on Carr published by her friends and contemporaries like Lawren Harris, Ira Dilworth, and Jack Shadbolt placed particular emphasis not only on her lonely struggle, but on her eccentricity, her menage of animals, and her closeness to nature," yet concedes that this image was partly of Carr's own making (86). Nevertheless, "[a]lthough one of the most innovative of Canadian modernist painters, Carr, as a woman, could not be imagined by these men or by the general public as their full professional peer, nor as the acute student of international stylistic currents and the would-be participant in the institutional art world that she was" (86). Instead, Carr came to be regarded "a grotesque" and "odd, and an addition at the end of the Group of Seven's Canadian art movement" (86-87). It would take an unbiased outsider, the British art critic Eric Newton, to acknowledge Carr as a "genius" and her work as "epic" – ironic, considering how anti-English Carr's own attitude often was (87). In contrast, Carr's optimistic "belief that Canada was a new land where the gender restrictions that had confined European women could be cast aside," caused her to be "continually puzzled and hurt" as she was repeatedly disappointed in her expectations (87).

Janice Stewart's dissertation on the autobiographical writings of three women authors straddles the turn of the millennium and takes a psychoanalytical approach. Beginning with Virginia Woolf and ending with Emily Carr, Stewart posits that the artistic identity these writers sought to establish could only be achieved (or attempted) by means of a figurative form of self-asserting aggression towards an artistic model. In Carr's case, by way of reading Carr's self-construction as an attempt to identify with First Nations culture, Stewart eventually arrives at the

charge of appropriation of First Nations art forms – a criticism that was first articulated by Marcia Crosby in 1991, almost ten years earlier, and aptly dismantled by Robert Fulford in 1993. Stewart neglects to draw in either Crosby’s or Fulford’s criticism, and also ignores Moray’s recent analysis of Carr’s attention to the totem figure of D’Sonoqua. Instead, Stewart repeatedly refers to Sanger’s outdated, unmeasured claims and tends to get lost in supposedly incriminating details that she later discounts as incomplete, adding caveats in her closing remarks that serve to open critical backdoors. Stewart reprises her chapter on Emily Carr in a 2005 article, mainly dropping the psychoanalytical argument in favour of a stronger appropriation and colonization charge. Here, Stewart does quote Crosby and jumps on the proverbial bandwagon, thus failing to take into account Douglas Cole’s push-back at the by then prevailing negative image of Emily Carr in 2000, or Glenn Willmott’s 2004 comprehensive differentiation of modes of appropriation.<sup>5</sup> Instead, while professing to aim for a “rereading that is productive,” Stewart does not achieve any balanced argument, and she once again disregards Moray’s critical work, which by 2005 had become a central part of Carr scholarship (Stewart, “Cultural Appropriations” 59).

In the same year, Linda Morra<sup>6</sup> criticizes the “perspective” of most English-Canadian scholarship regarding Emily Carr as “limiting” and articulates what Cole and Willmott had implied (Morra, “Canadian Art According to Emily Carr” 45):

Yet Carr is engaged in a situation, a cultural double bind, [...], that effectively ties her artistic hands. What she writes or paints about will never be deemed appropriate in our period: if she refuses to include traces of First Nations culture, she is contributing to the

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<sup>5</sup> Cole accuses critics of “inventing” and “imagining” Emily Carr, “essentializ[ing] her as the White colonizer” (Cole 159). Willmott vindicates Carr as a conscious appreciator rather than a greedy appropriator or “imperialist scavenger” (Willmott 104), without neglecting the real conflicts of appropriation.

<sup>6</sup> Morra’s essay was republished in 2013 (revised mainly for style by the author), as a book chapter in *Greening the Maple: Canadian Ecocriticism in Context*.

erasure of aboriginal presence [according to one critical perspective], but, if she includes it, she is negatively appropriating it [according to another critical perspective]. To approach Carr's painting and writing entirely from this point of view, obscures her own anti-colonial impulses, her refusal to pander to imported standards, which she perceived as impeding indigenous, national growth. (48-49)

Based on this critical dilemma, Morra argues that Emily Carr looked first to Indigenous art and then to nature, that is, landscape, as the "spiritual impulse" for a developing national art while interpreting the West Coast as a "state within the nation-state" (43). As clichéd as the expression may appear, Carr saw herself as standing on the First Nations giant shoulders rather than as exploiting their art. At the same time, she donated close to fifty paintings "to the state institutions that she believed represented her people, her region, and her nation," and established a trust intended to make the works "noncirculating inalienable possessions" of the Canadian public (Willmott 101-102).

A fresh perspective arrived in 2015 from a rather unexpected critical source. "[T]he Canada/First Nations split" is explained as an inner conflict that "all of us who live on appropriated First Nations land [...] have [...] whether or not we are conscious of it" (Jensen 232). Based on the images created by Emily Carr's autobiographical writings, Phyllis Marie Jensen, a Jungian analyst, examines Carr's psychological complexes of gender, family, and culture, as well as the behavioural implications of archetypal personality traits. Jensen traces and contextualizes the manifestations of these complexes throughout Carr's (family) life, as Carr acts and reacts to her situation. She describes Carr's overcoming of personal and professional odds, and her growing into herself as an artist and a person, as her psychological "individuation, the liberating and blossoming of the personality," and as a "process of discrimination, integration,

and maturation” (227). Jensen succeeds where Stewart fails, by providing a deeper understanding of and appreciation for what are habitually perceived as Emily Carr’s idiosyncrasies or eccentricities.

And yet, who better to understand these peculiarities than someone who knew Emily Carr personally? As Stephanie Kirkwood Walker points out, “[p]ersonal memories [...] are a rich and variable aspect of the composite image. Perhaps more than formal accounts [...] they add depth and immediacy and, of greater significance to the faceted image, they add other perspectives, differences of opinion and experience” (S.K. Walker 71). In 1954, Carol Pearson wrote something of a personal love letter to Emily Carr’s memory that was mingled with a defense of Carr’s character. While Pearson’s writings make no intellectual claims, she does try to set the proverbial record straight by responding through personal anecdotes to entrenched images of Emily Carr as eccentric and irascible. “With sensitivity and a nostalgia that rings true,” Pearson strives to convey more of Carr’s artistic and personal nature; she shows examples of Carr’s generosity and wisdom, as well as the reasoning behind the artist’s often ingenious solutions in practical matters (S.K. Walker 66). In 1969, Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher published her personal “portrayal” of Emily Carr, and also “acknowledged her friend’s [Carr’s] insight and spirituality” (71). In terms of providing critically enlightening facts, Hembroff-Schleicher stated that Carr “detested dates. [...] [S]he often didn’t bother to date a picture and her letters rarely bear any other designation than the day of the week” – Peter Sanger might have taken that into consideration when he accused Carr of lying about ages and dates (Hembroff-Schleicher 35-36). Hembroff-Schleicher was less close to Carr personally and more critically distant than Pearson, and she would intensify critical debate through her later controversial biography of Emily Carr.

Biographies, like personal reminiscences, tend to construct vivid images, but they do not necessarily supply critical analysis as they are more prone to suspending an academic approach in favour of a greater appeal to the broader public. Akin to journalists, the quintessential biographer believes him- or herself to be objectively in search of “the truth” and wants to “get at the core” of a “story” – yet, like any other piece of writing, the story every biographer tells is coloured by his or her lens (see S.K. Walker), and elements of conjecture are inherent. Small wonder, then, that Emily Carr insisted on constructing her own.

Although critics and biographers alike work to contribute to the existing “faceted nature” of Carr’s “composite image,” they cannot help but fragment the image’s “variable aspect[s]” into decontextualized puzzle pieces that may become individually overemphasized and will further distort, essentialize, or ingrain critical perception and construction of Emily Carr (S.K. Walker 71). The most discerning critical assessments of Emily Carr’s writing grasp that it was not a mere recording of facts but rather an extensive process of exploring her self – a process, in a word, of self-fashioning. Whereas Kröller treats Carr as a myth, Sanger spurns her as a liar, and Stewart accuses her of cultural appropriation, most of the critics surveyed above perceive the complex subjectivity that Carr’s books are interested in probing and performing. Rimstead asks readers to decipher Carr’s underlying messages rather than to scrutinize the text for factual accuracy, and Adams observes that Carr’s literary shaping of her experiences and ideas cannot be measured by academic or intellectual standards. Pagh adds a feminist perspective and points out that Carr broke gender barriers in life-writing by consistently connecting her subject matter to her artistic/professional evolution. While Egan views Carr’s writing as a struggle for self-expression, Elderkin describes Carr’s varied self-constructions as a generative process of personal development; S.K. Walker showcases the ramifications of these variations in (self-)

construction in the diversity of Carr biographies. Linsley explores Carr's philosophical outlook as part of the artist's quest for self-definition and the creation of her own space, which Thacker links to Carr's anchoring of her identity in the location of her home in the Pacific Northwest. Moray identifies Carr's attraction to First Nations art and to the B.C. forest as inspiring and empowering to the artist who would go on to create unique and powerful Modernist and Canadian art, while Morra acknowledges Carr's undeservedly precarious situation in terms of socio-political criticism. Both Moray and Morra legitimate Carr's quest for self-knowledge through cross-cultural inspiration. Ultimately, however, I have discovered that few critics consider the connections between more than two of Carr's major publications, much less the way these books function, together as well as individually, as cornerstones for Carr's exploration and construction of her self. Having reviewed the critical judgments, the analysis will now turn to Carr's books themselves, in order to demonstrate the ways in which she used them to fashion herself.

## CHAPTER 2

### Emily Carr as Author: Constructing a Self in Writing

“Writing is a splendid sorter of your good and bad feelings, better even than paint. The whole thing of life is trying to crack the nut and get at the bittersweetness of the kernel.”

“To paint a self-portrait should teach one something about oneself. I shall try.”

“I think writing is *good* because it shows you all sorts of shortcomings you did not know you had.”

Emily Carr<sup>7</sup>

Emily Carr, one of Canada’s most eminent painters, was also a writer, but apart from *Klee Wyck* (1941), her books are all but unknown today. Nevertheless, all her writings serve to shed light on the artist behind her paintings. While Carr described many of her paintings as representative of her search for a spiritual essence in nature, as well as an expression of her feelings particularly in reaction to the Pacific Northwest Coast, her books illustrate how Carr regarded herself and her artistic path. I argue that, in her written oeuvre, Carr positions herself in various yet connected ways. As the youngest daughter, at home with her family, she is the misunderstood, routinely criticized and thus suffering rebel. As an adult, she becomes the unappreciated perpetual outsider. As an artist, she manifests the will to achieve and toils through the stages of education, work, rejection, and an ultimate measure of success. While this schematic nucleus of Carr’s self-projection onto the page points to some of her most central concerns, it belies the artist’s much more complex nature, which a comprehensive study of her complete written oeuvre can partially elucidate. In her writings, Carr tried to explain and justify

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<sup>7</sup> Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, 427, 437. The third quotation is from one of Carr’s letters to Ira Dilworth, written in 1941 (*Corresponding Influence* 31).

who she was (or believed herself to be), as a person and as an artist, by tracing her personal and professional evolution, and through expressing her thoughts and beliefs.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, critics have alternately validated and challenged Carr's self-constructing claims. This chapter examines in detail how Emily Carr depicted herself in her writing and offers both interpretation and critical adjustment. Before I analyze Carr's individual publications, I ground my method of delineating Carr's self-portrayal in Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning. Carr's posthumously published *Pause: A Sketch Book* (1953) provides veiled insight into an identity crisis Carr suffered in her early thirties and further contextualizes the premise for considering *Klee Wyck* (1941), *The Book of Small* (1942), *The House of All Sorts* (1944), and *Growing Pains* (1946). *Klee Wyck* bears the characteristics of a *Künstlerroman*, while *The Book of Small* delivers an origin story. *The House of All Sorts* dramatizes setbacks in middle age yet tries to counterbalance human conflicts with love for animals. Carr's autobiography *Growing Pains*, per her request published after her death, converts her personal account into a comprehensive artist statement. I will round out my study by briefly comparing Carr's self-construction in her journal writing (*Hundreds and Thousands* [1966]; *Opposite Contraries* [2004]), as well as in her personal correspondence with Ira Dilworth (*Corresponding Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth* [2006]), to her self-portrayal in her books. Ultimately, I intend to show that Carr's self-construction, while personal and thus hardly objective or detached, is much more congruent and contoured than previously realized. The various segments of Carr's complete written oeuvre centre on a range of particular positions and perspectives in her life. Combined, her writings assemble like pieces of a puzzle and encompass a single project: a multi-dimensional construction and projection of herself.



### Applying Stephen Greenblatt's Theory of Self-Fashioning to Emily Carr

Various scholars have applied principles of Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning, as articulated in his ground-breaking *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), to literature from later time periods. I will briefly consider how Greenblatt's "set of governing conditions to most instances of self-fashioning" can be mapped onto Emily Carr herself, as well as her literary persona, which will set the premise for my endeavour to draw a coherent picture of how Carr constructed herself multi-dimensionally in writing by successively considering her main published works (Greenblatt 8-9).

Greenblatt marks typical self-fashioners as members of the middle-class, without the inheritance of "hierarchical status that might have rooted personal identity in the identity of a clan or caste" (9). Emily Carr grew up in a middle-class milieu where her family was respected, but her father's reclusiveness, as well as her mother's infirmity and early death, kept them away from much social contact with others, thus somewhat hindering Emily's socialization. Also, Richard Carr's pretensions to English gentility manifested themselves in his autocratic and almost fanatically pious dominance over the household. Emily rejected her father's philosophy as much as his eventual transfer of authority to her eldest sister Edith (Dede), and continuously portrayed herself in her writings as suffering under and rebelling against unjust family oppression. Her father's estate left her enough money, for a while at least, to maintain middle-class status and a measure of independence, thereby enabling her to feel confident enough not to bow to social convention. In choosing art as a profession and accepting the epithet of *eccentric* while developing an unconsciously elitist stance, Emily Carr used her background as a springboard to formal education in art and the initiation of her artistic path.

For Greenblatt, “[s]elf-fashioning [...] involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self” (9). While Emily Carr rebelled against patriarchal assumptions of authority, she found a reflection of her belief in God in the majesty she saw in the forests of the North West. Her ponderings about its grandeur fueled her search for artistic direction and a “fresh seeing” of God’s manifestation in nature (*Fresh Seeing* 10).

Greenblatt further posits that “[s]elf-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile” (Greenblatt 9). Emily Carr perceived a lot of things as alien, strange or hostile. She saw the transplantation of English customs and tastes as alien to Canadian culture. Patriarchal and Victorian expectations of female submissiveness struck her as both strange and hostile. In her writings, she consistently defined herself as an outsider who had to work hard to stand her ground. Since “the alien is always constructed as a distorted image of the authority” (9), Emily Carr resisted a father who behaved “as if he was God” (*Growing Pains* 24), and a society that exerted prejudiced and hypocritical pressure. The polarity of opposite perspectives, such as Emily’s and her father’s, or Emily’s and Victorian society’s, in standards and expectations, as well as feelings of righteousness, shows that “[o]ne man’s authority is another man’s alien” (Greenblatt 9). Also, “[w]hen one authority or alien is destroyed, another takes its place”: after her father’s death, Emily resisted the authority of her sister Edith, and if she was not cross with society at large, she often felt antagonized by some or other individuals (9). While all her books deal with a variety of people both inside and outside her family, Carr particularly explores her personal grievances with tenants in *The House of All Sorts*. Fittingly, “[t]here is always more than one authority and more than one alien in existence at a given time” (Greenblatt 9).

Greenblatt's concept of authority versus alien develops more complexity "[i]f both the authority and the alien are located outside the self," as is the case with Emily Carr, because then "they are at the same time experienced as inward necessities, so that both submission and destruction are always already internalized" (9). If we regard God as the authority that Emily Carr accepted while she rejected patriarchal and societal interpretations of God as alien, then her need to address the imbalances of power that she perceived as such, and which immediately affected her, drove Carr to form and articulate her individual stance, that is, to fashion her own identity by redefining her view of God and religion, nature, and society. As "[s]elf-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language," we can trace Carr's struggle to delineate her thought processes or emerging convictions, as well as to develop and assert both her identity and authority, mainly in her subjective writing, whereas her paintings evince the already acquired power of a confident brush (9).

At the same time, "the power generated to attack the alien in the name of the authority is produced in excess and threatens the authority it sets out to defend. Hence self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining, some loss of self" (9). Here, the authority that Emily Carr has set out to defend is her own. She was strong yet supremely sensitive, and the fight to resist parental and societal pressure, and to become her own person, alienated her from most members of her family and frequently isolated her from society. Both belligerent and shy, Carr often felt misunderstood or shortchanged by others, and her ensuing social withdrawal enhanced her image of eccentricity. She could best vent her frustrations in writing, which in turn immortalized words that worked against her in subsequent critical analysis. Although her writing could be corrosive and damage her image, once again I

find it worthwhile to point to Carol Pearson's perspective, to show that Carr was not always the epitome of impatience and rebellion:

She [Emily Carr] had many ideas, most of them labour-saving, that the public did not understand. As far back as 1925 she had the idea that a baby carriage would be just the thing for bringing home groceries. So we got a large deep one, painted it brown, and went shopping. Such a howl you never did hear! A crowd followed along from store to store, jeering. They made all sorts of remarks, mostly unkind, some rude, about "old women who could find no better use for baby carriages," and the suggestions they made were quite vile. She ignored them completely and **went her way**. [...] I would be tagging along, generally pushing the carriage, always with her. Once she turned to me and said, "Child, there is no need for you to be laughed at. You go along by yourself across the street; I'll pretend not to know you and we will make a game of it." This was to give me an easy "out." As if I would take it! I could have shouted at them, I was so angry, till, seeing my concern, she said, "Think, Child. It is they who should be pitied; they may have no real interest in life, no pets of their own." So we would continue on our way, chatting, ignoring them completely, and she would pause along the way to admire the trees, explain the colouring of a new flower to me, or pet a stray dog. Yet it was *they* who said that *she* was queer. Now, in the '50s, many shoppers in the big grocery stores have their own little grocery carts. (Pearson 27-28, my bold print)

Pearson's account shows that, apart from her unconventional ingenuity, Carr would also develop wisdom as part of her identity, and that in her actions she was capable of rising above the sometimes petty and resentful comments set down in her writings, and thus to provide a positive example for a child. And yet, her widespread negative utterances illustrate that "any achieved

identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss,” because the conflict or “point of encounter” between the authority (of self) and the (oppressing) alien chips away at both entities at the same time that “self-fashioning occurs” (Greenblatt 9). As such, Emily never felt victorious or validated. Rather, she often puzzled about people’s motives when she felt they were cruel to her or her art, and her writings functioned not only as an enlightening complement to her artistic endeavours, but also served as cathartic therapy to attempt to free herself, in hindsight, from these feelings of loss.

While most of Carr’s written oeuvre is retrospective, it does not consist of simple reminiscences. Rather, it encompasses “experience artfully shaped” (Greenblatt 6). Closely linked to Carr’s surroundings, every book contains her focus on a specific, usually personal situation from which she develops the trajectory and goal of her individual narratives. Yet the course or the arrangement of her stories does not necessarily follow a chronological route or a particular plot. Often, they circle back to the beginning, like in *Pause: A Sketch Book* (1953), when Carr does not find that she can record the progress she wishes for, or, conversely, in *Klee Wyck* (1941), when she does imply growth. As such, she challenges various status quos while she muses about her individual path. Even if partly or occasionally caught in elements of an inherited world view, Carr’s criticism and action are often ahead of her time.

#### Emily Carr’s *Pause*, the Abominable Rest Cure, and the Emergence of a Self-Definition

To begin my analysis of Carr’s self-construction in writing with the posthumously published *Pause: A Sketch Book* (1953) is perhaps a somewhat unorthodox choice. At first glance, *Pause* seems a peripheral or even isolated work, yet it looks back at a moment of paralyzing crisis and desperate self-reflection, within a contained space and time. *Pause* is pivotal to the extent that Emily Carr, in her early thirties, realized that she had to guard both her

health and her heart if she was to succeed as an artist. However, *Pause* does not overtly communicate this thought process. Rather, it represents the means Carr employed to try to process and overcome her identity crisis, by describing and illustrating mainly the daily occurrences of her stay in a lung sanatorium. The anxiety that had brought her there, especially regarding her uncertain future as a woman and as a female artist, emerges in the sense of powerlessness and despair that pervades the narrative, but its cause is not clearly identified, much less expressed. In her last few letters to Ira Dilworth, Carr mentioned that she wanted to revise the manuscript, but she passed away before it was returned to her from her publisher. I would argue that she would have re-shaped *Pause* to contextualize her experience as another painful, involuntary stepping stone in the continuous development of her personal and artistic self. As it stands, *Pause* remains cryptic and retains Carr's uncertainty of that time; while it ponders people and birds, it negates Carr's usual drive for and emphasis on forward movement and, instead, freezes the narrative of her life to an apparent halt.

Emily Carr's highly visual narrative style underscores her painter's eye, one that excels in translating observations and feelings into painted and written art. However, one should beware of interpreting her writings through an exclusively visual lens when illustrations are involved, particularly in the case of her incisive *Pause*. *Pause* comprises a collection of vignettes that Carr presumably wrote between 1938 and 1943 about her stay in an English sanatorium in 1903 and part of 1904, to recover from a mental breakdown that at the time was ill-categorized in the catch-all phrase of *female hysteria* (Thom 12 n 26). In his introduction to the 2007 edition, art historian Ian M. Thom points out that the illustrations, though dated during her time in the sanatorium, were not paired with the text by Carr herself, but exist in a separate sketch book that Carr had included in a trunk full of material she bequeathed to Ira Dilworth (the sketchbook is

now part of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Ontario). It is significant to note that these sketches appear to be initial drafts and probably do not constitute more than “source material” (Thom 8), jotted down while Carr’s impressions were fresh, whereas she worked much later and repeatedly on the vignettes. Crafting the stories in hindsight resulted in a tone at variance with the rough sketches and might be why Carr ultimately did not pair them together, but that does not seem to have deterred either Dilworth or the original publishers after Carr’s death. The question arises: why did Dilworth choose to publish Carr’s quite depressing sanatorium stories, with illustrations, as *Pause*, rather than one of her completed and much more amusing self-described “funny books” like, for example, *Sister and I from Victoria to London* (2011)? Was it because Carr had decided to prepare the sanatorium stories for publication (rather than for personal or family amusement), or to convince the public of Carr’s sanity, by showing that she was strong enough to cope with sanatorium restrictions? If anything, the sanatorium stay could have easily driven Carr mad, if it had not been for “her rebellious nature and her remarkable ability to see the humour in her own predicament” (Thom 3).

However, *Pause* is not as humorous or “lively” as Thom makes it out to be, and it marks while it veils an important turning point in Carr’s understanding of self (7). Contrary to Carr’s other “funny books,” it does not qualify as a fun read. In her journal, Carr voiced her own doubts while she worked: “The story is a bit grim so far but I want to weave it round the birds [...]. Birds are not tragic” (HT 398). She realized that her sanatorium narrative possessed too sombre of an essence to appeal to an audience and decided to frame the story cycle with the song birds that had uplifted her spirits and those of the other patients. However, the framing device seems forced and ultimately depresses rather than amuses the reader, especially since “[t]he death of the birds ends *Pause* on a rather melancholy note” (Thom 5). Yet Thom insists that “this

[melancholy] is not the sense that we get from the book as a whole” (5). I disagree, and this is also where the nature of most of the illustrations diverges from that of the writings. While only a few of the visual sketches that are included in the publication evince the despair that lies beneath the vignettes, that despair often becomes palpable in Carr’s words – and she spells it out in the chapter titled “Death”: “I drew a picture of a girl preparing to commit suicide in a water-jug. [...] [U]nder the drawing I printed, DESPERATE” (*Pause* 124). Thom overemphasizes his claim that “Carr’s drawings [...] substantially amplify and enrich her wry narrative” (10). While some “truly animate the story” and others are “quick, lively sketches” that occasionally “poke fun at [others] [...] and Carr herself” (6), the drawings mostly hide or downplay Carr’s feelings of powerlessness – with one notable exception: “I Cannot Eat” shows Carr’s sad tears rather than any satirical outrage at the dietary regimen (*P* 71). Generally, Carr’s visual art abounds with exuberant life. But throughout *Pause*, as well as many of her other writings, Carr’s words reveal suffering that, first, shapes her self-image, and second, does not find reflection in her paintings – perhaps because she paints herself only in writing.

In the stories that constitute *Pause*, Carr deals with an extreme low and protracted moment of her life, and yet, the stories do not solely revolve around herself. Instead, they tell about life as it was at the lung sanatorium, and the “bleakness that characterized much of her convalescence” emerges in her sometimes open-ended reflections on patients, the staff, and others, as well as in her common-sense wariness of the absurdities of the (at that time) professional treatment she and others were subjected to (Thom 3). This bleakness pervades the atmosphere of the whole narrative of *Pause* and pushes her well-known sarcasm into the background, at least when compared with her other books. At the very beginning, in her “Author’s Note,” Carr characterizes herself as “the fat girl [...] with a limp and a stutter” and



pronounces herself a “failure,” even though she stays “wildly rebellious at heart” (*P* 14-15, 18). In the middle of the book, the title of the chapter ““Me”” is set in quotation marks, as if she was hardly worth talking about, and the words run less than a page. Here, Carr distills her sanatorium stay into pithy statements, summing up how she sees herself (“not always polite, not always biddable”), the way the place was run, the value of the staff members, the usefulness of her “caricatures and silly rhymes” to appease others and pass the seeming endlessness of the time spent there, and the little progress she makes during the prescribed bed rest that characterized the (now disproved) rest cure (63). Later, in her autobiography *Growing Pains*, while referring to harsher treatments like electrotherapy, Carr describes how the last two months at the sanatorium almost sent her over the edge: “I was not allowed to read, to talk, to think. [...] [M]y nerves and spirit were in a jangle. By and by I got so that I did not want to do anything, to see anybody [...] I had lost all desire to work now” (*GP* 234). Apart from realizing that the negative effects of the treatment outweighed any positives, Carr resented the loss of agency, even if she managed not to let it break her will.

Carr’s experience calls to mind Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the feminist writer, who had also undergone the rest cure when she suffered from depression. As a result, Gilman’s short story “The Yellow Wall-paper” (1892) dramatizes a woman going insane because of the confinement of enforced mental and physical idleness. In 1913, Gilman explained that she wrote the story as a warning after she had saved herself from “utter mental ruin” by “cast[ing] the noted specialist’s advice to the winds and [going] to work again—[...] ultimately recovering some measure of power” (Gilman, “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wall-paper’?” 804). At the same time, Gilman protested in this and her other work the disenfranchisement of women in general.

Emily Carr was above all an individualist, yet she often took a feminist approach without realizing it on an intellectual level. Even though she took justified exception to the infamous hysteria diagnosis that was exclusively aimed at women, and eventually decided against marriage so that she could fully pursue her artistic career, Carr's stories in *Pause* do not turn her sanatorium stay into a gender issue. Nevertheless, Carr was always keenly aware of the disadvantages women faced – beginning with “I [...] began to question why Father should act as if he was God” and later having to contend with art instructors who insisted that women could never paint as well as men (*GP* 24). While most patients, both female and male, were treated for tuberculosis by two women doctors and a female staff, Carr claimed that “[t]he men patients [...] kept to themselves, enjoying a grouch” because they were outnumbered by “[t]wenty women to every man,” which would explain why there are more stories about women than men (*P* 36). At the same time, Carr's notice of the men's behaviour denotes her consciousness of the empowering advantages of male socialization.

Although Carr wrote in her journal that weaving the story of raising songbirds into the narrative would lighten the atmosphere, the inclusion may have been an unwitting use of the trope of the woman as a trapped bird, in the sense that she saw the ultimate failure of her experiment as symbolic for the weakening instead of the strengthening of most patients' ability to escape and survive outside the entrapment of the sanatorium. She recognized the determination, or rather the superior confidence, of male patients who “scuttled [...] [to get better] with all possible speed, to get away” not only from the women, but from the sanatorium as well (36).

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their seminal work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), dissect patriarchal circumscriptions of womanhood and trace female authorial despair

and “rebellion” through history, with an emphasis on women writers in the nineteenth century. They showcase authors who reread male-dominated literature from a female revisionary perspective, and who reconceptualized and rewrote both conventional and extraordinary stories within a gradually emerging female literary tradition that, at least initially, had to veil in self-protection its criticism of a male dominated society in general and the consequent oppression of women in the arts. The trope of the encaged bird appears in several works, such as Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814), for example, where a young Maria Bertram – who is not cast as the heroine (that is, the ostensible role model) and can therefore mask the author’s criticism – compares herself to a caged bird when she lashes out at the disenfranchised status of women that impedes a social acceptance of female independence (J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Vol I Ch 10).

Carr’s use of the birds in her stories may have turned out to be a similar albeit involuntary expression of despair. Increasingly aware of the inevitability of hard choices, she may have regarded the abortive idea of imported song birds in “her glorious silent woods” as a representation, on a personal level, of her failed hope for an uplifting beauty that would bring both balance and completion in a desired utopian (gender and other) life (*P* 15). With the example of the birds that she first nurtured and then felt obliged to euthanize when they became both “very quarrelsome, damaging each other by fighting” and unaccustomed to survive in the wild (*GP* 232-34), Carr conveys that freedom is natural and essential, that captivity changes and debilitates, and that transplantation is far removed from acclimatization (that is, one does not guarantee the other). At the same time, Carr denies her own colonial as well as her cultural English heritage, by fiercely considering herself a native Canadian and “thoroughly un-English” (*P* 59) – one of the contradictions that characterize Carr and her writing, evincing a variant of the struggle with self-definition that Gilbert and Gubar have identified in women writers.

As such, *Pause* represents a self-reflective look back at a moment of incisive, directional life choices, even if these considerations remain obscured in the narrative. Since Carr did not have the opportunity to revise her manuscript, *Pause* can be read as an outlier in her oeuvre, or as her preliminary ruminating over several concerns before developing a distinctive outlook on womanhood, the artistic profession, and nature. Nevertheless, in its unrevised condition, *Pause* provides a somewhat raw perspective that serves as the point of departure for reading and understanding Carr's fashioning of self in her other books. The discrepancy between humour and despair in *Pause* points to the personal nature of Carr's writing, as opposed to the accomplished universality of her painting. Paradoxically, considering that the rest cure has been proven to be detrimental rather than restorative, most of Carr's writing was done in ill health and while she was resting; but, of course, Carr's later convalescences were physical, not psychosomatic. Also, Carr's awareness of the social and professional obstacles that women faced daily, manifests itself in her observations of female and male behaviour in the sanatorium and in her probably unconscious use of the trope of women as caged birds in her songbird narrative. So, *Pause* presents a puzzle of pieces that open the door to myriad interpretations, while it showcases a period of crisis in which Carr's belief in herself, that is, in her sense of self-definition and her chosen path, was shaken.

#### *Klee Wyck* and the Making of an Artist's Identity

Without a doubt, Carr's debut publication *Klee Wyck* is her most famous book. It is also the most meticulously crafted. Although *Klee Wyck* won the Governor General's Award for Nonfiction in 1942, most critics have come to agree that the stories are fictionalized accounts of Carr's travels up the north-west coast of Canada. However, fewer acknowledge that *Klee Wyck* illustrates Carr's quest for a new self-definition, and that, therefore, the bulk of the stories are

covertly composed of the artist's search for identity and purpose through traveling and sketching. In the first paragraph of *Klee Wyck*, Carr portrays her imaginative heroine/artist persona as a nameless and inexperienced young individual on the threshold of a journey: "Everything was big and cold and strange to me, a fifteen-year-old school-girl. I was the only soul on the wharf. The Irishman did not have any trouble deciding which was I" (*KW* 31). Carr signals that a distinct personality already exists, and that a formation and identification process will ensue.

In his analysis of *Klee Wyck*, Gerald Lynch points to Carr's self-reflexivity in the book and traces the artist's growth. While Carr foregrounds her observations of the elemental power of nature and the enforced changing of Indigenous civilization in her narrative, Lynch makes a compelling argument for *Klee Wyck* as a *Künstlerroman* that is aptly situated within "the tradition of the English-Canadian short story cycle" "with its dynamic of recurrent development" (Lynch 115-116, 120). Lynch traces a dramatic arc that evinces not only a conscious arrangement of "cumulative" chapters (rather than loosely connected and somewhat repetitive vignettes) (124), which lead to a climactic event and a subsequent winding-down of the action in the form of a more enlightened return of the heroine to the point of origin, but also includes deftly balanced parallels and counterpoints within both the individual stories and their symmetric positions in the overall structure. For example, Carr's persona Klee Wyck surreptitiously draws a parallel between herself, as she appears in limbo or temporarily isolated in the very first paragraph of the book, and the Indigenous "hero" who is set apart in the last sentence of the penultimate story (*KW* 148). Significantly, from the viewpoint of a white policeman, the "hero" is a "fierce, troublesome customer[,]" so that, within this and other contexts of the stories, Carr provocatively sheds light on the polarized perspectives (and labels) of the time (148).

As Lynch explains, Carr avails herself of a variety of literary tropes in the process of fashioning her own *Künstlerroman*. In the first story, “Ucluelet,” she presents her young-girl persona (as opposed to her real age at the time, that is, conscious fiction as opposed to “lies”) anonymously, in the first person, and in an orphan-like fashion, “left alone in strange territory to the care of unknown missionaries” (Lynch 117), and she adroitly employs an Indian “Chief, old Hipi, [who] was held to be a reader of faces,” to characterize her in the second person: the missionary who translates for the girl tells her that the chief said “that you had no fear, that you were not stuck up, and that you knew how to laugh” (*KW* 32). From there, Carr “recreat[es] the cyclical story of her developing self,” whose beginning is marked by the moment an Indigenous woman bestows on her the name “Klee Wyck, the Laughing One,” and illustrates “the self-formation of reiterated identity in a marginal wilderness setting” (Lynch 117). Lynch argues that “[b]y writing herself as Klee Wyck within the text, Carr is signalling us to read the story cycle as the portrayal of a process of growth and accommodation, and as fiction” (115). In the very first story, she must overcome the obstacle of obtaining permission to paint First Nations people, and towards the end she has to acquire the same for totem poles. Throughout the book, in what Lynch terms as a “threat-rescue pattern,” she needs to negotiate the challenges of nature, until the climax occurs in a type of “shipwreck adventure” that leads to her return (that closes the frame) in the last story, “Canoe,” to the civilization she came from, in a kind of Indigenous “Ark” that underscores her more developed, enlightened and poised identity (124, 129). The artist persona Klee Wyck moves from being “figuratively an orphan in the first story” to “an honorary member of an Indian family” in the last, and “has secured an identity from and within wilderness space” that gives her a measure of composure or “self-possession” (118).

The “key symbol of [...] the tree” runs throughout the narrative, and “the tall standing-alone tree [encountered in the first story] serves a totemic function even before it is recognized as a totem pole” (118). This first tree provides Klee Wyck with an initial anchor, as it were, helping her to find her bearings and to calm her in the first instance of new and unfamiliar surroundings, and as Klee Wyck develops her interest in the cultural and artistic significance of First Nation totem poles (an interest that culminates in her triple engagement with the strongly feminized D’Sonoqua totem pole), she unites the living tree, the cultural/artistic totem pole, and the moving canoe by the close of the narrative into a symbol of her newfound identity and direction. Lynch identifies the “totem poles [...] [as] one of the prime elements of coherence” in the book and points to their “appropriative talismanic function [...] for Klee Wyck” (120): they provide the artist both with support and with a view into the soul of the nature she tries to capture in her art.

Yet Klee Wyck’s personal and artistic development is hidden both behind the depiction of the sublime in nature and behind the narrative’s social critique. In this “carefully shaped autobiographical fiction,” Carr employs her “writerly strategy” to “deflect[...] attention from her shaping of herself and onto the subject most definite of that self-shaping: Indian culture, and Indian life in opposition to a life-suppressing non-Native civilization/religion” (119). Klee Wyck continuously defines herself against the missionaries in her text, whereas she describes First Nations people matter-of-factly and (mostly) without judgement. While she describes various instances of personal suffering among First Nations in relatively unsentimental terms, the narrator works hard to respect and preserve their individual and collective dignity.

In terms of art and culture, Carr, as Klee Wyck, tends to romanticize First Nations life as “potentially creative,” but she sees it more as a “powerfully attractive (for Klee Wyck) alternate way of living with/in nature [...] that primarily contributes [...] to her own romantic and self-

creating myth” of personal freedom (127-128). On the one hand, she tries to decipher the artistic “grafted [...] language” of the totem poles to investigate both their philosophical and social significance in First Nations culture and the “tremendous force” and “the mysteries behind the forest” (*KW* 85, 70). On the other, she comes to see them as a relic and a symbol of a cultural past left behind in the name of progress or, rather, the assimilation of First Nations, and hence, a certain loss of identity, as “the missionaries [...] told the Indians this was all foolish and heathenish [and] [...] took the Indians away from their old villages and their totem poles,” leaving them to “rot and topple to the earth,” or else “carried [...] away to museums” where “the white man did not understand their language” (*KW* 86). In a way, Klee Wyck’s peaceful sketching of D’Sonoqua with cats surrounding her represents a moment of feminized and healing communion. However, Lynch cautions against “colouring the text and its persona’s actions [...] with the image of the artist Carr as a kind of fully formed and feminist idolater of Nature and Native civilization” (Lynch 115). Instead, one should recognize *Klee Wyck* as an example of “the Modern Canadian adaptation of story cycle form in the exploration of individual psychology,” and that “the art of self-definition is [...] intended to be viewed as a continuing process” (129-130). Ultimately, “Carr will repetitively sketch her Klee Wyck sketching her talismanic totem poles” in her effort to sketch herself (130).

Ira Dilworth, Emily Carr’s friend and literary executor, may have seen *Klee Wyck* not as an attempt at self-definition, but as self-therapy. At least, that is what he claims in his foreword to *Klee Wyck*’s first edition:

This writing has been done for no other reason than to provide occasional escape and relaxation for the artist, or, at times, to fix clearly in her mind sequences of events and impressions of people and places, the edges of which might become dim. It has none of



the too frequent self-consciousness which makes tedious reading of reminiscences prepared intentionally for the public. (*KW* 17)

Dilworth may be to blame for the critical reception of *Klee Wyck* and, by extension, Carr's other writings as attempts at non-fiction. While Carr herself described her writing in part as cathartic and clarifying thoughts in her mind, she was by no means determined to keep the results private, nor did she see them as a mere diversion. Dilworth's assertion of "occasional escape and relaxation" calls to mind Henry Austen's false insistence that his sister Jane Austen (the proverbial female writer with a sharp, if more subtle tongue) was too much of a lady to craft her writings with the intent to publish rather than "entirely from taste and inclination" (H. Austen 338). Likewise, the lack of "self-consciousness" in *Klee Wyck* demonstrates the work Emily Carr expended on creating a fictionalized, albeit autobiographical, *Künstlerroman*.

Dilworth, in his capacity as editor, did aid Carr in optimizing her literary output for publication. However, it took Lynch's study to throw light on Carr's dexterous construction of *Klee Wyck* and its theme of maturation. Lynch identifies and elucidates the narrative's features that come together as a *Künstlerroman*, namely Carr's conversion of herself into a waifish artist figure that moves and grows throughout a short story cycle that, in turn, employs the symbol of a tree (in a range of manifestations, from the immense, anchored, natural forest, to a small, mobile man-made canoe), both as foundation and as soul of the heroine's quest. In contrast, Dilworth's evaluation of Carr's work as self-therapy rather than her articulation of her search for self-definition shows the external perspective of Carr's main interlocutor for her public image as an author. While Dilworth's help was vital in bringing Carr's writings to publication, his own concern of promoting a Canadian national literature and culture may have predisposed him, in his foreword to *Klee Wyck*, to privilege his view of Carr as "a thorough-going, downright

Canadian” over her stance as an individual artist, and thus involuntarily affected her subsequent critical reception (Dilworth 16).

Reliving and Looking Back at the Beginning of Self: *The Book of Small*

While *Klee Wyck* vaguely gestures forward in terms of Carr’s artistic development, Carr’s next book, *The Book of Small*, considers her childhood and moments or situations she perceived as formative of her person and her personal philosophy. Essentially an origin story, *The Book of Small* presents a child’s mind in the adult’s retrospective view. However, the adult’s perspective is skillfully obscured by foregrounding the child’s language and thinking process. Carr’s reconstruction of herself as a child plays with the interaction between self and place; first, as the child in her family setting, where she is criticized for extending feelings of kinship to the cow in the cow yard, and then, as the child growing up in the wider setting of a small town that is in the process of developing as well. Thus, *The Book of Small* evinces a doubleness that suggests Emily and Victoria each allegorizing the other in a kind of symbiosis.

*The Book of Small* consists of two parts that are linked in their contemplation of origins. The first, entitled “The Book of Small,” fictionalizes some of Carr’s childhood experiences in a third-person narration about the persona of Small. However, it both bookends and intersperses chapters told as herself in the first person (perhaps intended to be or to appear less fictionalized) – without being named anything other than “child,” occasionally. The second part of the book, “A Little Town and a Little Girl,” deals with the growth and change of Victoria, BC, and its people. Part I begins with setting the scene for Small’s/Emily’s family upbringing, embedded in the cycle of her father’s autocratic, inflexibly pious and genteel Sundays (Blanchard 33), and ends with a child’s musings about time seeming to stand still or to fly when it does not do either. Part II runs longer, and Small has disappeared (at least as a persona), leaving Emily to tell us of

her childhood in the first person where she is a participant, and, in the third person, to give us “[a] parade of portraits [...] of the different types [of people] making up the collective whole” when she may not necessarily be even an observer (Dvořák 140). Emily begins by sketching her father’s background and how he established himself with his growing family in Victoria, thus giving rise to a Canadian Emily/Small in particular, and ends with her contemplating Victoria as she sees the town “grown up” at the (for her present) time when she writes the last chapter of her book (*BS* 200). Victoria, the town, is the “Small” of the second part of *The Book of Small*.

Carr saw a parallel between the development of herself and the town, and, in addition, recognized place as shaping her identity, together with her family and her time. Marta Dvořák reads “Carr’s dual focus on the self and the world” in *The Book of Small* as “the inscape of individual identity-construction grounded in the dynamics of place,” and argues that Carr takes a modernist, defamiliarizing approach “through a binary structure that focuses on the origins of selfhood at the same time as it focuses on the origins of community and nation – double dimensions of the process of individuation and identity construction” (Dvořák 137, 139, 135). Oscillating between “witness and participant,” Carr’s “fictionalized distancing from her autobiographical self by recurrently shifting from first person to third [...] generate[s] tension between undisguised autobiography and invention” yet wills the reader to accept the whole narration as true (135, 137). The split between the two parts is necessary because Small’s narrative tends to veer towards an emerging personal “aesthetic” while Victoria’s remains mostly a “sociocultural” contemplation (135). Cornelia Hoogland contends that “Carr shows [...] what it means to see *aesthetically*,” in the sense that Carr “convey[s] the complexity of experience” that “elicit[s] human sensitivities [...] in terms of emotions and sensory and imaginative play[,]” and further evinces “Carr’s belief that the child and the artist approach experience in similar ways”

through “portray[ing] such mature understanding through a child character whose main interest is the natural world of animal and plant life” (Hoogland 32).

Dvořák points to the juxtaposition of Small, the child persona, and Emily, the autobiographical story teller, as a Bakhtinian “open-ended present of the utterance, of the narrating self, as starting point and centre” that “sets up a hiatus and a dynamic of tension between the distanced image of the represented object [Small] and the enunciative stance grounded in personal experience [Emily]” (Dvořák 134). Small, while presented as a separate entity, voices Emily’s opinions, as well as her pleasures and hurts; Small and Emily are inextricably linked, yet Small seems to exist on a more ethereal (yet curiously grounded) plane that edges even closer to the bared soul of a child than Emily herself. According to Dvořák, Carr creates this tension through “refigurations of temporal experience,” that is, “[s]he conflates the forms of oratory concerning past, present, and future, fusing instantaneity and remembrance” and “paradoxically generates a metaphorical and ultimately metaphysical unifying system[,] [...] superscribed onto the discursive strategies of identity politics in an overcoding which confers veracity” (134, 136). In other words, Dvořák contends that Carr convincingly constructs a fully developed self in *The Book of Small* through “a quasi-fusion between narrating I [Emily] and narrated self [Small],” in which Small exhibits “a hyperbolically distorted perspective [that] produces a disorienting immediacy” and Emily avails herself of “recurrent flash forwards of explicit ellipses or [...] the collision of flashbacks and fast forwards” (138). Their slightly differing perspectives add dimension, even more so when combined in the reader’s mind, just as Part II of *The Book of Small* yields another.

How do these differing perspectives unite into one “system”? Firstly, their techniques of relating to the reader, such as hyperbole or time jumps, are much more meshed between the two

personas, that is, present and expressed in both their perspectives, than Dvořák would have us believe. Also, weaving Small and Emily together through essentially alternating chapters enhances their link to each other as well as knits together the narrative of Part I.

In *Everyday Magic: Child Languages in Canadian Literature* (1987), Laurie Ricou has found the unifying element in Carr's use of language and her ability to convey a child's mind. Claiming in his introduction that, when compared to other Canadian writers in his study, Emily Carr's "seems to [him] the closest approach to writing in the language of a child," Ricou posits that writers who do not specifically write for children generally struggle with "a sustained presentation of the pre-adolescent child's point of view" and, instead, tend to present child characters "precocious[ly]" or not at all (Ricou, "Introduction" 13, 8). While Carr did not look for children as an audience for *The Book of Small* or any other of her writings, she was able "to develop a language for Small, not by facile scraps of baby talk, but by attuning herself to a few underlying features and structure of child language" and thereby achieving "an illusion of simplicity" and "evoking a self-contained child's world" that "represent[ed] the child's fresh seeing, not the adult's remembering" (Ricou, "Emily Carr and the Language of Small" 73, 86). For Carr, "fresh seeing" represented an open-mindedness that was essential to artistic creativity as well as to an all-encompassing humanity. At the same time, Carr was keenly aware of the need to acquire a (writing) technique that would virtually disappear behind the finished product. In *The Book of Small*, this included the elimination of nostalgic hindsight (Hoogland 36).

Contrary to the *Bildungsroman* model that Ricou, like Lynch, recognizes in *Klee Wyck*, *The Book of Small* "avoids the form that structures a progression from adolescence to maturity. A story of childhood, *prima facie* unfinished, where the subject's attention span is shorter, where diverse experiences have equal significance, demands an alternate, more segmented form"

(Ricou, “Language of Small” 74). Although Carr’s writing style practically always employs short and incisive chapters, *The Book of Small*’s segments specifically resist timelines and, instead, appear more as a cluster of “spontaneous encounters of a child” that help the reader “sense” both her and what “she wants to communicate” (74, 78). As both Dvořák and Ricou indicate, Carr often employs highly imagistic language, much in the spirit of Ezra Pound’s “Make It New!” axiom, but judiciously combines it with the “unselfconscious use of child language [...]”: an idiosyncratic diction, the prominence of concrete finite verbs, and a syntax and organization emphasizing presentness of perception” to achieve that particularly sensitive, as well as aesthetic, dialogue with the reader (Ricou, “Language of Small” 75):

The turn brought Small face to face with the Orange Lily. [...] She leaned over to look into the lily’s trumpet, stuck out a finger to feel the petals. [...] They were cool, slippery and alive.

Lily rolled her petals grandly wide as sentinelled doors roll back for royalty. The entrance to her trumpet was guarded by a group of rust-powdered stamens—her powerful perfume pushed past these. What was in the bottom of Lily’s trumpet? What was it that the stamens were so carefully guarding? Small pushed the stamens aside and looked. The trumpet was empty—the emptiness of a church after parson and people have gone, when the music is asleep in the organ and the markers dangle from the Bible on the lectern.

[...] The Orange Lily! Oh if Mrs. Mitchell would only give me the Orange Lily! Oh, if only I could hold it in my hand and look and look! [...]

Small went back to the lily. With pocket-handkerchief she wiped the petals she had rusted by pushing aside the stamens. [...]

“That lily has rusted your nose, Small.” [...]

In her heart she hugged an Orange Lily. It had burned itself there not with flaming petals, not through the hot, rich smell. Soundless, formless, white—it burned there.

(*BS* 75-77)

The pronounced aestheticism of “The Orange Lily” episode pairs well with the previous chapter about “White Currants” (72-74), and Dvořák aptly terms Carr’s descriptive method as ekphrastic (Dvořák 144). Together, they impart something more singular and delicate than Small’s joyful stomping and singing in “The Cow Yard” (*BS* 27-37; “Singing,” 44-49), whereas, so Dvořák argues, the “cow in the Cow Yard” serves throughout *The Book of Small* as the sustained metaphor of Carr’s grounding in place and the value of its location in Canada: “A proteiform figure operating on the boundaries of fable and metaphor, with overtones of the objective correlative so dear to the modernists and in particular the Imagists, the cow is clearly at the heart of Carr’s semiotics of representational space” (Dvořák 141). In her 1930 public address, “Fresh Seeing,” Carr argued that, since Canadian cows differed from European cows in “spirit,” so should Canadian artists (*FS* 17). Thus, Carr’s pronouncement, “Small was wholly a Cow Yard child” (*BS* 28), implies more self-identification than mere childish play, and essential to this self-concept is the location, the yard, frame or place in which the self positions itself.

Carr walks a fine line between two representations or senses of (sensitive) self: between the sturdiness of the Cow Yard and the delicate nature of Orange Lily and White Currants, as well as between (to use Dvořák’s term) “overcoding,” overusing, and “over extending” (Ricou, “Language of Small” 78) stylistic and linguistic devices, so that these vehicles “are never frequent enough to make her either tedious or cloying” yet achieve the “effect [...] of a child’s talking, almost to herself” (80, 82). Out of the twelve chapters of Part I, Small, as third person persona, only occupies five. Though Small is implied and most likely perceived as the

predominant heroine via the title of the book, Carr is careful to sprinkle rather than saturate her narrative with Emily's appearance as Small. The result is surprisingly realistic. Only in "White Currants" does she yield to the slightly fantastic with the inclusion of an imaginary friend – one of the proverbial child characteristics in literature and psychology – yet she also tells us that he lives in her imagination: "I never saw the boy; [...] He was different from other boys, you did not have to see him, that was why I liked him so" (*BS* 73). Ricou finds that "Carr's language [...] implies that Small understands her world as naturally fantastic" by waxing poetic about flora, fauna, and "the natural magic of lightning and morning mists" while "giv[ing] a sub-text of practicality" (Ricou, "Language of Small" 78). Carr's attachment to the "good earth floor" of the cow yard grounds her occasional flights of fancy and her fascination with the sublime (*BS* 27).

Both Ricou and Dvořák have suggested a poetic quality in Carr's prose, particularly in "White Currants" – a quality suited to conveying a child's essentialism. Carr always searched for the essence of what she was contemplating (Dvořák aligns Carr's line of thought with "James Joyce's [...] whatness of things" [Dvořák 145]), and, again in "Fresh Seeing," she praised the unfettered and all-encompassing quality of a child's vision (*FS* 8). Though perhaps at times "Emersonian" in its philosophy (Dvořák 145), I find that Carr's poetic synthesis of a child's (and similarly an animal's) unspoilt innocence and honest curiosity, both simultaneously instinctive and conscious, or intuitive and aware, reaches further back to literary Romanticism. Dvořák refers to the "fantasy" in Carr's "White Currants" as "evocative of Coleridge's concept of the secondary Imagination" (146), whereas I detect in Carr's style a striking resemblance to Wordsworthian Romanticism in terms of simplicity in language, rapt observance of nature, and the purity of a child's vision. A certain enthusiasm about daffodils springs to mind (always a favourite), along with Wordsworth's "little maid's" blunt speech in "We Are Seven": that could



have been Small, or, by extension, a young Emily Carr (Wordsworth 278-279). Perhaps we can cautiously conclude that Carr's view of herself as a child was a little romantic in the sense that she saw herself as (always?) unbiased, open and curious about life. However, she was too smart (and ultimately too honest, I would argue) a writer to present us with a self-idealized or flawless version. While *The Book of Small* tries to avoid sentimentality in its innocently romantic look into the past, an untainted "fresh seeing" of oneself is nigh impossible.

The core complexity of *The Book of Small* lies in the pull between the invisible author – knowledgeable and remembering – and the protagonist child. Although Carr successfully foregrounds a child's perspective and obscures the adult artist by avoiding "a sense of reminiscence or nostalgia," her emotional memory seeps through in her accounts of family and social relationships (Hoogland 36). She emphatically portrays herself as more sensitive, loving, and imaginative than her sisters, thus revealing "[a]n undercurrent of elitism and thinly veiled jealousy" (Blanchard 31). This elitist frame of mind extends itself to other relationships. Also, albeit naturally, "Small's psychic direction [...] moves [away] from the adult world of authority figures" and from whomever she perceives as antagonistic to her (Hoogland 37). Apart from her more direct criticism of her father or her eldest sister Dede, Carr's sense of injured justice finds expression in the descriptions of her interactions with her sister Lizzie and Mrs. Crane, both of whom she damns with faint praise while she settles her score with them – seemingly urgent but actually in retrospect.<sup>8</sup> Carr's resentment, carried forward into adulthood and rekindled while considering anew from the perspective of a child, may elicit sympathy in us readers for a child's anguish, yet it negates the "fresh seeing" process in maturing human relationships. On the other

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<sup>8</sup> According to Blanchard, Mrs. Crane is the only alias used in *The Book of Small* (Blanchard 301-2). If that is the case, it is telling that Carr was aware of her own harshness and knew to protect herself from (possibly legal) repercussions. At the same time, this did not help Lizzie's image – most likely on purpose.

hand, Carr's clear delineation of the child perspective in *The Book of Small* renders the narrative both coherent and characteristic of Carr's tendency to consistently see herself as vulnerable and young rather than naïve and immature.

This pervasive pattern of duality in *The Book of Small* builds on the end of *Klee Wyck*, in which the old man in the canoe seems to approve of Carr's persona and her hometown Victoria at once. Yet, *The Book of Small* exhibits the tension necessary to individualize and define Small's child character within that duality, as well as push against it. Carr aligns herself with her homeplace while she simultaneously rejects some of its elements. Through switching first- and third-person perspectives, Carr extends duality to form and adds dimension to her manipulation of the polarity of fact and fiction. Also, Carr's apt rendering of a perceptive child's language lets both her child self and the future artist's sensibility escape in cascades from the adult writer. This exposure through compelling language connects the reader to Carr, who anchors her sense of self in her birthplace. Still, Carr's adult opinions reach back into the narrative, and, consequently, dualities do not always unfold as absolute, symmetrical or proportional. Carr recognizes her fascination with the hyperbole of the sublime better than the rigidity of her tendency for essentialism, while her appreciation of innocence and honesty goes hand in hand with her hatred of hypocrisy. Although she prizes open-mindedness, she holds grudges long enough to write about them. In some ways, Small never grows up, and it appears that Carr did not want to, either.

#### Anger and Frustration in *The House of All Sorts*

In other writings, Carr would vent her frustrations concerning what she perceived as the polarity of other people's villainy versus her victimhood, and this viewpoint would take centre stage in *The House of All Sorts*. If *The Book of Small* is, as Blanchard puts it, subliminally "an angry book," *The House of All Sorts*, also divided into two parts, is positively furious (Blanchard

279). Tethered by economic necessity to the endless demands and responsibilities of property owner and landlady, Carr had to struggle terribly to hold on to a definition of herself rooted in art and a compassion for living things.

However, I would argue that, despite Carr's ire and occasional rancour, what really comes through is her ultimate despair – like in *Pause*. Akin to a distorted dramatic monologue, Carr's lineup of tenant types (mostly bad ones, with a few good in between) obscures her main concern and frustration until late in her narrative of "The House of All Sorts": "The purpose of its building had been to provide a place in which I could paint and an income for me to live on. Neither objective was ever fully realized in the House of All Sorts. [...] I never did paint much in that fine studio that I had built: [...] All the twenty-two years I lived in that house the Art part of me ached" (*HAS* 111, 113). Instead of facilitating a living and a location for her to practice her profession, the economic recession in the First World War turned her rental apartment house into a burden of backbreaking work for a long time.

Susan Musgrave aptly titles her introduction to the 2004 edition of *The House of All Sorts* "A House of One's Own" (Musgrave 1). Her gesture to Virginia Woolf's statement about women writers needing their own physical and professional space, as well as preferably independent means, to be able to make art, points at the crux of the matter: the angry landlady who (to others and sometimes to herself) seemed like a madwoman (literally) living in the attic was in reality an artist strangled not just by wallpaper, but (the responsibilities of) a whole house. (At least the eagles Carr painted on the ceiling gave her courage.) Like the woman in Gilman's short story whose descent into insanity becomes apparent in her increasingly affected speech, Carr's expertly dramatized and, according to Blanchard, partly fictionalized stories about her tenants have a similarly tiresome, even strangling, effect towards the end. The destabilizing lack

of privacy Carr suffered during those difficult years must have agitated her, her self-image, and her memory as much as a patient who was constantly under supervision and scrutiny.

Both time spent and space occupied are as relevant in *The House of All Sorts* as in all of Carr's writings. Contrary to an isolated patient like Gilman's protagonist, Carr managed to keep her sanity (and improve her financial situation) with her dog kennel where she raised sheepdogs. Though much shorter, the second part of *The House of All Sorts*, entitled "Bobtails," provides a counterbalance to the tenant stories without separating them completely. It similarly mixes sad and happy stories, and attests to Carr's love for animals and the joy they brought her. Ultimately, it reconciles the reader with the image of Carr as a competent and compassionate woman, as opposed to the irascible and "inexperienced [not so] young landlady" (*HAS* 108).

While *The House of All Sorts* reflects the element of despair we find in *Pause*, it also continues and intensifies *The Book of Small's* duality of structure and polarization of people and their characteristics. Carr grounds the first chapter in the bygone world of Small, with lingering (and disappointed) expectations of being treated with respect, before she writes unequivocally in what could be termed "recollection-mode," as herself, of herself, about a beleaguered adult living and working in her home town.

#### *Growing Pains: An Artist Life's Narrative*

Emily Carr's autobiography *Growing Pains*, recasts the narrative net to encompass her whole life. Although Carr attempts to trace the wider arc of her experiences, she ultimately focuses on her artistic development in adulthood and constructs her narrative in what the artist considers an honest explanation of herself and her art. As such, Carr employs the genre of autobiography to convert her most comprehensive piece of life writing into her ultimate artist statement. In addition to compounding her prior writings, Carr brings in new elements,

particularly the importance of Lawren Harris and Ira Dilworth to her self-concept. Carr divides her account into stages of artistic and personal growth, in which she argues that she was driven to art by way of the healing properties of nature because she felt misunderstood and mistreated at home. She describes the professional training that takes her to places in Canada, the United States, England, and France, and shows that she develops a sense of independence despite personal and professional difficulties. However, Carr is happiest on the Northwest Coast of Canada, even if she feels professionally isolated and is still grieved by family tensions. After the Eastern art scene has embraced Carr, she acknowledges particularly Lawren Harris's mentorship, as well as Ira Dilworth's for her writings, while she declares and retains her authority over all her work and how it is represented.

Carr called *Growing Pains* her autobiography, and accordingly regarded it as non-fiction. However, any autobiography is inherently unreliable, given the subject's necessarily biased point of view, and *Growing Pains* must be read with the additional caveat that Carr wrote for (posthumous) publication. In her biography of Emily Carr, Paula Blanchard shows that the artist changed some names and took other liberties in shaping her narrative. Despite eschewing dates, Carr essentially adheres to a linear and chronological structure, depicting "The Making of an Artist," as Robin Laurence puts it in her introduction to the 2005 edition of *Growing Pains* (Laurence 1). Unlike *The Book of Small* and *The House of All Sorts*, *Growing Pains*'s three sections do not bear individual titles. Instead, they divide the narrative by stages of artistic and personal growth, accented by Carr's geographic movements between the Old and the New World. In keeping with the subject matter, Carr dedicated her book to the painter Lawren Harris, her greatest mentor among the many artists who taught her, particularly as a fellow Canadian artist who wanted to create new art in and of their young country. According to Carr, both Harris

and Eric Brown, director of the National Gallery in Ottawa, encouraged her to write her “struggle story” (*GP* 320).

To illustrate her gradually unfolding artistic path, Carr moves from point to point by compartmentalizing themes and places into chapters without sacrificing the flow of the narrative. She stays consistent in the required first-person perspective and employs a more personal, less lyrical tone than in *Klee Wyck*. As in many of her other writings, Carr tends to frequently (and overly) portray herself as “the persecuted alien” – criticized and harassed by family, society, the urban environment of big cities, art critics, as well as her inner demon of self-doubt (Blanchard 56). Nevertheless, particularly at the beginning, Carr attempts a brief and matter-of-fact account of painful personal experiences that she claims is “absolutely necessary for truth’s sake [...] to show what drove me to the woods and to the creatures for comfort, what caused the real starting point of my turn to Art. My family had never been in sympathy with my painting, nor entered into my life as an artist. My home life was always a thing entirely apart from my art life” (*GP* 321-22). Although her sisters’ prevailing indifference or antagonism to her art had been a real and constant source of pain, Carr was able to use it as a foil in her narrative. As in all her writings, Carr focussed on getting her point across clearly and vividly.

In the first few chapters of Part I, Carr summarizes her childhood and her family dynamics. While describing her position, in terms of both place and stance, within her family, she sets up a polarity between her parents. In between demonizing her father as a cold, selfish, oppressive autocrat during his lifetime and idealizing her mother as the proverbial self-effacing Victorian “angel in the home” long beyond Mrs. Carr’s death (Blanchard 39-40), Carr is quick to sketch her eldest sister Edith as their father’s copy and a continuation of his tyranny. Carr rejects the patriarchal “tradition that the men of a woman’s family were created to be worshipped,”

which eventually leads her, at least in part, to reject a marriage proposal as well (*GP* 25). While she disagrees with her mother's compliance and resents the companionship of her childhood-self "being used as a soother for Father's tantrums" (24), she basks in the glow of her mother's validation outside the father's controlled domain, when her mother does not deliver the expected scold at Carr's rebellion but, instead, takes her, and her alone, on an afternoon picnic in the "wild lily-field" (25). The magic of this special place and time out of time, "beyond the confines of [her] very fenced childhood," becomes emblematic of Carr's associations with her mother. It leaves her, literally and figuratively, with a "fresh and sweet [...] perfume [...] [that] clung through the rest of your life," coupled with an awareness that (family) life could be different and better but was not (25). By contrasting the types of companionship she shared with each parent, Carr illustrates how her mother made her feel loved, accepted, valued, if not always understood, while her father, up to his self-centred mourning, was mainly concerned with himself.

Yet her father, more than her mother, was the one to recognize Emily's talent. He "allowed [her] to take drawing lessons" and rewarded Emily for portraits she had sketched of him and his wife. After her parents' deaths, however, Emily increasingly resented her sister's harsh discipline and claims that the result of that despair "driving [her] out into the woods" became "the very foundation on which [her] work as a painter was to be built" (*GP* 33). Carr does not mention that she had to watch two other young girls leave Victoria to attend art school abroad, while her sister Dede refused her the same opportunity (Blanchard 59). Emily only describes how she convinces her guardian to let her go to an art school in San Francisco and further illustrates her sister's antagonism.

Carr assuredly tried to write her autobiography as non-fiction. However, since from the outset she had intended to have *Growing Pains* published posthumously, she shaped and

dramatized events and manipulated some facts to make her point. As in her other writings, she portrays herself as younger than she actually was when she went to see her guardian – in this case, perhaps in order to illustrate the early beginnings of her active search for an artistic path. Also, the theme of her variegated moments of naiveté or ignorance threads through the narrative in Part I of *Growing Pains*, particularly in the remaining chapters that describe her years in San Francisco. She paints herself as modest and eager to learn; she makes friends and enjoys most of her classes. Yet some stories are superfluous and seem merely to serve to discredit her sisters' judgment, as well as reiterate Dede's control of her circumstances. The point that Carr makes in Part I is that her stay in San Francisco represented the beginning of her more formal education in art: "The harder I worked the happier I was, and I made progress. We were a happy bunch of students[,] [...] laying our foundations" (72-73).

Part II of *Growing Pains* dominates the overall narrative in terms of length and detail about Carr's young adulthood, perhaps because Carr had already written about her childhood years in *The Book of Small* and her middle age in *The House of All Sorts*. The last part of her autobiography may have turned out to be more concise because Carr was often too ill to write, but, nonetheless, it provides the strongest sense of artistic movement and culminating fulfilment.

In the middle part of *Growing Pains*, Carr's narrative and her life become more complex. She takes stock of her artistic situation after returning from San Francisco, comparing herself to "a child printing alphabet letters," not yet able "to make words" (*GP* 103). But she knows that she has learned a measure of "[i]ndependence [that] had taught [her] courage" (104). Proving as resourceful as when she built her own easel as a child (29), she wheedles permission from Dede, who was "tyrannical, an autocrat like Father" (104), to adapt the cow barn's loft as a studio space for the classes she teaches ("Such delicious content!" [105]) and saves her fees until she has



enough money to go and study in Europe. Since two European artists told her that the Canadian “West was [...] unpaintable” and “that the only places you could learn to paint in were London or Paris,” Carr becomes determined to learn more and eventually find a Canadian method of painting Canadian landscape (107). However, in her subsequent, condensed description of her trip to Ucluelet that differs from the more poetic style she employs in *Klee Wyck*, Carr shows that she was as yet unaware of the power of the forest and, instead, “drew boats and houses, [...] tangible stuff [,] [while] [u]nknowingly [...] storing, all unconscious, [her] working ideas against the time when [she] should be ready to use this material” (110). More explicitly than in *Klee Wyck*, Carr expresses her sense of freedom in Ucluelet: “No part of the living was normal. We lived on fish and fresh air. [...] [T]he lovely, wild vastness did something to it all. I loved every bit of it—no boundaries, no beginning, no end, one continual shove of growing” (109). Not only does the artist begin to detach herself from society’s preconceived notions, but Carr finds both calm and inspiration in a place that seems suspended in time. Perhaps we can read this as the essence of her artistic yearning, as well as a reason why urban crowds and their movements agitated her so easily. Either way, Carr herself considered this time and this trip as sowing the seed for her later art.

In contrast, Carr’s experience with society in and around her home was less than uplifting for her. Her sisters’ zeal for pious work and missionary activities antagonized her with demands she refused to meet. A disappointed romantic infatuation drove her once again closer to “nature and [its] beauty” (111). When she was finally making her way to London, riding the cross-country train to the East coast, she waxed poetic (in true patriotic fashion) about how “Canada’s vastness took [her] breath” as the train traversed mountains, prairies, and “clean, new cities,” “munching space rhythmically as a chewing cow” (112-113). Naturally, wherever Emily Carr

goes, literally or figuratively, there has to be a cow somewhere along the way. (Dvořák has argued as much.) Carr's move across Canada and over the "nothingness" of the ocean "that grieved the stomach, wearied the eye" to "the Old World" illustrates the spatial and temporal continuity she instilled in her narrative (113, 107).

London's urban character overwhelmed a shy Carr, and not in a good way. She felt judged by others as a "Colonial!" and, in turn, considered the city, its streets, and the summer heat "unbearable" – not surprising for someone who had grown up in the temperate climate of North America's West Coast, and in a small town (118). Carr found solace and relief in Kew Gardens and at the Zoo, and she enjoyed the tranquillity and coolness of St. Paul's Cathedral. To get acquainted with the city before her classes began, she rode for hours on the rooftop of double-decker buses, "watching the writhe of humanity below [her]" (121). Although her description does not quite qualify as imagistic here, her words call to mind Ezra Pound's later poem, "In a Station of the Metro" (Pound 846):

I had never seen human beings massed like this, bumping, jostling, yet as indifferent to each other as trees in a forest.

I puzzled, wondering. What *was* the sameness with a difference between a crowd and a forest? Density, immensity, intensity, that was it—overwhelming vastness. One was roaring, the other still, but each made you feel that you were nothing, just plain nothing at all. (*GP* 121)

Like Pound, Carr makes the connection between "crowd[s]" of "humans" or their "faces" and "trees in a forest" or "[p]etals on a [...] bough" (*GP* 121, Pound 846). Carr's thoroughly modernist thinking had made its way into her writing as well as her painting. Consequently, England's penchant for "over-preservation" of tradition and history suffocated Carr (*GP* 124).

Art classes at the Westminster School of Art were still conservative. Although Carr complains about the school's lack of interest in innovative techniques or new artistic movements, the curriculum helped her round out her foundational skills. Socially, she resisted attempts to gentrify her and "swore to [herself she] would go home to Canada as Canadian as [she] left her" (141). Nevertheless, Carr made friends, some of whom gave her, often inadvertently, insights into English mentality. In recreating her experiences as anecdotal stories, Carr comments on a variety of people. While she loves and praises qualities of friends from all spheres of society (including a wealthy family of high social standing, whom she would ordinarily be prejudiced against), she deals critically with anything she deems either wrong or hypocritical: English pride and pretensions to gentility, religious fanaticism and bigotry, the pious and often macabre exaggeration of the Victorian death cult, and, most importantly, the inequality of women's stations, rights and opportunities. Altogether, Carr considers English, or, rather, Victorian culture to be morbid and reactionary, and it depresses her particularly when in London.

When Carr discovers the English spring in a country village, however, and on top of that a *forest*, her spirits revive and Small (with her characteristic hyperbole) seems to reappear in her narrative: "I was so happy I think I could have died right then" (173). "Baby daffodils" and much more delight her in "this sublime song-filled land" (172-173). However, as in Small's childhood, a visiting sister disturbs her happiness, both by insisting on city sightseeing and by ignoring Emily's art work. The contrast between the two chapters is striking, particularly when Carr's joyfully exuberant prose in the first gives way to terse dialogue in the second. Carr admits to bitterness and ends with a frequently quoted resolution: "It was then that I made myself into an envelope into which I could thrust my work deep, lick the flap, seal it from everybody" (175).

About halfway through *Growing Pains*, Carr has stated her increasing awareness that, artistically at least, she will always have to walk apart from her family.

Gradually, Carr also realizes that she will have to sacrifice marriage to her commitment to art. Her chapter on “Martyn,” the alias for her Canadian suitor, Mayo Paddon, who visited her in England to persuade her to marry him, illustrates both Carr’s wish for a Canadian partner and her uneasiness with his incessant proposals. Carr insists that she could not return his love and implies that she made this clear to “Martyn” early on, yet Blanchard contends that Carr hesitated with her final refusal while she deliberated whether to accept the “compromise” of “affections” (Blanchard 92): “It made me unhappy. I wanted time to think” (*GP* 176). Blanchard points out that what clinched the matter was Carr’s realization “that the equal partnership she needed in marriage simply was not possible with Paddon. He would have left her no room. For all his gentleness, he was conventionality itself. She saw that he demanded ‘worship,’ just as her father had demanded of her mother. Marriage would have meant the slow, sure stifling of her art” (Blanchard 92). Her decision to walk alone, once again, was difficult yet inevitable at the time.

Nevertheless, Carr was not callous in her treatment of Paddon. She showed him friendship and consideration by spending a lot of time “show[ing] [him] every sight [she] thought would interest him” (*GP* 178). At the same time, Carr should be applauded for standing her ground, much like the New Woman emerging at the turn of the still Victorian century which held on to its patriarchal ideals. Considering how long it has taken, and is still taking, to change perspectives on how to conduct heterosexual courtships, especially in the wake of the current #MeToo movement, or simply looking back to (and probably beyond) Jane Austen’s cartoonish Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, Paddon’s method of trying to wear down Carr’s resistance by continuously refusing to take no for an answer may strike us as ridiculous now (even if this

method still appears to be prevalent in today's culture[s]), but was aided and abetted at the time by Carr's female older friend in London.

It is significant how, within the narrative of *Growing Pains*, Carr implicitly conflates "one perfect day" that she spends with "Martyn" at Epping Forest (adjacent to Greater London), with the idea of what marriage to him would be like (179). Making him promise not to propose to her on that particular day, and situating them away from Carr's daily "work" at art school, that is, to a space and time outside her vocation, Carr's narrative creates an idyllic moment of mutual understanding and bond as fellow Canadians who find "[a]ll England's things [...] tame, self-satisfied, smug and meek" (182, 179):

There was no turmoil of undergrowth swirling round the boles of the trees. The forest was almost like a garden—no brambles, no thorns, nothing to stumble over, no rotten stumps, no fallen branches, all mellow to look at, melodious to hear, every kind of bird, all singing, no awed hush, no vast echoes, just beautiful, smiling woods, not solemn, solemn, solemn like our forests. This exquisite, enchanting gentleness was perfect for one day, but not for always—we were Canadians. [...]

Epping Forest was honey sweet—rich as cream. That was a perfect day, but too many days like that would have cloyed. We [...] enjoy[ed] it thoroughly, but all the while there was a gnaw in us for wild, untrimmed places. This entranced, the other satisfied; this was bounded, the other free. (179-180)

"Martyn" may or may not have shared these sentiments about the forest(s). However, Carr subtly, and perhaps unconsciously, signals that the idyllic idea of marriage with Paddon – a Canadian, yet Victorian traditionalist – would have entered or "entranced" her into a tame and permanently "bounded" environment, in which only he would have still been "satisfied" and

“free” (180). Therefore, this illusion of an ideal could only be sustained, or endured, for one day, and away from the reality of daily life.

Carr doubles down on her work (which “Martyn” had, according to her, ultimately and unequivocally called “detestable” [182]), and drops the first hint that her overall health may have begun to be taxed. She also realizes, in some frustration, that London is as conservative in art as it is in character, and that art in Rome and Paris is more progressive. Still, she fully dedicates herself to her classes, and during the summer vacation goes to the country for an outdoor sketching class. Carr thrives in the setting, even if she calls “English landscape painting [...] indolent seeing, ready-made compositions, needing only to be copied” (195). Afterwards, to stay sketching outdoors and away from London, she spends time with two artist colonies in St. Ives and Bushey. In both locations, Carr describes in fascinating detail their artistic routine, against often quirky backdrops of local folk. She praises the “stimulating” “atmosphere” but also notices that one painting master only “treat[s] [the male students] as fellow workers” (211). Luckily, she finds forests in the vicinity of both studios, and credits a separate teacher in each studio who patiently and kindly tutors her with similar understanding: “‘Trot along to your woods; I will give you your ‘crit’ there, where you are happy and do your best work’” (222).

But Carr’s happiness does not last, though she plans to winter at the first art colony. Her intended stopover in London to pick up her winter gear ushers in the last two chapters of Part II. An accident, illness, and a general break-down lead to Carr’s eighteen months’ sojourn in the sanatorium she dramatizes in *Pause*. Blanchard theorizes that the reasons for Carr’s collapse were not simply overwork, as Carr consistently claimed, but an underlying “self-doubt” and anxiety that she would never succeed as an artist, or, more precisely, as a female Canadian artist who could “paint the Canadian landscape as it really was, in all its roughness and wildness”

(Blanchard 93). What exacerbated Carr's anxiety was the fact that her sisters and non-artist friends "had made it clear to her how trivial they felt her ambition was compared with the opportunity to marry" (93).

The sanatorium stay leaves Carr without the will to work, but eventually, in the spirit of Charlotte P. Gilman's recommendation, she begins to pull herself out of the hole of despair by "labour[ing] incessantly over a satire on the San" (236). After a few months at the Bushey studio, Carr returns to Canada. Considering herself a failure after years in London, she nevertheless asks a forward-looking question that is enabled by hindsight, and closes the door on what she considers the narrative of her youth: "What had I to show for it but struggle, just struggle which doesn't show, or does it, in the long run? [...] Goodbye to my high hopes for work, [...] to my youngness! [...] Sad as I was about my failures, but deep down my heart sang: I was returning to Canada" (236-237).

Part III of *Growing Pains* speeds up Carr's time frame and tightens her narration, from her return to Canada in her early thirties to laying down her pen aged a bit over seventy. Individual chapters clearly delineate time periods (without giving any dates) spent in specific places, as well as particular themes like her experience of public rejection of her art or why she began to focus on writing. Yet Carr's narrative never seems to lack detail and transitions well from Part II, by tying the first chapter, about her stay in Cariboo country in B.C., to an invitation received while still in England, and describing it as a buffering space and time of recovery between ill health abroad and (her fear of) impending criticism (of what she thought would be seen as her individual failure) at home. Like Carr's "one perfect day" in the woods of England, "Cariboo Gold" represented a somewhat idyllic time out of time and space away from her home place, yet she felt more connected and reinvigorated because it was in her native province, as

opposed to the place of her parents' rather than her own heritage (241). Back home in Victoria, Carr lets her home woods teach and heal her:

There I sat, [...] staring, absorbing tremendously, though I did not realize it at the time.

Again I was struck by that vague similarity between London crowds and Canadian forests; each having its own sense of terrific power, density and intensity, but similarity ceased there. The clamorous racing of hot human blood confused, perhaps revolted me a little sometimes. The woods standing, standing, holding the cool sap of vegetation were healing, restful after seeing the boil of humanity.

[...] After [...] England with its perpetual undertone of humanity it was good to stand in space. (249)

However, Carr came to realize very quickly that staying in Victoria could not further her career. Upon working and teaching in Vancouver for a while, she took a trip to Alaska with her sister Alice. There, “[t]he Indian people and their Art touched [her] deeply,” and Carr claims that it was on this trip that she decided “to picture totem poles in their own village settings, as complete a collection of them as [she] could” (257). Blanchard explains that, while Carr never returned to Alaska and instead, years later, sketched totem poles in northern B.C. “settlements with a strong carving tradition,” the “highly sophisticated, intricate art [that] still survived” in Alaska gave her the impetus to “record as much of what remained as she could, before it was completely lost” (Blanchard 109). Significantly, though originally motivated to document expected history, Carr summarizes her resolve as a key moment in her quest for an artistic vision:

Indian Art broadened my seeing, loosened the formal tightness I had learned [...].

[...] I was as Canadian-born as the Indian but behind me were Old World heredity and



ancestry as well as Canadian environment. The new West called me, but [...] the flavour of my upbringing [...] pulled me back. [...]

I learned a lot from the Indians, but who except Canada herself could help me comprehend her great woods and spaces? [...] What about this New Art Paris talked of?

It claimed bigger, broader seeing. (*GP* 257-58)

To emphasize her search for artistic growth, Carr anticipates her later shift to landscape painting and transitions to her study year in France. She mainly credits the English modern artist Harry Phelan Gibb with guiding her work, even though he thought less of female painters. Despite language hurdles and another collapse necessitating a three-month hospital stay, Carr enjoyed time spent with and around rural communities in the countryside.

France gave Carr new tools and more confidence, “but [she felt] still mystified, baffled as to how to tackle our big West” (277). Settling in Vancouver, she claims that her exhibitions drew universal scorn from an essentially reactionary public, yet Blanchard contends (with press quotes) that “[t]here were many who did like her work, or who at least expressed an openness to it. Emily responded to them for the moment, but afterward they were eclipsed in her mind by the ones she failed to reach” (Blanchard 127). In *Growing Pains*, Carr uses this somewhat unilateral dramatization to make her point about the struggle of the modern artist per se, and simultaneously criticizes the colonial attitudes of a settler society:

In spite of all the insult and scorn shown to my new work I was not ashamed of it. [...] The West was ultra-conservative. They had transported their ideas at the time of their migration, a generation or two back. They forgot that England, even conservative England, had crept forward since then; but these Western settlers had firmly adhered to

their old, old, outworn methods and, seeing beloved England as it had been, they held to their old ideals. [...]

[...] I was glad I had been to France. More than ever was I convinced that the old way of seeing was inadequate to express this big country of ours [...]

When I got out my Northern sketches and worked on them I found that I had grown.

(GP 277, 279)

Lacking students and sales, Carr returned to Victoria and to her sisters who “disliked [her] new work intensely” (280). The economic recession shortly before the First World War forced the Carr sisters to sell as well as redistribute land among themselves, which led to Emily’s decision to construct the apartment building she describes in *The House of All Sorts*. In *Growing Pains*, she emphasizes that because of the economic slump, rents kept falling and she had to spend almost all her time working to make ends meet: doing all the chores a more solvent landlady might otherwise have delegated or outsourced, as well as supplementing her income by raising and selling produce, small livestock including a dog kennel, and by firing and selling pottery she painted with First Nations motifs.<sup>9</sup> She claims that, in terms of canvases, she “never painted now—had neither time nor wanting. For about fifteen years I did not paint” (281). Again Carr describes her life in absolutes – Blanchard shows that Carr did use opportunities to paint and to exhibit during that time – yet I would argue that, for Carr, these absolute statements serve to illustrate that, ironically, relatively to the amount of time and opportunity she had envisioned for her art, she “did not paint” (281).

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding appropriation claims, Carr felt guilty yet respectful of their origins: “I ornamented my pottery with Indian designs—that was why the tourists bought it. I hated myself for prostituting Indian Art; our Indians did not ‘pot,’ their designs were not intended to ornament clay—but I did keep the Indian design pure. //Because my stuff sold other potters followed my lead and, knowing nothing of Indian Art, falsified it. [...] I loved the beautiful Indian designs, but I was not happy about using Indian design on material for which it was not intended and I hated seeing them distorted, cheapened by those who did not understand or care as long as their pots sold.” (GP 281)

In fact, she was discovered by the eastern art scene while she was living in the hated apartment building, which led to her first invitation to contribute to an exhibition in the Canadian National Art Gallery in Ottawa and to her meeting with the Group of Seven in Toronto. She “marvelled how they all accepted [her]” and found a champion and mentor in Lawren Harris, whose letters “cheered and stimulated [her]” to renew work on her art (285, 289). Harris advised her to at least temporarily eschew Indian motifs and to focus on deriving inspiration from pure nature instead, in her quest for ““a new approach, a new vision”” (288-89). He also got her to “stop[...] grieving about the isolation of the West” and to find individuality and strength in a “[s]olitude” that was unencumbered by other influences or (art) ““chatter”” (290). Carr’s reflections align with another modernist’s, T.S. Eliot’s, thoughts:<sup>10</sup> “What I had learned in other countries now began to filter back to me *transposed* through British Columbia seeing” (290, my italics). In *Growing Pains*, Carr credits her newfound kinship with the eastern Canadian artists and her opportunities to travel east for exhibitions with finding her way back to art and helping her “to surmount the housekeeping humdrum which [she] had allowed to drift between [her] and the painting which [she] now saw was the real worth of [her] existence” (290).

Apart from dedicating *Growing Pains* to Lawren Harris, Carr devotes a whole chapter to expressing her appreciation of him. Quoting extensively from Harris’s letters to her, she states that “[h]is work and example did more to influence my outlook upon Art than any school or any master” (304). Harris was also a kind father figure to Carr (without her admitting anything of the sort) – patiently listening to and soothing her concerns, explaining and clarifying matters of art and philosophy, even scolding her if necessary, but always encouraging. Carr sharply contrasts

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<sup>10</sup> I am referring to T.S. Eliot’s essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in which Eliot describes the ideal poet/artist as “the catalyst” whose “mind digest[s] and transmute[s] the passions which are its material” (Eliot 2322), as well as his essay “The Metaphysical Poets,” in which Eliot claims that “a [perfect] poet’s mind [...] is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; [...] these experiences are always forming new wholes” (2329).

Harris's nurturing behaviour with her sisters' collective antagonism toward her art, thus signalling how dearly she missed experiencing a similar kinship with her own family. At the same time, like a true artist growing into her own, Carr was independent and discerning enough to admire yet separate herself from Harris's move towards abstraction. Thus, she closes her chapter on Harris by articulating her artistic vision, and moves on to how the colour "Green" suddenly takes on greater importance as the result of an image in a dream, giving her a new direction for the vibrant life of the mature canvasses yet to materialize: "growing green had become something different to me. [...] —weighted with sap, burning green in every leaf, every scrap of it vital! // Woods, that had always meant so much to me, from that moment meant just so much more" (314, 316). In the short chapter "Green," Carr encapsulates the spiritual culmination of her artistic path, before she turns to consider her shift to writing as an "Alternative" whenever she is too ill to paint (317).

While Carr describes writing the stories that would become *Klee Wyck* as figurative "medicine" that "healed [her] heart" and "soothed and calmed" her, she seeks to apply the same rigorous standards of procedure as in her painting, "presenting essentials only, discarding everything of minor importance" (320, 319).<sup>11</sup> Carr credits "two faithful women friends" with giving her "helpful criticism," and most significantly, one of them showed Carr's work to Ira Dilworth, then English professor and CBC regional director in Vancouver (321-22). Dilworth would become to Carr's writing what Harris was to her painting, as well as probably the most important male figure in her life. In *Growing Pains*, even though Carr only plays off of Dilworth's initial and never uses a possessive pronoun, she attaches herself to him as he becomes, as her literary editor and friend, also her somewhat bizarrely intertwined Emersonian

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<sup>11</sup> However, Carr would not let go of "non-essential" details, or reiteration. In the last year of her life, Carr wrote and collected extra tidbits about her life that Ann Switzer edited and published in 2007 as *This and That*.

“Eye” (324). For the remainder of the narrative, she does not call him by name anymore, as she describes the honours she receives for *Klee Wyck* around her seventieth birthday (or their subsequent work on *The Book of Small*). She momentarily conflates him, as “Eye,” with her hopes and expectations of Canada when he takes centre stage, praising her “contribution to Canada’s art and literature” and “kiss[ing] [her] cheek [...] for Canada” (330-31). Carr astutely employs the local event of her authorship/birthday celebration as the “proudest” moment of her autobiography/life: a moment of acknowledgement by dignitaries, clergy, and society in general, including her last remaining sister – an acknowledgement that she craved but had not yet received for her paintings, at least not to that extent (331). As such, Carr’s narrative climax, while happy, glosses over the National Gallery’s and others’ neglect of her painterly oeuvre during her lifetime.

And yet, with regard to artistic immortality, Carr proved to be a shrewd strategist when she latched on to correspondence with Harris and then Dilworth in particular. In *Unarrested Archives: Case Studies in Twentieth-Century Canadian Women’s Authorship*, Linda Morra indicates that Carr “worked cooperatively with male figures to locate a sense of self-agency,” that is, comprising various “forms of agency that, first, allowed her to cultivate her writing, her art, and the materials for her archive; second, legitimated her socio-political status as Canadian artist and writer; and third, sanctioned and recognized her aesthetic achievements” (Morra, “Her ‘Eye’ Was Her ‘I’” 75, 48). In all her interpersonal relationships, Carr prized trustworthiness. As a youth, she had felt oppressed and betrayed by her autocratic father (and sister), and, consequently, tested people for loyalty and if they respected her wishes, particularly men who could potentially have an influence on or power over her life and work. Mayo Paddon had failed that test, for example, but a few male figures, and especially Dilworth, were able to establish a

kind of “kinship [...] [with Carr] that exceed[ed] familial relations” and brought her “a way to represent her ‘self,’ albeit through a male interlocutor” (51, 47-48).

While Carr was well aware of the gender bias against women painters, in terms of perceived ability and socially acceptable choice of subject matter, she may not have necessarily realized that women writers faced similar “socio-political conditions of the period” (53).

Building on Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson’s approaches to the development and challenges of women’s life-writing, Morra explains that, while, at the time of Carr’s writing, a woman recounting some “experiences” was deemed acceptable, writing an autobiography still clashed with the traditional idea that this literary genre was reserved for a male author whose account of his achievements had claim to public attention (55-56). In what Morra interprets as “performed self-deprecation” (63), Carr refuses any outside literary help with her biography, insisting that “[b]iographers can only write up big, important people who have done great deeds to which the public can attach dates. I could not be bothered with collaborators, nor would they be bothered with the drab little nothings that have made up my life” (*GP* 321). Presenting herself as modest as contemporary expectations of her gender required, Carr adroitly retains power of composition and control of the authorial (hence narrative and subjective) “I” “in her employment of a form that ordinarily privileges a male [...] subject” (Morra, “Her ‘Eye’ Was Her ‘I’” 59). In *Growing Pains*, Carr “shows herself as one who has grown and matured as both writer and painter” and, “[e]ven as she follows a more conventional literary form, [...] she defies in her content those social and political structures [...] that would prescribe certain modes of conduct and expression. [...] [S]he demonstrates from the outset how she must resist [...] religious [...] [and] patriarchal forces” to assert herself as an individual and, ultimately, as an authority (59). Carr also “assert[s] her own rules of literary style” by claiming ignorance of established “book rules” and

pronouncing her own: “Get to the point as directly as you can; never use a big word if a little one will do” (Morra, “Her ‘Eye’ Was Her ‘I’” 62, *GP* 320). While Carr occasionally circles or, rather, spirals towards a point in a painterly swirly approach, her penchant for neologisms that stretch grammatical boundaries is certainly original.

Finally, upon having tested Dilworth’s respectful restraint as editor for *Klee Wyck*, she felt comfortable enough to give him complete rights to *Growing Pains*. Since “he did not overstep the bounds of his role” and, instead, functioned as “protector of Carr’s interests rather than simply her editor,” her fear was allayed that “editorial interference might have censored or altered *her person*” (Morra, “Her ‘Eye’ Was Her ‘I’” 72). As Morra points out, Carr closely identified with her oeuvre and how it represented both itself and her, but she needed Dilworth as interlocutor to present her literary efforts to the public “without altering her vision or understanding of her work” (73).

Thus, Morra argues, Carr’s “apparent deference to his ‘masculine authority’ [...] might also be read [...] as her attempt to integrate herself more fully into the public sphere” (54). Dilworth, as literary agent, editor and owner of *Growing Pains*, would become both Carr’s “Eye” and (potentially authorial, but self-negating) public “I” (44), and would ensure that “Carr *and* her manuscript would be sanctioned as legitimate subjects in the public sphere” (71). Also, Dilworth’s extensive public reach could only benefit Carr, as he introduced her to well-known Canadian writers and poets, represented her in lectures, and negotiated terms for the publication of her work. Just as Harris’s “accolades were a means by which Carr was sanctioned and embraced by [the Group of Seven’s] national project” (61), “Dilworth was instrumental to positioning her and her artistic work within a national lexicon: he himself regarded *Growing*

*Pains* as a metaphor for national development and she as a significant cultural producer. [...] National sublimation would seem to be an attitude she espoused” (54).

Throughout Carr’s writings, and even more specifically her autobiography, the painter and author strove to establish herself as an individual with a modern Canadian artistic vision and body of work. In her efforts to thus position her oeuvre in the public consciousness, she allied herself with Dilworth once she was sure that “he would faithfully represent what she desired in the public sphere” (75). Collaborating with him “allowed her to represent her concerns publicly but without endangering these concerns or her status as author. [...] Dilworth could promote her books publicly and mediate her political participation, but without threatening the polis or symbolic masculine authority” (75). Hence, Carr “acquired greater ontological weight because she found a means to be rendered a legible subject in a national imaginary that would have otherwise excluded her. She thus paradoxically found a means of securing the very self-agency that would have been threatened or denied altogether” (54). Despite frequently portraying herself as a hapless or discouraged victim in her writings, Carr tenaciously persisted in her artistic path.

The last chapter of *Growing Pains*, “Wild Geese,” skillfully rounds out Carr’s narrative and fittingly ends on a personal philosophical note. The elderly artist reflects on the cycle of life that has always spellbound her in both flora and fauna, while her religious belief hopes to lift her beyond the finite. Gesturing back to the migrating geese she had seen for the first time in Cariboo country (and the first chapter of Part III), Carr concedes that, like the “old or maimed goose who could not rise and go with the flock,” “[o]ld age has [her] grounded too,” but, ultimately, she is less “accepting” of her fate as she looks ahead: “God give me the brave unquestioning trust of the wild goose! No, being humans, we need more trust, our hopes are stronger than creatures’ hopes” (337-38). Nevertheless, like the old geese, she has overcome the



“despair” that was so palpable in *Pause*, and even at the close of *Growing Pains*, Emily Carr makes it clear that she is still open to “new wondering” (337). Ultimately, the last part of *Growing Pains* is the most moving, even though it is relatively short, and its lyricism is so strongly reminiscent of *Klee Wyck*’s style that it elegantly completes and seamlessly closes the circle of Carr’s literary oeuvre.

Carr’s insistence on writing her own biography testifies to her desire to keep control over the narrative that presented her self – not only as she wanted the public to perceive her, but also to convey how she saw herself and her art. Carr thus delivers her ultimate artist statement and defines herself in *Growing Pains* mainly by successively illustrating and justifying her professional and private life choices. While she pays homage to Lawren Harris and Ira Dilworth, she clearly distances herself from her family in attitude or outlook. Unwilling to submit to either her father, her sister, or a potential husband, Carr may have considered herself an emancipated version of her long-lost mother.

*Hundreds and Thousands, and Opposite Contraries: Bits and Pieces of an Artist’s Thoughts*

In the journals that Carr wrote between 1930 and 1941, with the express purpose of “sort[ing] out jumbled thoughts and help[ing] to clarify them” (*HT* 42), she grappled with recurring attempts at self-analysis that were peppered with continuous self-admonition and, inevitably, some self-delusion. Carr’s journals exhibit both spontaneous exclamations and profound thoughts. Carr also thought deeply about art and religion. She expressed her yearning for someone who would understand her. When age and ill health obliged her to reduce possessions and mementos, she reflected on detachment and mortality. She stopped journaling once she was fully focussed on writing for publication and Ira Dilworth had become her main sounding board.

Emily Carr's published journals, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr* (1966), begin with her 1927 travel diary to the *Exhibition of West Coast Art - Native and Modern* at the National Gallery in Ottawa, to which she had been invited to contribute. She traveled via Toronto to first meet the Group of Seven and described the deep impression their art and the individual artists, particularly Lawren Harris, made on her. While the travel diary stands apart from what, strictly speaking, makes up Carr's regular journal begun a few years later, it does furnish initial glimpses of Carr's search for God in both nature and art, her prevailing self-doubt and occasional loneliness both as artist and person, as well as the vehemence of her emotional outbursts when she feels that her person or her art has been slighted.

From the 1930–33 section onwards, *Hundreds and Thousands* should be read concurrently with the selection of excised passages that Susan Crean published in 2003 in *Opposite Contraries: The Unknown Journals of Emily Carr and Other Writings*. Crean indicates that Carr began her journal with the heading ““Oddments on Thoughts and Feelings on Work,”” proceeding to create a “patchwork, piecework: part story, part reflection, part confession” (Crean 23). By default, the chopped character of the genre makes for disjointed reading, more so if parts have been expunged. Ironically, this is also the only instance, apart from (not all of) Carr's letters, where dates help to orient the reader and to situate the entries within Carr's biography. Yet, in typical fashion, Carr claims in the first paragraph that she writes “not a diary of statistics and dates [...] and happenings, but just to jot me down in, unvarnished me” (*HT* 43). Gerta Moray picks up the concept of “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” in her introduction to the 2006 edition of the journals and calls them “a fascinating window into the personality and subjective experience of an artist and human being” that “bring[s] us the private world and longings of a forceful yet sensitive and highly complex woman” (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 1, 14).

However, the view is not entirely unvarnished nor unobstructed, even if Moray convincingly argues that Carr did not intend her journals for publication and therefore rendered herself “exposed and vulnerable to judgment” while often being quite judgmental herself (2). The editors of *Hundreds and Thousands* deleted instances of personal rancour and “gratuitous commentary” like “scathing remarks about people’s looks and behaviour,” as well as, more significantly, a “host of racial slurs” that nonetheless contrasts with “other expurgated sections of the journal [that] indicate that [...] Carr was quite conscious of the racism around her” (Crean 15, 18-19). Crean remarks that Carr “was not reticent about chastizing [*sic*] white society for its intolerance and superior attitudes. However, she was not able to turn the critique on herself, tending instead to promote herself as the exception, a special friend and interlocutor for Native culture. She is conflicted and inconsistent” (19). Carr may not have thought in the politically correct terms we demand of ourselves today, but, for her time, at least regarding respect for Native culture, she was far ahead of most of her contemporaries,<sup>12</sup> and she frequently tried to approach an issue from varying perspectives. As Moray explains, the journals “became the chief arena where [Carr] examined her experiences and thoughts,” especially when she felt isolated, illustrating “the day-to-day subjective experiences of an artist who has to put bread on the table and keep a roof over her head” while trying to analyze and articulate her “artistic goals and evolution during the 1930s” (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 7-9). Crean concedes that the journal “sometimes provided a place where [Carr] tussled with demons” (Crean 16). Anne Collett points out that “Carr’s self-admonishment that pulls her out of self-pity into the positive energy of creative work (whether writing or painting) is the repetitive motif of her journals,” and

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<sup>12</sup> For example, she counseled an Indigenous couple *not* to agree to send their children to a residential school, an important critique, among others, which was excised from *Klee Wyck* in the 1951 edition and not restored until the 2003 edition (*KW* 114).

Collett aptly summarizes the tenor of the journals as documenting “the struggle to maintain a place in her chosen community while insisting on the prerogative of singleness and, indeed, distinction. [...] Pride and humility, anxiety and self-assurance, despair and equanimity, frustration with herself and with others, alternate with a rapidity that is wearing on the reader, and often wearing on Carr herself” (Collett 122, 111).

Private introspection in a journal, with its natural tendency to ramble and reiterate, not only can be wearing on the reader, but Carr’s frequently brusque manner could easily have hurt her image upon publication.<sup>13</sup> Yet Carr did occasionally “varnish” her entries with ambiguity – either to guarantee that only she would understand what was written, or because she could not bring herself to “word” and thereby clarify thoughts she found too painful. Mostly, these cryptic utterances had to do with “the subject of love” and a few unspecified close relationships that Carr felt the need to address (Crean 19). For lack of concrete details, what Carr ultimately transmits is her disappointment in the perpetual conflict with her sisters, and her “*long[ing]* for somebody with their whole soul,” an understanding companion “with no body or appearance but with an enormous love and sympathy who would not only give to you but call out from you oceans of sweetness and the lovely feel of giving it out with a lavish hand to someone who *wanted* it, giving it generously and unashamed” (*HT* 236, italics in print stand for Carr’s underlining in manuscript). Hence, any ambiguous “varnish” Carr employs emerges as rather transparent when one considers the contents of all the journals and her other writings. The Emily Carr we know from her stories is unmistakably recognizable, not only in her rhapsodic descriptions of landscape, but also in her exceptionally keen perceptions. Indeed, in her journals, Carr delves

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<sup>13</sup> Carr bequeathed her papers to Ira Dilworth, without specific instructions to publish them. She even left it to him to decide whether or not to publish *Growing Pains* at all. Moray argues that Carr “left her personal journals to Ira Dilworth [...] with her desire that he should know her fully” (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 4).

much deeper into “philosophic ruminations” about art and religion, spiritual growth, and the constant need to push oneself forward (Crean 16). Until 1936, Carr’s journals are filled with thoughts, experiences and observations, and a mostly “direct and unguarded reflection [...] of herself and her self-image” – even if, as with anyone else, one could argue about the results (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 12).

That year, however, marks Carr’s move out of her apartment building and into a small cottage. From the moment of having to clean out and reduce belongings, Carr’s journal turns into a more depressing read, as Carr sorts and “burn[s] and burn[s] all the old sweet things” (unfortunately including “early art efforts”!) that make her look back on her life (*HT* 297). She contemplates her own mortality and regrets that “[t]here is no one to hand on to, no one interested in your past” or its memorabilia (297). Increasingly beset by illness (angina, heart attacks and a stroke), Carr’s journaling becomes less prolific and ceases altogether in 1941, but this is also the point where Carr shifts her attention to revising her material and writing the stories that would eventually be published. As Moray explains, “[b]y 1941, [Carr’s and Ira Dilworth’s] relationship had developed into a regular correspondence that took the place of Carr’s journal writing. That solitary dance in front of the mirror had never fully assuaged her loneliness, and it was now replaced by a friend who reflected her back to herself with appreciation and understanding. [...] The journals ended because Carr’s wish [for a soulmate] had come true” (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 7-8). Even though Carr discontinued her journals, she stayed as active as she was able to, maintaining her “sense of life as change and movement” in her perpetual “search [...] for vitality” (1).

Carr’s journals show the inner workings of the mind of a complex artist and woman, contemplating all aspects of life. Naturally, the journals show a more unguarded Carr, yet they

are consistent enough to underwrite Carr's voice in her other literary work. They had served their purpose once she was able to confide in and exchange ideas with Ira Dilworth.

*Corresponding Influence: The Self's Projections and Expectations of a Particular Addressee*

Dilworth's support and diplomacy cushioned Carr's dealings with much of the world and with writing for a public audience. Their correspondence, which I will consider next, sheds yet another light on Emily Carr and how she presented herself in her personal letters.

Dilworth and Carr felt a strong rapport and responded to each other's ideas and concerns. Carr trusted Dilworth, and he respected her. Their often bantering use of Carr's alter ego Small as a participating correspondent exemplifies the special bond they shared, as well as Carr's need to shield herself from potential criticism or conflict. As Carr's health declined, she became more depressed and emotionally needy in her letters, yet she also wrote about how the work she was still doing made her feel better. Despite a sense of finality, the mature artist kept going and rallied herself to plan to revise her manuscript of *Pause*.

Linda Morra transcribed and published a selection of Carr's correspondence with Ira Dilworth in 2006. Morra's title, *Corresponding Influence*, already suggests a connection between kindred spirits and how instrumental a part in Carr's life and, indeed, her oeuvre, Dilworth played. Not only did he edit Carr's writings and negotiate their publication, he also became her principal heir and, together with Lawren Harris as co-directors of the Emily Carr Trust, was legally in charge of preserving Carr's work and establishing her legacy both as a painter and as a writer. Although Dilworth met Carr late in her life, those five years of their friendship, between 1940 and Carr's death in early 1945, comprised a "complex mentoring process sustained between" them and proved providential both for Carr's personal satisfaction and professional longevity (Morra, "Introduction" 3).

In her introduction to *Corresponding Influence*, Morra points out that Carr demanded quick response time, thoughtful feedback to questions or concerns, and absolute privacy from potentially meaningful correspondents (4). Though Carr wrote more, and more “compulsively” to Dilworth than he to her, Dilworth earned her trust by apologizing, that is, by explaining how busy he was whenever any later than expected response might upset her, by diligently attending and responding to her concerns, and by consistently asking her permission if something of interest or importance could be shared outside their correspondence (4). At the beginning, in 1940, Dilworth set a formal, respectful yet friendly tone that evolved into addressing each other by first name as soon as the year after. Eventually, Carr’s deepening trust in Dilworth allowed her to “[speak] unreservedly about a range of subjects” (4). In turn, Dilworth’s “great diplomacy and sensitivity” as well as “critical astuteness” enabled him to guide her manuscripts to completion by recognizing “the merits and strengths of her writing” while subtly infusing them with publishable literary form and structure without altering Carr’s “self-representations” or “control[ing]” “her person” as she wished “to express herself” (8, 9, 11). In his personal correspondence with Carr, Dilworth was unfailingly polite and kind. Meticulously acknowledging receipt of every note, Dilworth not only encouraged Carr in her endeavours, but he empathized and aligned himself with Carr in most respects and was not above participating in “a bit of gossip!” or even contributing to negative comments on a friend (Dilworth in *Corresp. Infl.* 51, 66). It makes one wonder if he perhaps overrepresented himself as such a cognate companion, but their correspondence evinces a deep affinity between them. Carr, who shared Dilworth’s love of poetry, steadfastly listened to his radio program and commented on its content in her letters. In his letters, Dilworth often appeared to emulate Carr’s use of vivid similes to make a point. Dilworth frequently expressed “joy” at reading Carr’s letters and being “thrilled”

about one thing or another in connection with Carr or her work (46, 40), thus describing his appreciation of their friendship:

You will never know what my association with you has meant to me. [...] Our friendship is one of those great, rich things in life which seem too great and wonderful to be true. I keep expecting to wake up and find that I have been dreaming. The fact that we did find each other is [...] one of these experiences which make[s] me believe in patterns, plans, direction in this existence which at times seems so jumbled and incoherent. (46)

Carr responded:

Knowing you has been a holy thing to me, wonderful niceness at the end of life like the bits of lemon peel we want to pick out of our cake, as the best to eat last. In my lonely years, I used to pray [for] one friend that is real & won't wear out, one that I can love & trust right through. I have had a few good friends, but they were not "yours" – an inspiration[,] a feeder of strong thoughts[,] your own or culled from great minds. Behind all I feel your belief in God, your belief in the beauty of the earth – your belief in Canada. Bless you. (48)

While their respective situations in life – Carr, an elderly spinster, and Dilworth, a middle-aged bachelor living with his old mother and a niece/adopted daughter – smoothly conditioned them for their strong platonic friendship, Morra accurately observes in their correspondence not only "intellectual, emotional, spiritual – [but] even somewhat erotic [...] overtones to their relationship" (Morra, "Introduction" 15). They met and bonded over the editing process of *Klee Wyck*, personifying the work like a child and referring to it as "our book" (Carr in *Corresp. Infl.* 97). Their vehicle for greater intimacy lay in the "complex persona" of Carr's alter ego Small (Morra, "Introduction" 13).



Although Laurie Ricou indicates that “[v]ersions of Small shape most of Carr’s writings” in which she “continually presents herself as utterly naive,” Anne Collett contends that Carr uses Small as “a deflective device” in her correspondence with Dilworth (Ricou, “Language of Small” 73, Collett 121). Collett aptly characterizes Carr’s demeanour, when writing as Small, as “charming” and “coy,” employing “naivety to claim a protective space under the guardianship of male authority and power” (Collett 121). But this “bifurcation of herself” does not only serve as a strategy to enlist Dilworth as a “male champion” of a woman “who [has] step[ped] outside the bounds of allotted feminine space” (121). Other men, such as Lawren Harris or Eric Brown, had championed Carr as well. As Collett points out, Dilworth embodied “the combination of imagined father and guardian (and lover)” (121). Small’s persona, as a form of projection, displacement, and even performance of Carr’s emotionally vulnerable self, enabled Carr to create a distance that would separate and protect her personal strength and dignity as Emily, yet allow Small to express more personal feelings – even if they are disguised as childish ones – for Dilworth than Emily’s adult pride and sense of propriety would countenance. So, it is Small who becomes Dilworth’s “ward” and is invited to live in Dilworth’s “waistcoat pocket” for “as long as he live[s],” and only as Small “who had nobody at all but lived on in Emily’s heart” does Emily give and accept hugs or kiss Dilworth goodnight (*Corresp.Infl.* 42, 169, 317, 74, 315). Dilworth enters this ultimately euphemistic game and reciprocates in both his own words – “Will [Emily] never learn that we understand and love each other – you (Small) and I?” (169) – and by quoting poetry, such as Robert Browning’s line “Grow old along with me!”,<sup>14</sup> yet he carefully counterbalances any effusiveness by situating himself parallel to Lawren Harris’s position in Carr’s life: “I can’t tell you how thrilled I am that you love Lawren and me so ferociously” (39).

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<sup>14</sup> Dilworth quotes from Robert Browning’s poem “Rabbi Ben Ezra.”

Carr abides by the same rules and occasionally echoes the analogy regarding Harris. And yet, while Harris was a very close and understanding friend that played a significant mentoring role in Carr's painterly oeuvre and encouraged her to also write, Dilworth's affection was able to reach further to include Small whom Carr considered to be her inner soul and, indeed, not only her unvarnished but her better self. Carr wrote to Dilworth in 1942: "We are rather comical you know[,] you & I[.] My love for you is *something* like a mother's and your love for 'Small' is *rather* like a father's and our love for each other is friendship as deep as an ocean" (160).<sup>15</sup> There is nothing sordid in their relationship; it is merely heartbreaking that Carr's friendship with Dilworth and their use of Carr's alter ego Small as a communication vehicle seems to be the closest Carr ever came to enjoy a sense of emotional fulfillment with an equal partner. In logical contrast, judging from the varied correspondence published in *Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphrey Toms* (1991), Small scarcely makes personal appearances in letters to and from other friends.

Small's strong presence notwithstanding, Carr's correspondence with Dilworth holds few surprises. As in her journals, Carr expresses herself in a more spontaneous or often vehement manner, yet the essential characteristics of her comments are consistent with the voice of her published works. Since her correspondence with Dilworth ran concurrently with her writing efforts for publication, including her autobiography, the letters provide insights into Carr's writing progress apart from her daily thoughts or commentary, as well as Dilworth's empathy and counsel. While the letters reveal the depth of the friendship and trust they shared, I find neither Carr's self-image nor her general image much affected, though perhaps that is because I have already profited from the analyses of previous critics and biographers. Carr's words do,

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<sup>15</sup> In *Corresponding Influence*, italics indicate Carr's underlining.

however, document the impact of her steadily declining health on her life and spirit, especially from 1943 onwards. While Carr struggles against illness in order to continue to write as well as correspond, an increasing need for rest and medical attention, home and hospital care, constantly reminds her of “oldness” and often makes her “desolate” (202, 205). Her weakened physical state curtails her activities and reduces her mobility; thus, it increases her sense of isolation and heightens her need to cling to human contact and meaningful conversation by correspondence while having to reduce the same “to a minimum (only those I love)” (256). At the same time, she lashes out when she feels neglected or that her questions go unanswered, even when she suspects (and later contritely apologizes for) that her illness is mainly responsible for her depression and despair. Unable to travel, Carr keenly feels the geographical distance she can actively only bridge through letters (while passively hoping for visitors), and fears that Dilworth and a few other close friends are slipping away from her and living their lives without much thought or room left for her. “To all intents and purposes I *am* dead,” Carr complains to Dilworth in January of 1944, and, to remind him (not so subtly) of his responsibility as guardian of her emotional core, asks “Has Small died? She seems as remote as the dodo bird” (255-56). Throughout that last full year of Carr’s life, thoughts of death and expressions of love coupled with farewells intrude her letters. Despite occasional bursts of energy, in which the artist manages to write more short stories<sup>16</sup> and consider the critical reception of her books,<sup>17</sup> send paintings to exhibitions and put her affairs in order, Carr knows she is dying. A striking example of her awareness of the inevitability of separation and the need to let go even of relationships is a rare wish “to see [him] married to a dear woman” (275). In her next letter, she becomes emotional about the “connecting

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<sup>16</sup> These stories were published in *This and That* (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Carr was particularly concerned about a potentially negative response to *The House of All Sorts* (expected to be published for Christmas), “because it has not the *love* in it that the others have. [...] It was a tougher part of life” (*Corresp.Infl.* 267).

tie” between them and to other friends, and in her Last Will and Testament, she asks Dilworth not to “grudge [Small] sanctuary” in case he did get married after all (276, 301). And yet, “rebellious” as ever, she pulls herself together to keep herself alive and “*happy* [through] working” (255, 265). In her last letter to Dilworth, about a week before her death, Carr still expects her *Pause* manuscript to be returned to her for revisions (296).

Given the chance, Carr would have revised the *Pause* manuscript for a more hopeful final outlook than the rather despairing one in the published version. Carr’s last letter to Dilworth illustrates the characteristic way she hoisted herself out of the black holes of depression: if sarcasm helped her to vent, wit served to counterbalance pain. She moves from expressions of despair about her situation to end with a humorous quip about the honorary doctorate she is about to receive (but will not because she dies before the conferral): “What will Small’s title be? A Doctorette?” (297). At the age of 73, Carr is both thrilled with the idea and able to laugh at herself as the potential holder of an academic title. The aged artist who knows that she has achieved a measure of recognition and success, yet must accept the reality of her impending death, demonstrates a perspective in her last correspondence with Dilworth that both reflects and has advanced from the critical situation of uncertainty and loss of agency in *Pause*. While *Pause* somewhat awkwardly blends fragments of either (gallows) humour or despair, by combining caricature with a young woman’s unresolved anxiety about her (weakened) ability to take control of her personal health and professional future, Carr’s late “performance” in her letters to Dilworth revisits these issues of well-being and work from a perspective of a position of achievement (and finality) that nevertheless displays remarkable intensity in both presence and outlook. Thus, *Pause*’s tearful “I Cannot Eat” turns into matter-of-fact “Appetite all gone again” and emphatic “*I loathe food again,*” just as *Pause*’s pithy statements have given way to a

staccato style of short communicative sentences in Carr's last letter to Dilworth (*P* 71, *Corresp. Infl.* 296-97). Carr prevails, however, by evincing a crucial difference in how she finishes her correspondence with Dilworth, as opposed to the sombre conclusion of *Pause*. Despite everything she has gone through and is still dealing with at the end of her life, Carr is able to muster enough spirit to say good bye with a joke and sign, not fractured but whole, as "Emily & Small" (297). Carr has come full circle and made peace with herself and the world.

Carr's correspondence with Ira Dilworth shows the mature artist in her last years, still active and adding to her body of work. Although Carr is never free of self-doubt, she is proud of her painterly and written oeuvre, and she feels that she has acquitted herself honourably. Carr's self-reflection and, consequently, her self-construction never cease during her lifetime. Per Greenblatt's theory, and as intertwined as the artist's philosophical contemplations are with her critical outbursts, Carr both constructs and subverts the image that emerges from her writings through the never-to-be-resolved conflict between the authority gained by the self-fashioning self and the oppressing alien of public perception. Nevertheless, Carr's complete written oeuvre consciously marks central aspects of her personal and professional life: she tells her origin story in *The Book of Small*, stylizes her early ambitions into the lyricism of a young artist's maturation in *Klee Wyck*, illustrates the despair of her identity crisis in *Pause* as well as her midlife frustration in *The House of All Sorts*, and completes her meticulous and thorough self-construction by delivering her comprehensive artist statement in *Growing Pains*.

Upon Carr's death, further construction of her image passed into the hands of others: from Ira Dilworth, Lawren Harris, and Carr's publishers, to art critics, literary scholars, and general commentators, as well as artists who fictionalized Carr in their own work. Critical and artistic engagement with Emily Carr keeps her work and her personage alive and relevant. At the

same time, we have to recognize that in order to appreciate how she defined herself and what she tried to tell us, we need to trace our ideas back to Carr's primary texts and try to unravel them from her point of view.

## CONCLUSION

### The Personage of Emily Carr

Carr's perception of herself, and of how she felt treated by others, naturally influenced her self-representation. Yet she was sufficiently self-aware to continuously interrogate her self, admitting her impatience and frequent brusqueness on a personal level, as well as her self-doubts as an artist. Carr's virtually stream-of-consciousness style (as remarked by Susan Crean) in her personal journals and correspondence conveys the most immediate, that is, unedited, expressions of anger and remorse, often in quick succession, or alternating self-doubt and determination to overcome both personal and professional obstacles. Still, contrary to some critical opinions, Carr interpreted her self-image in a consistent manner. While she repeatedly scrutinized, revised and polished the texts that she wrote with publication in mind, her projections of herself into print largely coincide with the image that emerges from her more spontaneous private discourse. As such, it makes sense that she sought to capture and record her self-concept, and thus immortalize her legacy, in the three cornerstone texts of *Klee Wyck*, *The Book of Small*, and *Growing Pains*. I have shown in this thesis that Carr encapsulated her ambitions in *Klee Wyck*, her background in *The Book of Small*, and her entire life in *Growing Pains*, while *Pause* and *The House of All Sorts* illustrate two protracted crises that affected both her personal and professional identities. Building on Gerald Lynch's reading of *Klee Wyck* as a *Künstlerroman*, I extended Lynch's premise to Carr's main literary oeuvre and identified *The Book of Small* as Carr's origin story and *Growing Pains* as her overarching artist statement. To employ yet again Gerta Moray's most apt words, Emily Carr emerges from her writings as "a forceful yet sensitive and highly complex woman" (Moray, "An Unvarnished Emily Carr" 14).

Finally, the main key to better understand Emily Carr lies in the recognition that only in writing was she able to fully express herself and her Self. Though usually shy and reticent around strangers, Carr could unleash a sharp tongue when provoked, and then suffer the consequences of interpersonal conflicts. Writing and corresponding let Carr circumvent the immediacy of a possible clash (even if this did not necessarily prevent one altogether), and gave her the opportunity to voice thoughts and opinions, in addition to relating events and stories, without interruption of flow, and, by the same token, without being disconcerted by an instant reaction from the kind of live and potentially hostile audience she encountered in her daily personal and professional life. In a journal entry dated November 26, 1935, Carr described it thus: “[T]hat beastliness, self-consciousness, is left out, shyness, shamedness in exposing one’s inner self there face to face before another, getting rattled and mislaying words” (*HT* 281). The medium of pen and paper enabled Carr to create the buffer she needed to protect and nurture the words she wrote, as well as the message she wanted to convey.

And there we have it – Carr’s “desire that he [Ira Dilworth, and, by extension, presumably all her posthumous readership] should know her fully,” as Gerta Moray puts it in her introduction to *Hundreds and Thousands*, can only be fulfilled by reading and paying attention to Carr’s own words (Moray, “An Unvarnished Emily Carr” 4). All of Carr’s writing, taken together, opens the door to a vista from her perspective, and Ira Dilworth appears to have been her most successful correspondent, in the sense that he was the most able to align his gaze with hers and, thus, break through Carr’s protective barriers and unite with her in the spirit of fellowship that she always craved. But Carr was also aware of the limits of trust and earthly companionship, as well as the price of individuality:



Perhaps everybody has to have a *secret* place deep in the middle of themselves where they are not supposed to admit others, only God, a spot you've got to keep sacred. It seems so natural and "meant to be" to stand guard in front of that inmost place as though we were meant to be solitary like raindrops falling. And then when we hit Heaven (or Heaven hits us) we won't be drops any longer but one ocean; there won't need to be a secret place inside any more, because we will have nothing ugly to hide. (*HT* 282)

In typical Carr fashion, the artist openly considers two opposite perspectives of Heaven and situates herself and her self within a larger scheme. Although she relinquishes, upon her death, all outer documentation of her inner self to us via her publications and Ira Dilworth, it will never be possible to "fully know" Emily Carr, and the image that emerges from her writings will have to suffice in giving us the best impression of who she was. Looking back, Carr wrote that her life had been "made by those tiny bits of things that were nothings in themselves" (*TT* 201) – but, remarkably, together these "nothings" made the "something" or, rather, the Someone that was Emily Carr.

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