Towards a Modern Canadian Art 1910-1936:

The Group of Seven, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott

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ABSTRACT

During the 1910s, there was an increasing concerted effort on the part of Canadian artists to create art and literature which would affirm Canada's sense of nationhood and modernity. Although in agreement that Canada desperately required its own culture, the Canadian artistic community was divided on what Canadian culture ought to be. For the majority of Canadian painters, writers, critics and readers, the future of the Canadian arts, especially poetry and painting, lay in Canada's past. These cultural conservatives championed art which mirrored its European and Canadian predecessors. Their domination of the arts left little room for the progressive minority, who rebelled against prevailing artistic standards. In painting, the Group of Seven was one of the first groups to challenge this stranglehold on Canadian culture. The Group waged a protracted and vocal campaign for the advancement of Canadian approaches and subjects. In literature, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott began a similar movement to modernize Canadian poetry and reform critical standards. By examining the poetry, essays, criticism and archival material of these poets and painters, the thesis establishes strong parallels between the modernist campaigns of these two groups and investigates this cross-fertilization between the modern Canadian arts.

RÉSUMÉ

Durant les années 1910, il y a eu un effort concerté de la part des artistes canadiens pour créer un art et une littérature qui affirmeraient la nationalité et la modernité du Canada. D'avis que le Canada avait désespérément besoin d'établir sa propre culture, la communauté artistique canadienne demeurait néanmoins divisée sur la nature de cette culture. Pour la majorité des peintres, écrivains, critiques et lecteurs canadiens, le futur de l'art canadien, notamment la poésie et la peinture, demeurait dans son passé. Ces conservateurs culturels soutenaient un art qui imitait ses prédécesseurs européens et canadiens. Leur domination des arts laissait peu de place à la minorité progressive qui protestait contre les standards artistiques contemporains. En peinture, le Groupe des sept était un des premiers groupes à défier cette emprise sur la culture canadienne. Le Groupe a pendant longtemps orchestré une campagne très expressive qui visait l'avancement d'approches et de sujets canadiens. En littérature, A.J.M. Smith et F.R. Scott ont lancé un mouvement semblable pour moderniser la poésie canadienne et réformer les standards critiques. En examinant la poésie, les essais, les critiques et le matériel archivé de ces poètes et peintres, ce mémoire établit d'étroits parallèles entre les campagnes modernistes de ces deux groupes et étudie le croisement qui s'ensuivit dans les arts modernes canadiens.

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For my parents. Danke.

INTRODUCTION

In her essay "A New Soil and A Sharp Sun: The Landscape of a Modern Canadian Poetry," Sandra Djwa suggests that there were close affinities between the new art of the Group of Seven and the new poetry of A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott in the 1920s. Influenced by the prevailing nationalism of the period, both groups attempted to answer the question "what was a distinctly Canadian art?" (3). "For many of the artists and poets of the Twenties," argues Djwa, "the answer to these critical problems was to be found in the fusion of a distinctly Canadian landscape and imported modernist techniques" (3). This approach was first pioneered in the 1910s by the collective of painters who would later be known as the Group of Seven. In his seminal work The Group of Seven: Art for A Nation, art critic Charles C. Hill contends that "the artists' fight to make Canadians realize they could define their own culture was once again the exemplar for writers working in parallel fields" (256). The Group of Seven fought hard for recognition against a conservative artistic establishment which was openly hostile to its approach. Partly inspired by the success of the Group of Seven, Smith and Scott also sought to counter and ultimately break the academic stranglehold of Canadian culture and, in the process, reform and modernize Canadian art and criticism.

This cross-fertilization in the arts in Canada in the 1920s is rarely examined. Critics often discuss these artists in isolation without reference to possible connections with other contemporary Canadian movements. Despite the obvious parallels between the painters and the poets, critical readers of Scott's and Smith's early poetry and critical work have, for the most part, ignored or downplayed the connections between the Group of Seven and the poets. Discussion of the Group with regard to the poets' landscape

poetry or to their poetic campaign is often regulated to a short paragraph or a footnote. Michael Darling in his review of Smith's oeuvre, for example, confines his comments to Smith's "Lonely Land," which he sees as an attempt "to do for Canadian literature what the Group of Seven did for painting" ("Smith 250). Although acknowledging the similarity in the artists' landscape vision, Darling argues that the "influence of the Group of Seven" on Smith "must remain unspecified" ("Smith" 250). Of F.R. Scott's poetic development, Desmond Pacey ignores the similarity between Scott's landscapes and those of the Group. Instead, Pacey emphasizes the international sources of Scott's work and the influence of Smith:

> The view of Nature expressed is the typical view of the twentieth century, and the style has close affinities with both the Georgians and the Imagists. The use of Canadian northland scenery gives the poems a certain distinctiveness, but even in this respect Scott had models in the work of A.J.M. Smith, whose "Lonely Land" is a more successful evocation of northern harshness than any of Scott's poems. (242)

Critics, on the whole, prefer to focus on the influence of the work of international modernists like T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, and Ezra Pound on the poets' development. In his article "The Beginnings of Canadian Modernism," Ken Norris writes:

> The McGill group of poets knew what was wrong with Canadian poetry in the 1920's and they knew where to find the remedy: in the English and American experimentation in modern verse that began round 1909 and found its crystallization in Erza Pound's Imagist movement. (65)

Throughout the 1920s, the Group of Seven maintained a high profile in the Canadian media and art circles. Extremely vocal, the Group seized every opportunity to publicize its art and ideals. During this decade, members of the Group wrote numerous articles defending and promoting the progressive aims of their art movement. The Group of Seven's high profile made it impossible for Smith and Scott to be ignorant of the artists' work and approach. Although in his own account of this period Smith largely omits any reference to the Group of Seven or other Canadian contemporaries, Sandra Djwa notes that:

> scattered biographical comments and the internal evidence of his poetry indicate that the revisionist temper of the 1920s, particularly as shown in the pages of The Canadian Forum from 1920 to 1927, had a shaping influence on his poetry and thought. ("Who" 206)

Scott, on the other hand, fully acknowledged the influence of the prevailing nationalism and the work of the Group on his early poetic development. As a member of a nationalist discussion group, Scott was well aware of the political and cultural issues of the 1920s. His close association with Smith during this period would have ensured Smith's awareness of current Canadian issues. Although it is difficult to determine to what degree Smith and Scott were influenced by the painters, the closeness of the connection between the two groups cannot be underestimated. In examining simultaneously the history and the work of the Group of Seven and Scott and Smith, it can be established that strong parallels exists between the modernist campaigns of these painters and poets during the 1920s and 1930s.

To highlight the development of modernism in the arts, I have divided my chapters along approximately chronological lines. As the Group of Seven's early activities clearly predate those of Smith and Scott, the thesis begins with an examination of those forces which had a strong bearing on the development of the Group of Seven's modernist campaigns. Later the efforts of Smith and Scott are discussed, and the similarity between the movements of the painters and the poets is explored.

Chapter One is principally concerned with the early years (1910-18) of the Canadian art movement. During this period, picturesque Dutch-inspired landscapes and the pastoral prettiness of the Barbizon school dominated the Canadian art scene. Tired of the public's taste for academic works, artists such as Maurice Cullen and James Wilson Morrice began rejecting academic conventions and expressing their own aesthetic aspirations. The painterly innovation of Cullen and Morrice greatly inspired the members of the Group of Seven to challenge accepted art practices. In the years leading up to the First World War, the painters were deeply involved in exploring and painting the Canadian landscape. Through their art, the painters challenged the European-oriented view of painting perpetuated by the Royal Canadian Academy. The painterly innovations of the artists drew heavy opposition from conservative critics such as Hector Charlesworth, who denounced the modernist abandon of the Toronto group. The battle between the progressives and the art establishment had begun.

Chapter Two surveys the rise of the Group of Seven during the early 1920s. With the support of the National Gallery and the Canadian Forum, the Group aggressively promoted its art and ideals. The Group was determined to create a market for its art and gain acceptance of its modernist vision. In the face of virulent criticism, the artists and

their supporters attempted to diffuse the more controversial aspect of the Group's art--namely its modernism--by emphasizing the nationalistic ideals of the Group. The Group's critical success at the 1924 Wembley exhibition resulted in national press and widespread interest in the painters.

In the early 1920s, romantic poetry flourished in Canada. Largely ignorant of contemporary developments in England and the United States, the majority of Canadian versifiers continued to write poetry based on late-Victorian models. Chapter Three first examines the domination of Canadian letters by the conservative establishment represented by the Canadian Authors Association. The C.A.A.'s indiscriminate promotion of Canadian poetry, and its nationalist stance contrasted greatly with the progressive nationalism advocated by the Canadian Forum. It was in the pages of the Forum that young poets such as Smith and Scott first came in contact with the new developments in Canadian art and international poetry. Disgusted with the boosterism and conservatism of the C.A.A. and its poets, Smith and Scott in the McGill Fortnightly Review assailed the conservative establishment. This chapter goes on to examine the efforts of Smith and Scott to reform Canadian poetry. Preliminary parallels between Smith's and Scott's campaign and that of the Group of Seven emerge.

Chapter Four charts the steady dispersal of the Group of Seven and the diverging interests between Smith and Scott during the years 1927-1936. Although it had largely achieved its fight for acceptance and recognition, the Group of Seven continued to campaign for the advancement of Canadian art. The overwhelming success of the Group in achieving its goals, however, led increasingly to the 'academization' of its art and ideals. Drawn in different directions, the painters no longer had the energy to battle their

critics, who began to denounce the Group's lack of innovation and limited artistic vision. While the majority of the painters continued to work within the established Group style, Lawren Harris experimented with abstraction. Harris's artistic development mirrors that of Smith, who also felt increasingly constrained by naturalistic representation and nationalistic sentiment. As his involvement in politics increased, Scott's poetry, on the other hand, began to reflect his social concerns. Unlike Smith, Scott was not averse to using recognizably Canadian images in his poetry and his land-based nationalism is evident in many of his poems from this period. Despite of their divergent interests, Smith and Scott were committed to the advancement of Canadian poetry and of critical standards. In 1934, Scott again joined forces with Smith to assemble a collection of modern Canadian poetry. Yet by 1936 when New Provinces: Poems by Several Authors was published, the painterly and poetic movements had largely dissipated, as their members moved in different directions and pursued other interests.

Thanks largely to the poetic and painterly efforts of the Group of Seven, Smith and Scott, Canadian modernism was established. These poets and painters also helped to develop a national culture which looked beyond the country's borders to its place within the international forum. By examining the history, work and mutual responses of these two groups, this thesis establishes that the development of a modernist aesthetic in painting and poetry in Canada were parallel paths.

CHAPTER ONE

The Development of a Modern Canadian Art Form (1910-18)

In 1910, the Royal Canadian Academy (R.C.A.) sent a selection of Canadian paintings to the Festival of Empire at London's Crystal Palace. Reflecting the conservative tastes of the R.C.A., these paintings were stylistically and thematically very dependent on European prototypes and, as a result, were imitative rather than innovative in style and content. The highly derivative nature of these works was not lost on one English reviewer, who in an article in the Morning Post criticized the Canadians' lack of originality: "At present the observation of the physical fact is strong, but the more immutable essences of each scene is [*sic*] crushed out by a foreign-begotten technique" (qtd. in Housser 11). The Canadian portion of this exhibition epitomized the dismal state of the visual arts in Canada during the early decades of this century. While artistic movements in contemporary Europe were revolutionizing and modernizing art practice, Canadian art remained firmly entrenched in Victorian aesthetics.[1] In general, Canadian painters and the Canadian public preferred the outdated academicism of the Barbizon and the late nineteenth century Dutch schools to works that were distinctively Canadian or inspired by the European avant-garde. Popular opinion was perhaps best expressed by

[1] International art movements arrived in Canada long after having been introduced in Europe. For example, Impressionism first appeared in Paris at the 1874 Salon des Indépendants. Over twenty years later, James Wilson Morrice's and Maurice Cullen's Impressionist-inspired landscapes introduced this style to Canada. A factor which contributed to this artistic isolation was a widespread lack of information concerning avant-garde developments. At the turn of the century, there were only a handful of galleries in Canada, and no Canadian art magazines existed. A.Y. Jackson felt that artists "were woefully lacking in information about trends in other parts of the world. A few good paintings by Monet, Sisley and Pissarro would have been an inspiration to them. They saw nothing at all to give them direction" (Country 22). A similar situation occurred in the literary arts. Due to a time lag and little information, Canadian poets and writers were, for the most part, unaware of current European literary trends.

artist Homer Watson, who in 1908 declared: "It will be a good thing for Canadian art, if for the future exhibitions, picturesqueness be almost rigidly demanded. It is difficult to conceive of anything being artistic that is not picturesque" (qtd. in McInnes, Art 66). In this stifling environment, artistic innovation was frowned upon. Artists who adopted unconventional styles such as Impressionism received little support, financial or otherwise, from official art circles or patrons.[2] According to D.R. Wilkie:

> Heretofore each artist returning to his native land from his studies abroad has experienced a shock in realizing the lack of sympathy with his aims and objects, the lack of artistic facilities of every kind, the lack of intelligent critics, the lack of suitable buildings where works of art can be properly shown, and, above all, the lack of any apparent desire to see things change for the better.
>
> (qtd. in Lamb 6)

Faced with dismal prospects in their homeland, many artists followed the example of J.W. Morrice and Paul Peel, and left Canada to further their careers in countries more sympathetic to the arts. Of those painters who remained in Canada, however, an increasing number risked financial and critical ruin by challenging the complacency of the Canadian art scene. The exclusive Canadian Art Club (1907-1915), for example,

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[2] Despite their success in Europe, Canadian Impressionists James Wilson Morrice and Maurice Cullen were largely unable to attract patrons in their native country. The sales at Cullen's 1896 Montreal exhibition, for example, were so disappointing that the artist was forced to auction 100 paintings, which sold as a lot for $800 (Murray 10). Their work, however, exerted a considerable influence on other Canadian landscape artists, notably the Group of Seven: "It was through Cullen and Morrice that we...first became aware of the fresh and invigorating movements going on in the art circles of France; and it was their influence that weakened the respect of the younger generation of painters from the stuffy traditions that prevailed in that city [Montreal]" (Jackson, Country 15).

attempted to create through its exhibitions a market in Canada.[3] Perhaps the club's greatest success for Canadian art was to provide a stimulus for other Canadian artists; by the time the club held its last exhibition in 1915, the dominance of academicism was weakening, as more and more painters embraced Canadian subjects and progressive styles.

This creative revolution was nurtured for the most part in the relatively receptive environment of Toronto. Although Montreal was considered the cultural capital of Canada, its art establishment was exceedingly conservative and reacted with hostility when confronted by modern art; new artistic developments, Canadian and European, were castigated by the press and virtually ignored by prospective collectors.[4] Conditions in Toronto, on the other hand, were remarkably conducive to artistic experiment. The city's thriving publishing and commercial art industries employed a large number of artists as illustrators and graphic designers. No longer forced to depend on their art for their livelihood, these men were free to follow personal, not public, aesthetic tastes (Jackson, "Recollections" 99). Moreover, whereas "there was no close association between painters and commercial artists" in Montreal, as A.Y. Jackson observed, "there was little distinction between one and another [in Toronto]. The men who made designs for

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[3] The club consisted of eight core members: Edmund Morris, Horatio Walker, Homer Watson, James Wilson Morrice, Maurice Cullen, Curtis Williamson, William Brymner, and Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté. Although exhibiting as a group, these artists, unlike the Group of Seven, did not profess to be a "school" of painting; the Canadian Art Club exhibited paintings in various styles, including Barbizon and Impressionism. Without funds and plagued by infighting, the club ended its activities in 1915.

[4] At this time, Montreal collectors were investing heavily in the mediocre pastoral landscapes of the Hague School. It was reputed that Montreal possessed the largest collection of Dutch art outside of Europe. A.Y. Jackson observed that "the wealthy homes bulged with pictures of cows and sheep, windmills and old women peeling potatoes...At a quarter of the price they could have purchased the works of Monet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Renoir and many other artists of genius" ("Talk" 1-2).

advertising went painting on week-ends" (Country 21).

Toronto's numerous art and social clubs also played a significant role in creating a stimulating artistic environment at the turn of the century. In these clubs, men in the arts could socialize, create, and meet potential patrons.[5] Peter Mellen explains that these clubs "represented a more spontaneous interest in art for art's sake" and thus encouraged creative exploration (Mellen 16). At such venues as the Toronto Art Students League, the Mahlstick Club, and the Graphic Arts Club, artists furthered their interest in Canadian subjects through outdoor sketching groups and discussion. According to J.E.H. MacDonald, "there was a great stirring of the Canadian ideal" in these Toronto clubs (qtd. in Mellen 17). And it was from this rich setting that the circle of painters that came to known as the Group of Seven emerged.

From 1911 to 1913, this group of landscape painters slowly converged on the Grip Limited, a commercial art firm, and on Toronto's Arts and Letters Club. At the Arts and Letters Club, Grip employees J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Franklin Carmichael, Frank H. Johnston and Tom Thomson nourished their painterly ambitions through social interaction and through the club's numerous creative activities. Considered the "centre of living culture in Toronto," the club provided an informal and congenial atmosphere for the city's artistic community (Reid, The Group 28). Unlike the Canadian Art Club, which

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[5] Canadian women artists were excluded from artistic societies such as the Arts and Letters Club and from prominent exhibitions. Although women played an active role in the Canadian arts as educators, artists and patrons, their contributions to the Canadian art community were either ignored or dismissed by their unsympathetic male peers. During the early decades of this century, women artists were viewed as "dabblers," whose work was subjected to gender-based criticism (Tippett, Lady 55). Ignored by critics and by the predominantly male art community, women artists founded their own artistic societies and art schools. "For whatever reason," writes Maria Tippett, "women simply could not win the approval that their work deserved" (Lady 201).

restricted its membership and held closed exhibitions, the Arts and Letters Club welcomed artists, musicians, dramatists, writers, actors and would-be patrons. Through theatre productions, concerts, art exhibitions and the club's official magazine The Lamps, club members cultivated and shared their ideas and skills. When compared to the sterility of official art circles, the Arts and Letters Club was a fertile milieu of interaction and creativity where experimentation was welcomed, not censored.

Despite such spirited activity and interest in Canadian subjects, few Canadian artists in Toronto, or elsewhere, completely abandoned academic aesthetics.[6] According to A.Y. Jackson, the majority of these painters

> painted with much enthusiasm but not much understanding. They had no background, no traditions, no collections of good art they could go to for guidance. The painters who won recognition and received financial support were the ones who painted like Corot, Constable or Millet -- pictures with a sentimental appeal, following long established traditions. Many of our artists would like to have blazed new trails....But no purchaser wanted pictures that were unlike other pictures. ("Talk" 2)

Although prospects for artists were better in Toronto, artists there still had to contend with many of the same problems facing artists in Montreal; namely, an ignorant public, indifferent collectors and conservative uninformed critics. Toronto critics and patrons, on

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[6] There were of course notable exceptions: Emily Carr , John Lyman and David Milne, to name a few. These artists, however, remained comparatively unknown in their native land until the 1930s. Both Lyman and Milne were expatriates who resided in France and the United States respectively. Milne returned to Canada in 1928 and Lyman in 1931. Carr, on the other hand, worked in relative isolation in British Columbia during the 1910s and 1920s. In the 1930s, Carr attained national recognition through a series of exhibitions held in Toronto and Vancouver.

the whole, followed the preferences of their counterparts in Montreal, who favoured the moody poetic landscapes of the Dutch and of their Canadian imitators.

J.E.H. MacDonald's landscape sketches in his solo 1911 Arts and Letters Club exhibition, however, were dramatically different. The freshness and originality of these landscapes greatly impressed fellow artist and club member C.W. Jeffreys, who reviewed the exhibition in the December 1911 issue of The Lamps. Although Jeffreys praised MacDonald's choice of subject matter, he emphasized that "in themselves, of course, Canadian themes do not make art, Canadian or other, but neither do Canadian themes expressed through European formulas or through European temperaments." MacDonald's appreciation of the land, however, had led to "a method of expression in paint as native and original as itself." Unlike his artistic predecessors, MacDonald, according to Jeffreys, "seems to be able to forget what other men have selected, and how other men have expressed themselves, and in...a country so provincial and imitative in its tastes as Canada, these are rare qualities" ("MacDonald" 12). Another club member, Lawren Harris, recognized in MacDonald's work "the beginning of what I, myself, vaguely felt; what I was groping toward - Canada painted in her own spirit" ("The Group" 31). Of these paintings, Harris wrote: "These sketches contained intimations of something new in painting in Canada, an indefinable spirit which seemed to express the country more clearly than any painting I had yet seen ("The Group" 31). Shortly after viewing this exhibition, Harris approached MacDonald. In late 1911, the two began sketching together, and were soon joined on these excursions by MacDonald's Grip colleagues, Lismer, Carmichael, Thomson, and Johnston. In 1913, their artistic circle grew with the inclusion of Lismer's

fellow Englishman, Fred Varley, and Montrealer A.Y. Jackson.[7]

These men were drawn together by a shared love for the Canadian landscape and a desire to create "an art expression" which would "embody the moods and character and spirit of the country" rather than those of Europe (Harris, "The Group" 31). For the most part, their early paintings (1911-1913) were painted in a diluted Impressionistic or realistic style. Although Group of Seven biographer F.B. Housser viewed the 1912 Ontario Society of Artists (O.S.A) exhibition as "the first outbreak of the movement...the first sign of an organized revolt," (47) it was really a revolt in terms of subject matter rather than technique. At this time, the painters were shifting their focus from urban and figural subjects to scenes of Ontario's north.[8] Almost completely unexplored by artists, this rugged northern region was a veritable painter's paradise, in the treatment of which the group was free to experiment with technique and expression. In the years that followed, as the artists moved farther northward literally and conceptually, their paintings became increasingly expressionistic, subjective and controversial.

By 1912-13, the painters had abandoned the subdued outskirts of Toronto and were engaged in an exploration of Ontario's Algonquin Park and Georgian Bay area. Douglas Cole contends that the artists "began to paint the wilderness at just the right time to catch

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[7] Harris and MacDonald first came upon Jackson's work in 1911, when his The Edge of Maple Wood was exhibited in Toronto. Impressed by the "startling verity" of Jackson's work, Harris purchased the painting in 1913 (Harris, "The Group" 31). Disappointed by Montreal's art scene, Jackson accepted Harris's 1913 invitation to join the group.

[8] Despite this increased interest in northern subjects, Harris and Varley continued to paint urban scenes, portraits and figure studies. With the formation of the nationalistic Group of Seven in the 1920s, however, the coterie concentrated almost exclusively on northern scenes. According to Ann Davis, "urban and figure subjects had drawbacks which made them inappropriate as 'Group of Seven' subjects...these two themes presented ideological problems that conflicted with the land-oriented, naturalistic Group theories...Eventually landscape became the only accepted Group of Seven subject" ("Vision" 146).

the enthusiasm of a generation of cottagers and wilderness buffs" (74-5).[9] According to Cole, this exploration of the uncultivated and untouched north by Canadians was a response to the rapid industrialization of Canada. The explosive growth in Canada's population and economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had resulted in a vast increase in urban population, a shortage in housing, unsanitary conditions, pollution and general squalor. In response to new economic and urban pressures, Canadians developed a "wilderness ethos," a "new appreciation of the physical, aesthetic and spiritual values of those areas where man's incursions upon nature were relatively absent." This ethos resulted in the creation of parks such as the Algonquin, drove the booming cottage movement, and permeated the literature of the time (69-70).[10]

This fascination with Canada's wilderness was part of a larger preoccupation with northern themes and images. During the bustling years surrounding Confederation, nationalist sentiment and northern mythology were linked together by the Canada First Movement, which popularized the idea that Canada's uniqueness stemmed from its northern location.[11] Displaying elements of racism, the Canada First Movement held that

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[9] As Cole notes, "there was a ready audience of affluent and influential patrons prepared by their own experiences to respond to the portrayal of wilderness subjects" by the Toronto painters (77). These upper and middle class Canadians would, during the 1920s, respond sympathetically to the Group of Seven's art.

[10] During this period, Canadian wilderness literature was immensely popular both at home and abroad. The popularity of nature poetry continued well into the 1920s. Victorian poets Bliss Carman, D.C. Scott, Charles G.D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman, and Wilfred Campbell were idolized by a conservative literary establishment, who promoted the romantic style and subjects of these poets. As a result, the majority of verse written at this time was derivative, colonial and outdated. Like the Group of Seven before them, poets A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott wished to modernize and, to some extent, Canadianize their discipline. Smith's and Scott's literary battle will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[11] The Canada First Movement (1871-1875) was founded by Henry Morgan, George Taylor Denison, Charles Mair, Robert Grant Haliburton and William Forster. It rapidly grew as a nationalistic movement, and Goldwin Smith was its unofficial leader. In 1874, Canada First entered politics and organized the Canadian National Party. According to D.R. Farrell, Canada First "was a group of nationalists who represented one particular section; it was antagonistic toward political parties while organizing into one; it was composed of Imperialists who believed in everything from independence to annexation" (25).

Canada's climate naturally selected the strongest and fittest to inhabit the land. This distinctly Canadian application of social Darwinism advanced the idea that Canada's future greatness lay in her northern peoples and location (Berger, "North" 6).[12] According to Berger, in the decades that followed the Canada First Movement,

> Canadian nationalists of all persuasions stopped apologizing for their climate and extolled the influence of the snow and cold upon their character...The adjective"northern" came to symbolize energy, strength, self-reliance, health, purity, even libertinism and disease. A lengthy catalogue of desirable national attributes resulting from the climate was compiled. (Power, 129)

In the early twentieth century, literature and politics continued to promote the idea of Canada as the "true north, strong and free." In the 1910s, the Toronto landscape group's preoccupation with northern subjects was partly a response to this prevalent ideology. The painters were undoubtedly affected by Ontario's promotion of its northern territory as an unlimited source of natural resources and potential wealth (Walton, "Development" 172).[13] The group's "need to explore the aesthetic potential of the wilderness," Paul Walton argues, "must have been linked...with an awareness they shared with so many

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[12] In the words of ardent nationalist Robert Grant Haliburton: "May not our snow and frost give us what is of more value than gold or silver, a healthy, hardy, virtuous, dominant race?" (qtd. in Berger, "North" 6).
[13] A "New Ontario" was created between 1889 and 1912, when the province purchased lands in the north from the federal government (Walton, "Development" 172). Rich in natural resources, this Precambrian Shield territory was quickly transformed by industry and tourism. Paul Walton notes that by 1900 the Georgian Bay area was "overcrowded and the water-ways were encumbered with log-booms, so it was hardly a wilderness area when Dr. MacCallum's cottage provided a comfortable base from which his artist friends could explore the region's picturesque possibilities" ("Development" 173).

others of its availability for pioneer endeavors of all kinds" ("Development" 172).[14]

Despite increased critical and financial support for the painters during 1912-13, European-inspired landscapes and works in the academic style continued to dominate Canadian art. Although institutions and collectors purchased works from the group, they did little otherwise to encourage the development of experimental Canadian art.[15] The members of the group were also frustrated in their efforts by their inability to develop a technique compatible with their subject. Harris, MacDonald, Varley, Lismer, Johnston, Carmichael, Thomson, and Jackson were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to translate the stark, untouched and "savage" land of Canada into paint. With its masses of bare rock, clear atmosphere, northern light, strong lines and vivid colouring, the land refused to be expressed in European terms. According to Jackson:

> after painting in Europe where everything was mellowed by time and human associations, I found it a problem to paint a country in outward appearance pretty much as it had been when Champlain passed through its thousands of rock islands three hundred years before. (Country 25)

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[14] These painters, however, were not the first Canadian artists to view the north as source of inspiration. As Charles Comfort has noted, these artists "undoubtedly underlined and gave reality to the concept, but others before them had not only painted the Canadian countryside but aspired to the creation of a Canadian school of painting" (4). Where this modern group of painters differed from earlier enthusiasts of the north, like Cornelius Krieghoff and Charles Jeffreys, was in its determination to cast off European influence and create a uniquely Canadian form of expression. It was the way these painters viewed the landscape, not necessarily the techniques they used, which made their art "particularly Canadian." During the post-war period of the 1920s, many artists, including the poets F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith, shared the Group of Seven's view of the Canadian landscape as a pliant subject for modernist experiment. Conservatives, however, also featured northern landscapes in their artwork and literature.

[15] By 1913, Toronto art circles were well acquainted with the group's artistic campaign through exhibitions like the annual Ontario Society of Artists (O.S.A.) exhibition and through newspaper reviews. Significantly, it was at this time that the National Gallery began buying works from the artists. Another important development in 1913 was the construction of the Art Gallery of Toronto. During the 1920s, it would also play a pivotal role in the development and success of the Group of Seven (see Reid, Group 34).

J.E.H. MacDonald and Lawren Harris discovered a solution to this technical problem at the 1913 Scandinavian painting exhibition, held at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York. Flagrantly unacademic, these paintings celebrated the line, colour, contour, and surface of the Scandinavian landscape. According to MacDonald, the Scandinavian painters "seemed to be a lot of men not trying to express themselves so much as trying to express something that took hold of themselves. The painters began with nature rather than with art" ("Lecture" 2). Already familiar with contemporary Scandinavian art through reproductions and articles in The Studio, a British arts journal, MacDonald and Harris were, nonetheless, impressed by the dramatically fresh landscapes of their northern European counterparts.[16] In these paintings of snowscapes and mountains, the two men recognized a response to landscape that was analogous to their own developing sense of Canada. In Harris's opinion, the Scandinavian paintings

> gave body to our rather nebulous ideas. Here were paintings of northern lands created in the spirit of those lands. Here was a landscape as seen through the eyes, felt in the hearts, and understood by the minds of people who knew and loved it. Here was an art, bold, vigorous, and uncompromising, embodying direct experience of the great north. ("The Group" 31)

Harris and MacDonald were not the first Canadian artists to express an interest in, or to be encouraged by, Scandinavian art. At the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893, C.W. Jeffreys had noted the topographical similarities between Canada and Northern

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[16] For a thorough examination of the influence of northern Symbolist landscape paintings on the Group of Seven, see Roald Nasgaard, The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America 1890-1940 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1984).

Europe (Nasgaard 161). Jeffreys also recognized the Scandinavians' artistic independence from academic techniques and genre. Turning to Canadian painting of the 1890s, Jeffreys observed "that on all our painting, admirable as much of it was, lay the blight of misty Holland, mellow England, the veiled sunlight of France, countries where most of our painters were born or trained" (qtd. in Nasgaard 161). Lawren Harris came to a similar conclusion two decades later, recognizing that it was now necessary to

> paint the Canadian scene in its own terms. This land is different in its air, mood, and spirit from Europe and the Old Country. It invokes a response which throws aside all preconceived ideas and rule-of-thumb reactions. It has to be seen, lived with, and painted with complete devotion to its own life and spirit before it yields its secrets. (Lawren Harris 48)

The Scandinavian show crystallized MacDonald and Harris's plan for a national art which, in their eyes, would express the moods and spirit of the land and its people. As Roald Nasgaard points out, both the Canadians and the Scandinavians

> sought to reveal beneath the surface of nature something more profound and enduring, which would not only reflect subjective responses but also be the basis for shared experience and eventually the common denominator for defining a national spirit. (168)

With their convictions strengthened by the example of their Scandinavian counterparts, the Canadians began to experiment and to develop a sensitive treatment of their subject matter. According to Harris, after the Scandinavian show "[the group's] purpose became clarified and our conviction reinforced" ("The Group" 31). If anything, the Scandinavian painters demonstrated the viability of painting in an original manner

that highlighted the strength, beauty and uniqueness of the northern landscape, not its supposed similarity to that of western Europe. Of all the painters, Harris was the most determined to replace his academic handling of paint with something indigenous. Jackson remarks that "One of Harris' efforts to get vibrant colour was to drag his brush quickly through three or four colours and slap it on the canvas. Among ourselves it was known as Tomato Soup" ("Harris" 8-9). "Tomato Soup" was just one of the many experiments conducted by the group in an attempt to develop new painterly methods. As their commitment to the north increased, each of the artists developed his own empathetic response to the scenery. By the end of 1914, the group "abandoned any attempt after literal painting and treated our subjects with the freedom of the decorative designer, just as the Swedes had done, living in a land where the topography and climate were similar to our own" (Jackson qtd. in Nasgaard 159). These early exploratory paintings exhibited what many later considered Group of Seven hallmarks: a strong concern with pattern, bold simplification of form, flattening of images, dynamic line and an emphasis on colour.

Jackson's Terre Sauvage of 1913, with its brash use of colour and symmetry, its symbolic evocations and its northern subject, establishes the new style of the group (Reid, Concise 140). In this work, the picture plane is divided into three sections: a rocky foreground, a middle distance consisting of conically shaped trees, and a background of clouds and sky. It is, however, Jackson's use of colour that distinguishes this work from his earlier Impressionistic landscapes. Here, complementary colours are juxtaposed: red maples are placed next to jagged evergreens and a vivid blue sky. Jackson then contrasts form by heavily outlining the straight vertical lines of the trees and the rounded curves of

the rocks. As in the majority of the images produced by the group, human beings and surface details are absent. Hugh Kenner points out that

> Nobody ever appeared in those pictures, no human form except occasionally a tiny portaging figure hidden by his monstrous canoe. Nobody was needed. The Canadian Face was there right enough, rock of those rocks, bush of those bushes. (203)

In the eyes of the Toronto landscape group, the Canadian wilderness embodied the spirit and uniqueness of Canada and its people. For Jackson and his colleagues, the Canadian North was also symbolic of Canada's vibrant past and rich future.

With the construction of the Studio Building for Canadian Art in Toronto in 1914, the Canadian movement gained even greater momentum. Funded by Harris and Dr. James MacCallum, the Studio Building provided affordable, high-quality studio space for various group members and their friends.[17] Harris conceived the Studio Building "as a working place for those artists primarily interested in painting Canada in its own terms - a new creative venture" (qtd. in Adamson 49). According to Jackson, the building was "a lively centre for new ideas, experiments, discussions, plans for the future and visions of an art inspired by the Canadian countryside" (Country 27). In the Studio Building,

> Every day was an adventure - Lawren Harris experimenting with broken colour...Thomson, after much self-depreciation, finally submitting to becoming

[17] MacCallum, a Toronto ophthalmologist and Arts and Letters Club member, was one of the group's first patrons. A devotee of the north, MacCallum encouraged the artists to explore the north and to depict it on canvas. Not only did he acquire their paintings, he also provided much needed financial help and offered the group the use of his cottage at Go Home Bay.

> a full-time artist; MacDonald, happy as a child, working out strange rhythms and designs on canvas. (Jackson, "MacDonald" 138)

In this supportive environment, the painters' confidence in their goals and art increased.

As the group moved decisively forward in its campaign, resistance to its program increased. In the shows of early 1913, such as the First Exhibition of Little Pictures by Canadian Artists and the annual Ontario Society of Artists exhibition, response had been favorable to the painters' efforts.[18] One reviewer praised the paintings for being "characteristically Canadian," and said that "anyone who knows anything of the North country will rejoice in these vivid sketches" (P.O'D. 6). However, as the artists' paintings became more expressionistic and less dependent on representation, detractors emerged.[19] Nancy Clark charges that the majority of the Canadian art critics of the period "judged paintings according to mimetic taste" and were "intolerant of deviations from the familiar" (57). Furthermore, says Clark,

> There was no real analysis of works and sensitivity to formal values was rare. Criticism rarely directed developments in the arts; more often than not, the critics simply reflected public taste and were notoriously slow to respond to innovation. (49)

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[18] The introduction to the catalogue for the Exhibition of Little Pictures was the first attempt by the painters to attract a wider audience and to establish themselves as Canadian artists "whose work is part of our national life" (qtd. in Reid, Group 33). Dennis Reid observes that the "direct, aggressive tone of the conclusion" of this introduction would later become the distinctive feature of the Group of Seven's statements (Group 33).

[19] In the 1910s, negative attention was focused upon the artists' style and technique; the majority of critics objected to the "degenerate" post-impressionism of the group. Although their art continued to generate controversy in the 1920s, the group's forceful stance and the National Gallery's steadfast support of the group was increasingly targeted by their equally vocal and assertive critics.

Although not opposed to the use of Canadian subject matter, these critics opposed anti-academic technique and style. On the whole, Montreal and Toronto critics reacted negatively towards artistic experimentation. When, for example, in March 1913 the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal opened, critics from the Montreal Daily Star and the Montreal Daily Witness blasted the Post-Impressionist paintings of Randolph Hewton, John Lyman and A.Y. Jackson. In the opinion of the Montreal Daily Star's Morgan-Powell, "Post-Impressionism is a fad, an inartistic fetish for the amusement of bad draughtmanship, incompetent colourists, and others, who find themselves unqualified to paint pictures" ("Art Association" n.pag). Morgan-Powell's response to John Lyman's solo exhibition in May was even more virulent: "[Lyman's paintings] are not works of art. They are travesties, abortions, sensual and hideous malformations" ("Essays" n.pag). In Toronto, the Studio group's experimental landscapes were also subjected to critical rebuke. In December of 1913, H.F. Gadsby of the Toronto Star reviewed the group's show at the Arts and Letters Club. In a facetious article entitled "The Hot Mush School, or Peter and I," Gadsby ridiculed "the Advanced Atomizers who spray a tube of paint at a canvas and call it 'Sunshine on the Cowshed'" (6). All of their works, claimed Gadsby, "look pretty much alike, the new result being more like a gargle or gob of porridge than a work of art." In his reply to Gadsby's mockery, MacDonald urged Gadsby and his fellow critics to view these and other like-minded works "with an open eye and perhaps a little receptivity of mind." MacDonald emphasized the "Canadianness" of the paintings, and called on Gadsby "and the rest of us...[to] support our distinctly Native art, if only for the sake of experiment"("Hot Mush" 6). MacDonald and his group felt that as long as artistic experiment was opposed,

Canadian art would languish and falter. New methods and new attitudes among artists, public and critic were vital.

After the "Hot Mush" incident, the members of the group became aware that, if they were to succeed, they required the support of the general public. Thus, from 1913 onward, they adopted a program of self-promotion which publicized their increasingly nationalistic aims and solicited support.[20] Those who voiced their opposition to the new order were promptly and effectively admonished by the artists in print. Peter Larisey views the painters' response to criticism as

> an avant-garde aspect of their program...They attempted to fan any mention of criticism into a public issue, realizing that they could thus get the attention of the Canadian public and awaken them to the possibility of an art that was Canadian. (29)

This highly aggressive approach proved extremely successful in 1914, when the National Gallery and its trustee Sir Edmund Walker at last recognized the Studio group's crusade.[21] This recognition was largely the result of a 4 June 1914 Globe article by Harris, in which he criticized the apathy and timid orthodoxy of the Federal Art Commission and the National Gallery:

> We are already too well supplied with European pictures...the number of Canadian patriots who won't have anything but foreign work in their

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[20] During the 1920s, the artists, as the Group of Seven, repeatedly emphasized their nationalism in their exhibition catalogues and articles. By adopting a nationalistic stance, the Group diffused the criticism of the more controversial aspect of their art, namely its "modernist" style.

[21] Although the National Gallery began buying works by the Toronto artists in 1913, the Gallery's director Eric Brown and its trustee Sir Edmund Walker did not actively support the group until 1914.

> collections need no Government to endorse them in their snobbishness. Yet this is what the art commission is doing. Out of touch, with no sympathy or enthusiasm or any belief in the future of Canadian art save that it ape the past and severely copy European standards, it [the art commission], with its stupid policy is merely helping the dealer to blind the people whom the Canadian artists must depend on for a living. ("Federal Art")

Harris and the group scolded the Commission and the National Gallery for hindering the progress of Canadian art by not mounting national and international modern art exhibitions, such as the Albright Scandinavian Show. In response, Sir Edmund Walker, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery, visited the Studio Building and listened to the artists' petition. Far from dismissing the aims of the group, Walker approved of its use of Canadian subject matter and its attempts to form a Canadian school of painting.[22] From this point onward, the National Gallery (and Walker, and gallery director Eric Brown in particular) actively endorsed the group's endeavors and purchased its works. These were powerful allies, who, throughout the difficult war years and the later controversies, never wavered in their support and patronage.

During 1914, the spirits of the painters of the Studio Building soared. During this year, the artists succeeded in securing patronage and garnered critical recognition for their

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[22] Of these events, Jackson writes: "We were inclined to be very vocal about our ideas. Harris and I wrote letters to the papers, criticizing the National Gallery for its neglect of Canadian art. We expected to be black-listed by the Gallery for our effrontery; instead of that, Sir Edmund Walker, who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees, came around to see Harris and asked to know what all the fuss was about. Harris told him of our intention to paint our own country and to put life into Canadian art. Sir Edmund said that was just what the National Gallery wanted to see happen; it if did, the Gallery would back us up. The Gallery was as good as its word" (Country 27).

work. Yet their art was not subject to the dictates of the public, critics or patrons. Harris and the group were committed first and foremost to exploring their land creatively. When sketching the magnificent lakes, rivers and terrain of the Algonquin and other northern areas, the painters of this group "suppressed" their formal art training and instead claimed to have allowed the land to dictate technique and approach.[23] In a 1914 letter to his sister, Varley wrote:

> We are endeavoring to knock out of us all the pre-conceived ideas, emptying ourselves of everything except that nature is here in all its greatness, and we are here to gather it and understand...to receive it not as we think it should be, but as it is, and then to put down vigorously and truthfully what we have culled. (qtd. in Varley 9)

This search for a "native" creative expression resulted in boldly unacademic paintings combining Post-Impressionist use of colour with the stylization of Art Nouveau. Painterly progress was great at this time, and, by the summer of 1914, the group finally seemed to be ready to storm the conservative Canadian art world. These plans were frustrated, however, by the outbreak of World War I. At first, the painters simply ignored the war, and continued their sketching trips to Algonquin Park. But as the war progressed, the painters gradually curtailed their activities and concentrated on

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[23] In their quest for critical and public acceptance, the group during the 1920s repeatedly emphasized the Canadianness of both their subject matter and technique. Post-impressionist techniques and other foreign influences are, however, evident in the majority of their landscapes.

contributing to the war effort.[24]

Four of the artists, Lismer, Johnston, Varley and Jackson, were commissioned as war artists for the Canadian War Memorial. Founded in 1917 by Lord Beaverbrook, the War Memorials were pictorial records of Canada's participation and achievements at home and overseas. In 1918, Lismer, Johnston and Varley joined a distinguished group of Canadian artists that included their friend Jackson, who had signed up in 1917.[25] Although offered positions, MacDonald and Harris both declined.

Despite the intrusion of the war, the Algonquin School, as the group then called itself, continued to exhibit its controversial landscapes.[26] In 1916, their contributions to the spring Ontario Society of Artists exhibition drew fire from critics Carl Ahrens and Hector Charlesworth, who berated the painters for their highly experimental works. In his article "Pictures That Can Be Heard," Charlesworth focused on the painterly offenses of MacDonald, especially those committed in The Tangled Garden (Figure 2). Charlesworth lambasted MacDonald and his cohorts on the grounds that their paintings "almost destroy the effect of very meritorious and sincere pictures which are hung on the

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[24] Jackson was the first of the group to enlist, doing so in June 1915. He was sent overseas to France in November and participated in active combat until 1917, when he was severely injured (Mellen 70). Harris enlisted in 1916, and was sent to Ontario's Camp Borden to teach musketry. In May 1918, Harris was discharged after suffering a nervous breakdown, and returned to Toronto. MacDonald, Thomson, Carmichael, Varley and Johnston remained in Toronto, where they struggled to survive in a depressed war-time economy. From 1916 to 1919, Lismer resided in Halifax, where he was employed as the principal of the Victoria School of Art and Design. For a thorough discussion of the group's activities during the war, see Mellen 70; Larisey 34-36; Reid, Group 109-120.

[25] Johnston's commission required him to remain in the Toronto area, where he recorded actions of the Royal Canadian Air Force (Mellen 76). Lismer, on the other hand, painted the activities of the Canadian forces in Halifax.

[26] The group's name, of course, refers to Ontario's Algonquin Park, its preferred sketching ground during the 1910s. In 1919, the group renamed itself the Group of Seven. See Chapter Two.

same walls." MacDonald, according to Charlesworth, was the main offender, guilty of throwing "his paint pots in the face of the public."[27] The tirade continued:

> In the first place the size of the canvas is much too large for the relative importance of the subject, and the crudity of the colours, rather than the delicate tracery of all vegetation seems to have appealed to the painter; but it is a masterpiece as compared with The Elements or Rock and Maple which for all they really convey might as well have been called Hungarian Goulash and Drunkard's Stomach. Mr. MacDonald's impulse has also infected a number of other talented young artists, who seem to think that crudity in colour and brush work signify the qualities of 'strength' and 'self-expression.' (5)

A critic from the Toronto Star endorsed Charlesworth's critique by dismissing the entire O.S.A. show and the Canadian art movement in general: "There are some samples of that rough, splashy, meaningless, blatant, plastering and massing of unpleasant colours which seems to be a necessary evil in all Canadian art exhibitions now-a-days" (qtd. in Duval, Tangled 57). The "evil" the Toronto Star reviewer and Charlesworth found so disturbing was the experimental technique of the paintings, not the subject matter. In Charlesworth's view, "applied or 'quasi-futurism' has gotten hold of the hanging committee of the Ontario Society of Artists this year" (5).[28] By labeling the exhibition "futurist," Charlesworth aligned the work of the Toronto radicals with the controversial

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[27] With this comment, Charlesworth echoes John Ruskin's condemnation of James McNeill Whistler's non-naturalistic Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket (1874): "I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face" ("Fors Clavigera" 2 July 1877). For a not dissimilar image see Gadsby's 1913 attack "The Hot Mush School, or Peter and I," pages 12-13.

[28] In a letter to the Toronto Globe, published 15 March 1916, MacDonald dismissed the contention that the O.S.A. exhibition contained Futurist or Cubist works (6).

and highly inflammatory art of the Italian Futurists. In 1912, Futurists had incensed the English public with their "gleeful assault on time-honoured concepts of man, nature, and art" during their exploitative publicity campaign for their London exhibition (Walton, "Beauty" 94). Paul Walton notes that

> The long-standing suspicion that modernist art was allied with anarchism and communism in seeking to subvert civilization was heightened to fever pitch when the new art was taken up by young British artists calling themselves "Vorticists." "Futurism" began to be used indiscriminately in the English speaking world to denote any form of radical modernism in art that offended and alarmed the general public. ("Beauty" 94)

Walton argues that although the Canadian artists were not in fact affiliated with these radical European movements, their association with progressive Canadian publications like The Rebel and, later, The Canadian Forum may have been enough to encourage Charlesworth's identification of "artistic rebels as analogues of political disruption" ("Beauty" 96). As with the Futurists, the group's aesthetic and social concerns were viewed by conservatives such as Charlesworth as a threat to the political stability and established moral values of Canada.

Charlesworth's views of the group were supported by other traditionalists like artist Carl Ahrens, who felt that the "new art" of MacDonald, Harris and the Studio artists "bespeaks only of a hermaphroditic condition of the mind and an absolute lack of knowledge of drawing, colour, and design" ("New Schools" 3). MacDonald brilliantly

countered these attacks in his "Bouquets from a Tangled Garden," published in the March 27, 1916 edition of the Toronto Globe. Without referring to his critics by name, MacDonald admonishes those who "condemn, apparently without understanding and without making an effort to understand, forgetful of Goethe's caution for doubtful cases, that a genuine work of art usually displeases at first sight, as it suggests a deficiency in the spectator." In the view of MacDonald and his colleagues, critics must "know the distinctive character of their own country and...approve at least an effort made by the artist to communicate his own knowledge of that character." Furthermore, claimed MacDonald, critics routinely failed to see that these paintings **were** Canada: "The Tangled Garden, Elements and a host more are but items in a big idea, the spirit of our native land. The artists hope to keep on striving to enlarge their own conception of that spirit" ("Bouquets" 4).

While MacDonald was engaged in defending the new movement, Thomson concentrated on expanding his artistic vision. During the first two years of the war, Thomson had continued to spend winters in Toronto and summers in Algonquin Park. Owing to the generosity of Dr. MacCallum, Thomson was able to abandon commercial art work in order to devote himself fully to painting. With this freedom from financial worries, Thomson spent the greater part of 1916-1917 in Algonquin Park, sketching and occasionally working as a guide. His mysterious death on 8 July 1917 was a terrible blow to his fellow members of the Algonquin School. The spirit and usefulness of Tom

Thomson, however, remained with the group, which promoted the myth of Thomson as the natural, untutored Canadian artist.[29]

Devastated by Thomson's death and depressed by financial worries, MacDonald physically collapsed in late 1917; Peter Mellen speculates that MacDonald's illness was due to a stroke (68). During his long convalescence, MacDonald put aside painting and began to write poetry and articles. Published in The Rebel and in its later incarnation, Canadian Forum, MacDonald's literary efforts revitalized the group's crusade. In articles published between November 1917 and December 1918, for example, MacDonald belittled the inferior tastes of collectors and galleries. In "A Whack at Dutch Art" (March 1918), MacDonald wrote:

> It is not suggested that Canada should be a private reserve for Canadian artists or that they should fall heirs to all that is now being expended on foreign art, but one must deplore the fact that many paintings of fine quality, with such modest prices as $20.00 or $30.00 remain unsold in our exhibitions, while $600.00 or $700.00 is paid for foreign works which would be rejected by the juries of most of our exhibitions. Many Canadian artists are handicapped by having to devote the greater part of their time to work apart from art, and men

[29] Unlike the other members of the group, Thomson did not receive a formal art education or visit Europe. As a trained commercial artist, however, he was familiar with Art Nouveau, and was able to glean from his fellow artists the techniques of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. In the minds of his fellow artists, Thomson became the untutored genius, a model for all Canadian artists. In Jackson's view, Thomson "was the guide, the interpreter" who introduced his friends to "a new world, the north country" (qtd. in Reid 90). Dennis Reid argues that Thomson's death was seen "almost as a sacrifice to the idea of an indigenous Canadian art...Thomson was...to become Canada's first Old Master, and as an idea he has acted as a constant inspiration to all who believe that the secret of Canada's self-knowledge is somehow contained in the land" (Group 90).

> of great talent have been discouraged by the indifferent prospects of artists, and the slight esteem in which artists are held. (259)

By the summer of 1918, MacDonald and Harris had also recommenced their excursions into the North, although, after Thomson's death, they did not return to the Algonquin. Thomson had been the first of the group to explore Algonquin Park, and it was his enthusiasm for this region that had inspired his fellow artists to explore the park and use it as their subject. Without Thomson, the group "had not the heart to go back to Algonquin Park, so they moved to Algoma and Lake Superior...and other parts of the country" (Jackson, "Foreword" 5). In August 1918, MacDonald, Harris, Dr. MacCallum and Johnston traveled by box car to Algoma. The four men returned to Toronto in late September, eager to transform their sketches into paintings.

By the end of 1918, then, the group was again beginning to coalesce, and was preparing itself for further exploration of the Algoma region and for a fresh assault on the Canadian art world. 1919 would see the rise of the Group of Seven, with its aims renewed and its work increasingly supported. During the following decade, artists from all fields would join the Group of Seven in challenging the colonialism, conservatism and Victorianism of Canadian culture. It was a time during which great changes would occur not only in the visual arts but also, significantly, in literature.

CHAPTER TWO

"Art Must Take to the Road": The Rise of the Group of Seven (1919-1925)

The intensely nationalistic climate of post-war Canada proved especially propitious for the Toronto rebels and their Canadian art movement. After a five year absence, the members of the landscape group reconvened in 1919 in Toronto, where they found themselves in the midst of a nation-wide search by cultural nationalists for an indigenous culture and identity.[1] Canada's participation in World War I and its increased role in post-war global politics contributed to this rise in patriotic feeling.[2] Canadians emerged from the Great War acutely conscious of their distinctiveness and of the lack of appropriate national symbols. "After 1919," wrote Arthur Lismer, "most creative people, whether in painting, writing or music, began to have a guilty feeling that Canada was as yet unwritten, unpainted, unsung...In 1920 there was a job to be done" (qtd. in Bumstead 223). In English-speaking Canada, this "job" was appropriated quickly by the country's artistic and intellectual elite, who directed and fostered national consciousness through a variety of nationalist-inspired organizations and publications (Vipond, "Network" 44).[3] Mary Vipond notes that these cultural nationalists "saw themselves...performing the critical function of crystallizing community identity by dispensing meaningful symbols and articulating common goals" ("Network" 34). Charles Comfort believes that the

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[1] After the death of Thomson in 1917, the group consisted of Lawren Harris, J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Fred Varley, Frank Johnston, Franklin Carmichael and A.Y Jackson.

[2] Although a dominion, Canada participated in the 1917 Imperial War Cabinet and the Paris Peace Conference, as well as in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles (McNaught 19). Canadian confidence was further bolstered by Canada's economic growth.

[3] During the 1920s, these cultural nationalists came together to create organizations such as the Canadian Authors Association, the Canadian League and the Canadian Historical Association. It was also during this period that the Canadian Forum, the Canadian Bookman, the Canadian Magazine and the Dalhousie Review were established. See Vipond, "Network" 34-42.

Toronto painters were at the right time and place to capitalize on this nationalist upsurge:

> They had just the right blend of idealism, crusade, lyricism, audacious enterprise, and intellectual and economic independence necessary to make the movement the success it was. At the time of the Group's ascendancy, the ties of European cultural dependency were responding to the pressure of Canadian requirements; the sap was rising with the awareness of our intellectual growth. (8)

Despite this seemingly sympathetic environment, the group's battle for public acceptance was uphill. Although far from silent during the war, at its end the artists remained relatively unknown outside Toronto art circles. Throughout World War One, the painters promoted themselves and their art through the press and through exhibitions such as the annual Ontario Society of Artists show. Although their activities received coverage in The Rebel, Saturday Night and various Toronto newspapers, the total readership of these publications was comparatively small. During the 1920s, the Toronto-based group attempted to remedy this situation by launching a well-orchestrated crusade designed to appeal to the newly-emergent patriotism of its intended audience. This audience included not only English Canada's artistic, intellectual and business elite but also the general public. The painters wanted to be seen as part of a national movement, not just as a Toronto rebellion.

Throughout the 1920s, the painters aggressively campaigned through exhibitions and the media for the establishment and acceptance of a national art based on indigenous

subjects and techniques. In their artistic statements, the group repeatedly intoned that the progress of a nation depended upon on its art. The artists held that

> art is what makes a nation articulate, not painting alone, but literature, drama, music, sculpture and architecture and every great nation must create these things for itself. Art is the voice of a nation speaking though time.
>
> (Jackson qtd in McLeish 92-3)

The group's goal was to raise art consciousness and, by so doing, improve conditions for artists in Canada. The success of the Canadian art movement would, the Toronto group hoped, "free artists all over Canada, to make it possible for them to see and paint the Canadian scene in its own terms and in their own way" (Harris, "Group" 38). The painters' motives, however, were not completely altruistic. As Dennis Reid has pointed out, the painters were determined during this period "to gain acceptance of [their] view of Canada as a suitable, indeed the essential, subject for the progressive development of an advanced plastic idiom" (Group 13).[4] In order to accomplish this, the artists began to accentuate in their articles and exhibition catalogues the "Canadianness" of their subject matter, technique and ideas rather than the "modernism" of their work.

As shown in Chapter 1, the supposed "modernism" of the group's art drew both praise and extreme censure from their reviewers. For example, Augustus Bridle on

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[4] According to Charles Hill, the Group's program was very ambitious: the Group intended "to develop an unacademic, Canadian art in which the nation could take pride and which would be materially supported by collectors, to show Canadians that art permeated all aspects of their lives, and to reform the education system so it would train designers and artisans for employment in industries that would manufacture distinctively Canadian products, generating economic and social benefits for the whole society" (Group 5). By the end of the 1920s, the Group was largely successful in achieving these goals. As internationally and nationally recognized artists as well as educators, the Group's vision of the Canadian landscape became the vision of Canada.

reviewing the 1912 Ontario Society of Arts Exhibition (O.S.A.) proclaimed the group's work "modern and a note of great joy" ("Season" 7). In his 1919 review of the O.S.A. show, Peter Donovan

> thought it was a very good show--full of modernity and hit-em-in the-eyeness, so to speak. Of course, some of it was rather advanced--these modern chaps always keep about three jumps ahead of our comprehension--but we like their daring and enterprise. ("Connosoor" 5)

The majority of Canadian critics, however, derided the "daring and enterprise" lauded by Donovan and Bridle. As Charles Hill has pointed out, conservative critics like Hector Charlesworth held the view that "Post-Impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism were the result of an exaggerated individualism and lack of discipline and respect for tradition, combined with a keen sense of publicity and commercialism" (57). During World War One, some Canadian writers went so far as to associate the ideas and art of modernism with the destruction and terror of the War (Hill, Seven 67). Even the usually moderate Bridle's comments during this period vehemently denounced the tenets of modernism: "Modern art as exemplified most successfully in Germany was but one outcropping of the conditions that brought about the war" (qtd. in Hill, Seven 67). Hill notes that during the 1920s the painters and their supporters, especially the National Gallery, "took pains to distance the Canadian manifestations of modernism from the 'decadence' or 'immorality' of its European expressions" (Seven, 29). In his 1919 Canadian Forum article "Tom Thomson and Others," critic Barker Fairley, for example, drew attention to the efforts of the "native movement in Canadian art" but took care to emphasize that the art of these painters "is much less abstract than modern English movements...and, generally speaking,

is worthy of better support than it has yet had" (247). National Gallery director Eric Brown also attempted to distance the art of the group from its European counterparts:

> When we begin to distort the human figure, a tree, a landscape or anything else, the result is degeneration, and that is not art. In Canada the new art is coming to life in an extraordinary sane and beautiful way. There has not been the slightest attempt at degeneracy. ("Canadian Art" 15)

The group and its supporters were selling a "clean, national modernism" (Hill, Seven 29). In the words of Lawren Harris, the painters wanted Canadians to see that

> the artists were not concerned with art movements as such but with interpreting the country to the people. The whole endeavor functioned as an interplay between the artists and the country. The way in which the sketches and paintings were made, the way the artists explored, camped, and lived, were strictly in the spirit of the country and its people. ("Group" 38)

In articles and catalogues, the artists repeatedly appealed to the nationalism of their audience by promoting their art as the true expression of Canada and its people.

The Canadian public was not easily won over. In its battle for public acknowledgment, the group had also to contend with what they perceived as a Canadian "inferiority complex." Canadians, wrote Lawren Harris,

> cannot credit the idea that any of our own people are creatively the equal of creative individuals anywhere on earth. We have not yet developed a standard of our own in the arts - our creative values. This has led us to bring in individuals from outside the country to do the things we should do for ourselves. Such a procedure dries up our own creative springs. ("Canada" 7)

The artists felt that they had to prove to Canadians that their country possessed a distinctive body of art, and that this cultural production was established and internationally recognized.

One way of solving this problem was to connect group activities with high-profile and critically applauded events. When, in October 1919, the Canadian War Memorials Exhibition garnered both national and international press, the group used the opportunity to publicize the quality and modernity of Canadian art. In this exhibition, argued Arthur Lismer, the "value of modern art, and of academic tradition here have an opportunity of demonstrating their respective claims" ("Memorials" 40). In his Rebel article, "The Canadian War Memorials," he dismissed the "polite performance" of the "academic painter of conservative ideas," who with "argus-eyed mediocrity" painted "detail without fervor - incident without intensity" (40). He then described the modern offerings of British artists Paul Nash and Wyndham Lewis and of Canadians A.Y. Jackson and Frederick Varley, as "dynamic, vivid record[s] of actuality' (40-41).[5] Lismer's views on the exhibition were not shared by the majority of Canadian critics, who responded less than enthusiastically to the Vorticist offerings of Nash, Lewis and other British radicals. A reviewer for the Toronto Globe, for example, expressed the hope that "Canada would not have to provide a permanent home for such rubbish" (qtd. in Tippett, War 90). Far from being dissuaded by these reviews, Lismer and his associates hoped that the collection, especially the Canadian portion, would "influence contemporary art in

[5] In the section on Jackson, Lismer emphasized the significance of Jackson's pre-war work and its influence on his later paintings: "His experience of painting the rugged north country of Canada has stood him in good stead in presenting the pitiful, broken streaks of fields and cities of Northern France" ("Memorials" 42).

Canada" ("War" 78).[6] Modern and vibrant, these paintings were "justification of those who have had faith in the future of Canadian art" ("War" 78). The group's critics, however, did not agree. Arrogant yet defensive, the group's articles in the Rebel and in other publications riled its detractors, who opposed the technique, style, subject matter and, most of all, the militant program that it applied to its work. In an unsigned review in the May 17, 1919 Saturday Night, a critic wrote: "These young men are not only anxious to see truth, but to see it differently from others. They do not choose to let their work stand on its merits, but prepare the spectator for the worst..." ("Paint-Etchers" 3).[7] Throughout the 1920s, the ultra conservative magazine Saturday Night published similar denunciations of the group's nationalist pretensions and modernist works. These articles and reviews were often written by one of the group's most vocal opponents, Hector Charlesworth, who preferred the pastoral paintings of the "poetic" school of landscape artists to the wilderness paintings of these "young iconoclasts" and "abandoned colour splashers" ("Impressions" 6). Charlesworth abhorred the painters' modernist notions, especially their glorification of the wild and barren North. According to Charlesworth, the group consisted entirely of "painters [who elect] to present in exaggerated terms the most sinister aspects of the Canadian wilds, and [who have] steadily campaigned against all painters of more suave and poetic impulse" (Charlesworth qtd. in Walton, "Beauty"

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[6] In "The Canadian War Memorials, " Lismer writes of the original plan to house the War Memorial collection in its own building in Ottawa (42). Lismer proposed that the collection be located in Toronto, "a more central, more appreciative--in an artistic sense--city than Ottawa" (42). This, however, was not to be. The British portion of the War Records was returned to England. The Canadian portion remained largely hidden until 1926, when the paintings were exhibited at the Art Gallery of Toronto (Hill 72-73).

[7] This critic was responding to the group's claim that its art was "too often...ridiculed by the ignorant and criticized adversely by an unsympathetic narrowness of mind, as though it had no traceable connection with Nature" (qtd. in Larisey 79). Highly confrontational remarks like this appeared frequently during the 1920s in the group's exhibition catalogues and articles.

98). Paul Walton notes that Charlesworth's "preference was for the delights of the softer, more 'feminine' aspect of nature in a cultivated state" ("Beauty" 100). The critic greatly favored the moody atmospheric landscapes of his friend Carl Ahrens to the bold wilderness featured in the group's paintings.

Such opposition did not dissuade the members of the group, all of whom were committed to "express, in paint, the spirit of the country," thereby creating National Art (Jackson, Country 54). By late 1919, the painters were organizing themselves behind a united front; they were becoming a "school".[8] Vipond sees the establishment of the Group of Seven as a "political act":

> Abandoning individual isolation and becoming a "group" may not have helped the artists to paint Canada better, but it did enable them to speak out more powerfully in the battle of the Canadian art world, and to transmit their nationalist vision to a wider audience. ("Network" 48)

In April of 1920, the Group of Seven was established, with Jackson, Harris, MacDonald, Lismer, Varley, Johnston and Carmichael as its members.[9] Its first exhibition under this rubric was held at the Art Gallery of Toronto between May 7 and 27, 1920. The show consisted of one hundred and forty works by the Group and seven paintings by invited

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[8] Had it not been for the war, the Group of Seven would probably have been established in 1914 and would have included Tom Thomson. The Group of Seven declared its formation with its first exhibition in the spring of 1920.

[9] The Group of Seven was not the first avant-garde group to choose a numerical name. In late nineteenth century Europe, the German Vereinigung, or Gruppe, der XI and the Belgian group, Les XX, were formed (Larisey 43). In America, The Ten came together to protest America patronage of European works. They were joined in 1908 by The Eight, thus escalating the patronage protest (Appelhof 46). Significantly, the Eight were responsible for organizing the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, also known as the "Armory Show." This was the first North American exhibition of modernist European and American art. By choosing a name similar to that of other nonconformist landscape movements, the Group of Seven linked itself to various international modernist rebellions.

contributors Randolph Hewton, Robert Pilot and Albert Robinson. This exhibition, writes Charles Comfort, "opened up a totally new and expansive area of development" for Canadian art:

> The first impact of the exhibition was one of burgeoning colour. The second was the dynamic, almost ruthless, energy employed in the use of oil paint. The most important was the definitive shift in the nature of subject matter; baskets of kittens and still life paintings of dead game were gone. In their place appeared the vigorous, bountiful challenge of the little-known wilderness of the north, an unconquered territory of unexplored, unclaimed natural treasure that had suddenly and prophetically gained the attention of this group of rebellious young men...Nothing like it had been seen in Canada before and nothing with the same impact would be seen until Alfred Pellan's exhibition in 1941. (2-3)

A catalogue accompanied the exhibition, and the foreword, apparently written by Harris, stressed the Group's nationalist intentions and chastised those averse to Canadian art. In the foreword, the Group of Seven claim that their "distinctive and vital" art would meet with "ridicule, abuse or indifference," but plead for the attentions of "a very small group of intelligent individuals" who would realize that "the greatness of a country depends upon three things: 'its Words, its Deeds, and its Art'" (qtd. in Mellen 216). According to the Group, these enlightened individuals would recognize "that Art is an essential quality in human existence" and would "welcome and support any form of Art expression that sincerely interprets the spirit of a nation's growth" (qtd. in Mellen 216).

Realizing that Canadian art would falter without an audience, the Group encouraged public response: "The artists invite adverse criticism. Indifference is the greatest evil they have to contend with" (qtd. in Mellon 216). Although in later years the members of the Group claimed that they had been scorned by the press, most of the reviews of the 1920 show in fact praise the Seven's originality, and the usually vocal Hector Charlesworth remained silent throughout the entire affair.[10] In his Canadian Courier exhibition review "Are These New-Canadian Painters Crazy?", Augustus Bridle, for example, praises enthusiastically the "work of men who act on the belief that Canada has a colour scheme and subject interest entirely her own" (6). The artists' efforts were also strongly supported by the National Gallery, which not only purchased works from the show but included various pieces in a travelling exhibition in the United States. By sending the works to the United States, the Group and the National Gallery attempted to cull support for the Canadian art movement. The critical success of the international tour would, hopefully, bring recognition at home. Dennis Reid notes that the National Gallery and the Group also organized over forty separate exhibitions held throughout Canada between 1920 and 1922 (Group 168). Through its Canadian tours, the Group attempted to create a national market for its art.[11]

The Canadian Forum, formerly The Rebel, also emerged during this period as an

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[10] All of the Group members perpetuated this myth. For example, in his autobiography A Painter's Country, A.Y. Jackson writes: "There was plenty of adverse criticism, little of it intelligent" (52). Lawren Harris writes that the Group "were attacked from all sides. Whole pages in the newspapers and periodicals were devoted to it. Such a display of anger, outrage, and cheap wit had never occurred in Canada before" (Harris, "Group" 37). Peter Mellen suggests that the Group wished to cultivate "the image of themselves as valiant heroes overcoming the ignorant philistines" (Group 99).

[11] This determination to be a "national movement" would later lead the Group to expand its sketching ground to include Quebec, the Maritimes, the Rocky Mountains, and the Arctic.

outspoken ally of the Group and its program. Founded in 1920, the Forum, unlike its university-oriented predecessor, concerned itself with issues of national and international consequence. Its first editorial included a statement to the effect that: "Real independence is not the product of tariffs and treaties. It is a spiritual thing. No country has reached its full stature, which makes its goods at home, but not its faith and its philosophy." In particular, the periodical was committed to "trace and value those developments of art and letters which are distinctively Canadian" ("Editorial" 3). In the 1920s, the Forum would provide a meeting ground for the progressive elements in Canadian culture.

To the editors of the Forum, the Group of Seven's modern landscapes, in particular, captured the new nationalistic Canadian spirit: Barker Fairley said that "They represent the furthest point in the nation's cultural development..." ("Harris" 275). Already familiar with the painters' ideas from articles in The Rebel, the Forum reaffirmed its support for the Group's aims by regularly printing their articles, poems, art and exhibition reviews. Margaret Davidson concludes that "a curious relationship of interdependence" evolved between the Group and the Canadian Forum. The Seven, contends Davidson, helped "to shape the format of the periodical" through their articles, illustrations, and through the inclusion of MacDonald and Harris on the publication's board. The Forum, in turn, "aided the Group through both its coverage and its criticism of the artists" (13-4). With the advent of the Canadian Forum, another voice was expressing its disgust at the widespread indifference to the Canadian arts. Forum editor Barker Fairley, in particular, was sharply critical of the state of criticism in Canada. In the December 1921 Forum article "Artists and Authors," Fairley derided the low critical standards of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art and the Canadian Authors Association. According to Fairley,

the Academy and the C.A.A. were both guilty of being "tolerant to the point of being nondescript," and Canadian literature and art "need[ed] the same thing, without which they cannot thrive -- a background of critical appreciation on the part of the public" (462-3). According to Fairley, the Canadian public was also at fault; Fairley writes that Canadians "have become over-conscious of our literature by lowering our standards till we find everything good which we readily understand. Being still under-conscious of our art we find everything bad which we do not readily understand ("Artists" 462). In another Forum essay, Fairley addresses the pitiful state of Canadian criticism in the 1920s:

> It would seem as if this art which Canada is producing is not yet considered a matter for expert or even for considered opinion and the average press report is, with here and there a welcome exception, written by one who quite patently has no particular desire for the job and has nothing to contribute to the subject. This sort of thing is harmful and cannot last for many more years.
>
> ("Harris" 275)

For the painters, their long-standing complaint about the low standard of art criticism in Canada and the general neglect of Canadian art by critic, patron and members of the public was finally answered.

Although fortified by the stalwart support of the National Gallery and the Canadian Forum, the members of the Group of Seven were aware that they were "not loved very much by their conferes [*sic*]," and that "it would only be a matter of time before the opposition takes a definite form" (Jackson qtd. in Reid 167). Fully expecting--and indeed desiring--a barrage of negative criticism, the Group composed a defensive foreword to its

1921 exhibition catalogue:[12]

> These pictures have all been executed in Canada during the past year. They express the Canadian experience, and appeal to that experience in the onlooker. These are still pioneer days for artists and after the fashion of pioneers we believe wholeheartedly in the land. Some day we think that the land will return the compliment and believe in the artists; not as a nuisance or a luxury but as a real civilizing factor in the national life. (qtd. in Mellen 217)

The foreword to their 1922 catalogue was just as aggressive. At this time, the Group attempted to diffuse any opposition to its work by aggressively defending its actions and by presenting the members as rebels with a national cause:

> New material demands new methods, and new methods fling a challenge to old conventions...The thought of to-day cannot be expressed by the language of yesterday...Artistic expression is a spirit, not a method; a pursuit, not a settled goal; an instinct, not a body of rules. In the midst of discovery and progress, of vast horizons and a beckoning future, Art must take to the road and risk all for the glory of a great adventure. (qtd. in Mellon 217)

Despite suggestions to the contrary by the Group, exhibitions of 1921 and 1922 were as popular and as lacking in controversy as had been the 1920 show. The 1921

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[12] Frank Johnston left the Group shortly after its first group show in 1920. Bolstered by critical praise, Johnston went on to mount highly successful solo exhibitions, much to the envy of his former friends in the Group (Mellen 136). Johnston also took pains to disassociate himself from the Group and its activities. He says of himself that he "was never a member of the school of seven in the sense of taking a formal oath of allegiance to an art brotherhood or of subscribing to rigid doctrines...I shared their enthusiasm for new ideas and new methods...[and] used to exhibit along with them" (qtd. in Mellen 136). Charles Hill argues that Johnston's resignation from the group was perhaps due in part to his fears of the "negative effect from his association with the Group" (97).

exhibition had 2,500 visitors and, like the shows of 1920 and 1922, resulted in the sale of several works. The media coverage had also improved, and the resulting reviews were intelligent and insightful in ways that the Group had long anticipated.

Despite Canadian and international tours, however, the Seven failed to draw widespread national attention to their cause.[13] Augustus Bridle offered the artists constructive criticism when he reminded them that

> people in general are conservative. No group can hold out absolutely against that. No new art can thrive without public recognition. It cannot live just upon the hostility of traditional painters. ("Pictures" n. pag)

Although the Group of Seven's aims were clearly presented in its catalogue forewords and magazine articles, the technique and style of the works themselves continued to challenge a bewildered audience, which was obviously accustomed to more conservative renderings of the Canadian landscape. Nevertheless during the 1920s, the Group of Seven moved beyond descriptive naturalism and began to produce less representational and more expressionistic works. Although the painters claimed that their respective techniques and styles were inspired by the land, and that they had divested themselves completely of foreign influence, their use of colour, form and expression was undoubtedly influenced by Impressionism, Art Nouveau, Symbolism, Fauvism and other Post-Impressionist movements. Peter Mellen, among others, contends that the members of the Group of Seven "incorporated elements from Impressionism, Post-Impressionism

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[13] The market for Group of Seven's work remained relatively small. MacDonald, Jackson, Lismer and Varley supplemented their income by teaching at the Ontario College of Art. Carmichael continued to work in the graphic arts. Financially independent, Harris was the only full-time artist among the Group of Seven.

and Art Nouveau into their individual styles. However, the Group was not influenced by these schools until about thirty years after their inception - at a time when European art was already moving toward abstraction" (Group 190). Yet, argues Charles Hill, "their art was perceived by most Canadians in relation to the work of other Canadians, and in this context their paintings were advanced" (25). Compared to the timid landscapes of Carl Ahrens and Wyly Grier, the Group of Seven's art was bold, bright and startlingly different.

The new direction in Harris's art, in particular, was seen as too avant-garde by some reviewers. Harris's work from the early 1920s displays a growing disenchantment with representationalism. In 1921, Harris traveled with Jackson to the north shore of Lake Superior. Profoundly stimulated by the starkness of this new environment, Harris produced strictly controlled landscapes, composed of simple forms and a dramatically limited palette. Harris's painterly aesthetic was directed in part by the mystical tenets of theosophy.[14] For visual artists, theosophy offered a means of portraying the transcendental in art. It placed great importance on the role of the artist as seer, whose work offers glimpses of "the essential order, the dynamic harmony, the ultimate beauty, that we are all in search of, whether consciously or not" (Harris 147). In his Lake

[14] Theosophy, an offshoot of transcendentalism, was "predicated on the centrality of intuition as an inclusive but not exclusive tool, and on an individual, emotive approach to divinity. This divinity was immanent, indwelling, permanently pervading the universe" (Davis, Ecstasy xvi). According to theosophical doctrine, a northern "spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic renaissance" was to take place in North America, and Canada, because of its northern location, would be accorded a special role (Nasgaard 7). This northern emphasis appealed to the Group of Seven's land-based nationalism. Although Lismer, Carmichael, and MacDonald were attracted to theosophical ideas, only Harris was an official member of the Theosophical Society. All of the Group members, however, shared a desire to give visual form to spiritual values. The Group of Seven drew support for their spiritual and nationalist ideas from theosophy, transcendentalism, the European Symbolists – the art of the Scandinavian symbolists in particular -- and Irish nationalist A.E. (George Russell).

Superior works and in his later paintings of the Rocky Mountains and of the Arctic, Harris utilized "elements of the North in depth, in three dimensions, giving fuller meaning, a more real sense of the presence of the informing spirit" (Harris qtd. in Larisey 112). This "informing spirit" was not present in the Lake Superior works of Harris's fellow Group members. Peter Larisey argues that Harris's associates "were responding in more relaxed, naturalistic ways than Harris to the sites, revealing their personal attitudes in their brushstroke, colour and composition" (98). Harris, on the other hand,

> through simplifications of form and composition, and a growing smoothness of brushstroke...was creating paintings that expressed his belief that art should strive to be impersonal, that traces of the individual artist should disappear in deference to the creative spirit that inspired him and to the universal statement that painting should be making. (Larisey 98)

Critics and admirers alike--even Barker Fairley--began to take exception to the development of Harris's style and its variance from those of fellow Group members. In his 1921 Canadian Forum article, "Some Canadian Painters: Lawren Harris," Fairley, discussing Harris's Island -MacCallum Lake (Figure 3), declared that the picture's point of view was "dictated by the intellect and directed towards the curious and the occult" (276). Compared to his contemporaries, Fairley concluded, Harris "is not a landscape artist at all: he does not penetrate nature" (278). Augustus Bridle was also troubled by Harris's "frankly neurotic studies of colour and form, phantom trees that never grew, distorted nightmares of deadwood and much else" ("Art Cult" n.pag). The works of other Group members appeared tame when compared to the artistic advancements of Harris.

Objections to Harris's semi-abstract landscapes, however, were overshadowed by the controversy that surrounded the Group of Seven between 1922 and 1924. The uproar began in late 1922 when Charlesworth published "The National Gallery a National Reproach" in the December 9 Saturday Night. Charlesworth claimed to be shocked and dismayed by the National Gallery's neglect of many "worthy" artists in favour of the "experimental" Group of Seven ("National Gallery" 3). In the Mail and Empire, Sir Edmund Walker countered Charlesworth's claims and defended the Gallery's acquisition policy and its director Eric Brown. Walker also accused Charlesworth of a prejudice against the modernists and argued that the Saturday Night art critic's views were at complete variance with those of international critics ("Letter" 2). To this Charlesworth replied that the "apparent obsession in favor of one school of Canadian painting" was "destroying the individuality of young artists" ("Reply" 2). Unable to remain silent during this heated exchange, A.Y. Jackson accused Charlesworth of being ill-equipped to judge modern art. Sarcastically, Jackson suggested that Charlesworth rearrange the Metropolitan Museum after finishing with the National Gallery: "They have a lot of fake stuff by Cezanne, Rockwell Kent, Prendergast, and other experimental painters which he could shove down in the cellar for them" (Jackson qtd. in McLeish 79). In Jackson's opinion, experimentation was necessary if Canadian art was to advance:

> The modern painters either stimulate, amuse, or cause anger, which perhaps in such a young country is better than to go to sleep so soon. After all, our most extreme work would be considered academic in Europe to-day; our greatest offense is that we work from nature, instead of making pictures like the ones in our auction rooms and in our millionaires' houses. (qtd. in McLeish 80)

In his defense of modern art, however, Jackson does not address Charlesworth's contention that the National Gallery's preference for one style over another would stifle artistic individualism. Conservatives like Charlesworth feared that the Group of Seven's national art program would induce "all painters to feel, see, think and paint in exactly the same way" (qtd. in Walton, "Beauty" 95). According to Paul Walton, because Charlesworth felt that the "National Gallery was promoting the work of believers in a national art effort to the exclusion of divergent tendencies, he feared that Canadian art would harden into one official style" ("Beauty" 95). Even Group supporters like Augustus Bridle noticed the apparent lack of individuality among the Group of Seven members. In his review of their 1922 exhibition, Bridle felt that "the group are becoming rather more alike" ("Art" n.pag). Arthur Lismer later denied this claim in his 1950 radio broadcast "Canadian Art --An Informal History." According to Lismer, the painters were "different in technique, temperament and achievement. The accusation that we took time off to work on each other's canvasses and that we painted alike is...an extravagant over statement" (2). In spite of Lismer's claims to the contrary, there was a recognizable Group of Seven "style," which would revolutionize and later dominate Canadian art.

Opposition to the Group of Seven and to the National Gallery grew in 1923. In May 1923, it was announced that the National Gallery, not the Royal Canadian Academy, would be responsible for organizing the Canadian art section of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924.[15] Normally in charge of foreign shows, the R.C.A. was furious that control in this area had been wrested from it. The National Gallery invited

[15] For a thorough examination of the Wembley controversy, see Ann Davis, "Wembley" 48-73.

the Academy's president, G. Horne Russell, to be on the jury, but he refused and asked fellow R.C.A. members to boycott the exhibition (Reid 170). It was for this reason, argues Ann Davis, that the Group of Seven, an ally of the National Gallery, became a target for the enmity of the R.C.A.: "Only when the National Gallery, partially through the Seven, began to threaten the power of the Royal Canadian Academy and its supporters, and to challenge their artistic control of Canada, did critics really attack the Seven" ("Wembley" 67). Firmly on the side of the R.C.A. and of traditional painters, Hector Charlesworth publicly announced his support for R.C.A. president Russell. In his Saturday Night article "Canada's Art at Empire Fair," Charlesworth expressed his fear that the Wembley jury would

> make the younger and more freakish schools of landscape predominant in the display, and eliminate the works of the elder and more accomplished craftsmen whose works interpret Canadian life and scenery with a more suave and poetic interpretation than do the violent productions of some of the younger men. (1)

Although paintings by the Group of Seven were included in the show, they in fact made up only a small percentage of the three hundred works chosen. Moreover, all eight members of the jury were Academy members and only two, Arthur Lismer and Randolph Hewton, were clearly associated with the modernist movement (Mellen 104). The fears expressed by the R.C.A. and its supporters appeared unjustified in light of the actual Wembley selection process.

The critical success of the Wembley exhibition, however, further enraged the R.C.A. and Charlesworth. European critics lavishly praised the Canadian portion of the exhibition, especially the bold landscapes of the Group of Seven:

> Emphatic design and bold brush work are characteristic of the Canadian section, and it is here in particular that the art of the Empire is taking a new turn...At any rate, there can be no question that Canada is developing a school of landscape that is strongly racy of the soil. (qtd. in McLeish 82)

Another reviewer proclaimed that "these Canadian landscapes...are the most vivid group of paintings produced since the war - indeed this century" (qtd. in McLeish 82). But in Canada, the controversy continued as advocates and detractors of the new school vented their admiration or their outrage in the press (the dispute between the R.C.A. and the National Gallery would rage in the press until 1933). Dismissing the accolades of the foreign press, Charlesworth resumed his attack on the "cult of ugliness":

> Not only do they reject beauty themselves but they urge that all painters who feel its existence be cast aside and their pictures excluded so far as possible from public galleries as 'insincere' and 'unrepresentative' from the standpoint of nationality. And the worst of it is they seem to be succeeding to some extent in spreading the belief that Canada is a land of ugliness; and its art a reflection of a crude and tasteless native intelligence. ("Paint-Slingers" 1)

Charlsworth's disgust of the Toronto painters was not shared by British critics or foreign galleries. In November 1924, the Group's international approval was confirmed when London's Tate Gallery purchased a work by Jackson. As usual, British approval procured Canadian acceptance. Showered with praise in the foreign press, the Group of Seven began to receive wider coverage at home. Despite a barrage of negative criticism from Charlesworth and other conservatives, the Canadian press and public began to look more favorably on the creative efforts of the Group.

The critical victory of the Group of Seven at the 1924 Wembley exhibition, and again in 1925, dramatically raised the profile of visual art in Canada. Through their participation in these events, the artists showed their fellow Canadians that Canadian art could hold its own, even flourish, on the international stage. The artists also demonstrated that art could be vital, original, yet distinctively Canadian. "The Group's campaign to shake off the shackles of colonialist thinking, to validate Canada aesthetically and culturally, and to further a national expression," contends Charles C. Hill, "represented Canadians' first steps towards making an international contribution in their own terms" (201). The Group of Seven's success in creating a progressive Canadian art expression would inspire artists in other disciplines to mount their own battles against conservative and colonial attitudes. The Seven's program became a model of how the tenets and techniques of international modernism could be adapted to suit Canadian needs.

CHAPTER THREE

Poetic Transformations in the 1920s: A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott

During the 1920s, there was a concerted effort on the part of Canadian writers to create a literature which would affirm Canadian's sense of nationhood. Although in agreement that Canada desperately required its own culture, the Canadian literary community was divided on what Canadian literature ought to be. For the majority of Canadian writers, critics and readers, the future of Canadian literature, especially poetry, lay in Canada's past. These literary conservatives championed art which mirrored its European and Canadian predecessors rather than that which divorced itself from Canada's history as a colony. In the early Twenties, the late romantic-Victorian tradition flourished in an overwhelming number of Canadian versifiers producing countless mediocre imitations of what F.R. Scott termed the "milk-and-honey late-Victorian God-and-Maple-Tree romanticism of Bliss Carman" and other Confederation poets ("New Poems-II" 339). The conservatism, traditionalism and sentimental nationalism of the literary establishment, however, did not go unchallenged. Led by the Canadian Forum, a growing number of poets and critics voiced a disgust with prevailing literary standards. Although these progressives shared the traditionalists' concern to create a distinctive Canadian culture, they wanted Canadian arts and letters to reflect twentieth-century, not Victorian, issues and aesthetics. According to A.J.M. Smith and F.R Scott,

> Canadian literature - if there be such a thing - is overburdened with dead traditions and outworn forms. We are a pitiful extension of the Victorians. If a living, native literature is to arise we must discover our own souls, and before

> that can happen a mass of debris has to be removed. No better helpers in this task can be found than amongst our contemporaries in England and America. ("Editorial" 41)

In poetry as in painting, there was a small but effective movement among artists and critics to introduce modernism to Canadian literature.[1] "Since there was no native model for a kind of poetry that might fit the Canadian experience," notes George Woodcock, "these writers tended paradoxically to become international in order to express their sense of nationality" ("Introduction" xviii). Like the Group of Seven, this poetic avant-garde adopted, then adapted, the new ideas and techniques of international modernism to suit Canadian requirements. Modernism, however, represented more than just a formal tool for these poets; it reflected and embodied the *zeitgeist* of the early twentieth century. In Canada, this new spirit was best exemplified by the Group of Seven, whose aggressive campaign to advance Canadian art inspired a new generation of Canadian artists to embrace modernism. Dramatist Herman Voaden writes:

> The artists, notably the Group of Seven, were among the first to strike out boldly. They carved new materials out of our landscape and evolved a different technique to handle them. It is probably true that the painters are the heralds always of wider and more far-reaching artistic developments. They

[1] Canadian literary modernism had made its first, tentative appearance in 1914 with the publication of Arthur Stringer's Open Water, a work significant not for the poems it contains, but for its manifesto-like preface. Dudek and Gnarowski have noted that Stringer's plea for free verse is particularly striking "if we recall that in 1914 free verse was still in the experimental stage, and that the famous notes of F.S. Flint and the strictures of Ezra Pound on imagisme and free verse had appeared less than a year before this in the March 1913 issue of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse (Chicago)" (3).' Stringer's early plea for free verse went unnoticed until the 1920s, when a concerted effort was made by the Canadian Forum and a small group of poets led by Smith and Scott to dislodge the primacy of traditional poetics in Canada.

make us artistically aware of the new scene. (106)

Although the Group of Seven exhibited infrequently outside Toronto during the 1920s, their works and ideas were well known among the country's artistic and intellectual communities via ample media coverage and through articles by and on the painters in the Canadian Forum.[2] For many young progressives, in particular Smith and Scott, the Group of Seven's campaign influenced their own artistic battle to modernize Canadian culture.[3]

Throughout the 1920s, the battle between the progressives and the traditionalists raged in publications such as the Canadian Bookman and the Canadian Forum. The Canadian Bookman (1919-1939), for the most part, represented the views of the conservative majority as embodied by the newly established Canadian Authors Association (C.A.A.).[4] The C.A.A. was founded in March 1921 with a mandate to reform copyright laws and to protect the interests of Canadian authors. These objectives were, however, usurped soon after as the organization decided to foster national pride through Canadian literature.

Although the C.A.A. desired a viable Canadian literature, it was unwilling to

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[2] In Montreal, for example, members of "The Group" were greatly interested in the recent developments in Canadian art, politics and literature. This discussion group is examined in greater detail later on in this chapter.

[3] The influence of the Group of Seven is, for example, evident in the plays of Herman Voaden, the art of the Beaver Hall group and in the early nature poetry of Smith and Scott. All feature the same stark "northern" landscape that is found in the Group's paintings. In particular, Smith and Scott's program to introduce poetic modernism in the McGill Fortnightly Review parallels the Group's own often aggressive yet defensive media campaign.

[4] C.A.A. propaganda was first published in the Canadian Bookman and, after 1923, in the association's Author's Bulletin. Although only briefly associated with the C.A.A., the Canadian Bookman has been accused frequently by critics of identical crimes -- namely, boosterism and an uncritical approach to Canadian literature. From 1923 onward, however, the Bookman, with only occasional lapses, followed the Canadian Forum in providing balanced critical discussions of Canadian literature and advocating higher critical standards (Mulvihill 56).

sacrifice established literary values or authors in order to achieve this goal. The association and its supporters upheld conservative social values and feared that modernism, especially in its American form, would taint Canadian literature. Marlene Shore says that these traditionalists

> argued that American popular culture was making Canada less British, and was encouraging vice and immorality. They also condemned modernist literature...not only for its open treatment of sexuality but because its cynicisms and social criticism conflicted with their belief that art should be the handmaiden of society, not its censor. (31-2)

In a stance similar to that of Group of Seven critic Hector Charlesworth, the C.A.A. and its supporters condemned the "bolshevism" of modern poetry (Irving 63).[5] In the April 1925 Canadian Bookman, Crawford Irving declares that "the new school is not only breaking away from the old poetic laws and conventions," it has also "got out of touch with Nature" (64). Quoting Alfred Noyes, Irving argues that "poets in their desire for newness should let Nature be their guide. Nature abhors ugliness" (64). Irving vastly prefers the "beauty that Keats and Shelly worshipped" to the "stark realism" of the new poetry (64). He was not alone in his views; conservative and romantic in attitude, the literary establishment revered the nature poetry of late nineteenth-century Canadian poets

[5] Not all C.A.A. members held the stifling and traditional views of Crawford Irving and his supporters. In his January 1919 Canadian Bookman article "Rhymes With and Without Reason," John Murray Gibbon carries out an informed discussion of the merits and faults of free verse. Gibbon argues that for Canadian literature to enter the twentieth century, its colonial and derivative cloak must be shed: "It would be a great thing for Canadian literature if it kept pace with the times instead of in the drawing rooms of the early Victorians...The voice of today is the voice of the people, not the voice of a special caste" (20). What makes this plea for modern forms and poetry so striking is that Gibbon was President of the C.A.A. from 1922-23.

Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, Charles G.D. Roberts and D.C. Scott. Mary Vipond concludes that in the 1920s, the C.A.A. "was not simply trying to make Canadians aware of their literary past. It was trying to keep that past by adulation and imitation" ("Consciousness" 367-68). The C.A.A., for example, organized lecture tours for "our younger Canadian poets" Charles G.D. Roberts and Bliss Carman (Djwa, Scott 90).[6] Thanks to the efforts of the C.A.A., the "golden age" in Canadian literature continued, even flourished, through the profusion of "Victorian, New-Victorian, Quasi-Victorian, and Pseudo-Victorian" verse (Hayakawa qtd. in Kennedy 100).

In painting, the Group of Seven adopted a nationalist stance to gain acceptance for their progressive art: the opposite was true in literature. The C.A.A. and the conservative majority of writers used nationalism as a means of promoting their own work and maintaining the status quo. The C.A.A.'s Canadian Book Week, for example, was an annual event with the dual purpose of promoting Canadian literature and convincing the public to buy and read Canadian literature. In this event and other promotional ventures, the C.A.A.'s paramount objectives were to make Canadians aware of their national literature and to convince them to read it. In its promotion of books, however, the organization appeared too willing to endorse any work as long as the author was Canadian. Although the C.A.A. maintained that it employed critical standards when judging Canadian literature, these so-called "standards" were never clearly defined. B.K. Sandwell, editor of the Bookman from 1919-1922, sums up the C.A.A.'s critical stance in

[6] Despite the advancing ages of these poets--in 1920 Roberts was 60 and Carman 59--the C.A.A. promoted Roberts and Carman as part of the new generation of Canadian poets. The C.A.A. even bestowed the title of unofficial Poet of Laureate of Canada on Carman in 1921.

the following manner:

> To this new interest in ideas, and in the books which convey them, there is added in the case of Canadians a new national self-consciousness, a new demand that ideas be judged not by the standards of any other nation, however closely allied by kinship or economic circumstance, but by the standards of our own country; a new output of ideas by Canadians themselves, and a new belief in those ideas as being probably the best explanation of Canadian requirements, the best solution of Canadian problems and a consequent new demand for vehicles of criticism and discussion concerning this purely Canadian output.
>
> ("The New Era" iii)

According to Sandwell, critical standards, Canadian or otherwise, were secondary to the promotion of Canadian books and authors. In a 1921 letter to the Canadian Forum, Sandwell defends the program of the C.A.A.: "we are strongly of the opinion that the Canadian author does not receive from the Canadian public the attention which, in proportion to his merits, he deserves." The C.A.A., argues Sandwell, wants the Canadian public "to give enlightened interest, and ultimately intelligent and competent judgment." But first, "we begin by trying to arrest its attention. With the help of vigorous literary criticism (in which the Canadian Forum will bear a hand), the rest will follow" (459-60). In the C.A.A.'s view, the selling of Canadian literature took precedence over sound criticism.

The nationalist stance of the C.A.A. contrasted greatly with the progressive form of

nationalism advocated by The Canadian Forum.[7] Although, like the C.A.A., it wished to create a national culture, the Forum and its contributors did not advocate doing so at the expense of quality and progress.[8] During the 1920s, the Forum devoted considerable energy to criticizing the C.A.A.'s commercialism, as well as its endorsement of what Barker Fairley has called a "low standard of literary merit which is comfortable to every Canadian who possesses a fountain pen" ("Artists" 462). On the pages of the Forum, collaborators like Fairley often embroiled themselves in the passionate debate on the future of Canadian literature, especially that of poetry. For example, in a March 1921 Forum article entitled "Canadian Poetry," Huntley K. Gordon criticizes the elements of "false Canadianism" and unreality in the work of celebrated poets like Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, D.C. Scott and Marjorie Pickthall (179). Gordon argues that the subjective verses of these poets "fail to touch the reader home. It is in this insincere, this unconvincing expression that one must seek the fault that destroys our claim to a distinctive poetry" (178). In Gordon's view, English Canada had failed to produce a unique literature, and would continue to fail so unless Canadian poets learned to

> shun derivative expression and sentiment as we would the devil and follow our characteristic bent as eagerly as we are learning to do in other spheres. We

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[7] In the chapter entitled "The Precursors (1910-1925)" of their book The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada, Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski limit their discussion of the debate over modernism and free verse that took place in Canada in the 1920s to the ideas of early modernist champions Arthur Stringer, F.O. Call and J.M. Gibbon. The two authors later argue that "a more fully-developed program of renovation in poetry, along modernist lines, appeared in Canada in the late 1920s and early thirties" (24). However, I believe that this campaign against the "old guard" and shoddy literary criticism began in earnest in 1920 with the inception of The Canadian Forum.

[8] As noted in Chapter Two, the Canadian Forum was one of the first supporters of the Group of Seven. The Forum firmly but objectively supported the efforts of those who, like the Group of Seven, facilitated rather than impeded the progress of Canadian culture.

> have our own expressions and names for the features of the countryside...and above all we have a characteristic spirit. We must learn to use and purify them, and develop a native tradition, or die to literature. (180)

Douglas Bush supported Gordon's argument and added that the impoverished state of Canadian letters was the result of the rigid puritanism of both writers and readers ("Plea" 589). In his April 1922 Forum article "A Plea for Original Sin," Bush writes provocatively:

> We are so firmly entrenched behind our rampart of middle-class morality that we are afraid, even in imagination, to look over the top. Such an atmosphere, of course...makes the artistic impulse impossible...One can see no future for Canadian letters until Canadians learn to obey the fine injunction, to 'sin gladly.' ("Plea"590)

Bush's criticism of Canadian morality and art enraged some Forum readers, who objected to his supposed "plea for immorality" ("Sin" 714). In the August 1922 Forum, Bush responded to these complaints by stating that his purpose in writing the article was not to set off "a deadly anarchistic bomb...to shatter morals and release us all for a grand carnival of the senses" ("Sin" 714). Rather his "modest fire-cracker placed under the chairs of the twin Muses of Canadian literature, Sentimentalism and Insipidity," was intended to show that "morality and art in Canada are hand in glove, when they ought to be strangers" ("Sin" 714-715). Bush's exhortation to 'sin gladly' was readily accepted by a number of Canadian poets, all of whom were frustrated by the archaic standards of the literary establishment and were calling for the rehabilitation of Canadian literature. This transition from traditional forms to modernism, however, was a gradual and not always

successful process.

As the 1920s progressed, an increasing number of Canadian poets began to use free verse as an alternative to traditional patterns and rhyme schemes.[9] Nevertheless, the majority of these poems were traditional in theme, attitude and diction. Most poets, it seemed, were unwilling to abandon conventional subjects and language. According to George Woodcock, "a new way of expression had to be found," one that reflected contemporary Canadian experience and reality ("Introduction" 1).[10] It was

> not enough to turn aside from the traditional settings of classic poetry and give recognition to the special character of the Canadian environment, as Roberts and Scott and Lampman had done, if one continued to use the imagery and the diction of another time and place. ("Introduction" 1)

For many artists, the Group of Seven's successful rendering of the Canadian landscape through modernist techniques became a model of how to proceed. E.J. Pratt was one of the first poets to figure the bold, vigorous "northern" aspect of Canadian life in his poetry. His poetry revitalized and, to some extent, modernized Canadian poetry. In

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[9] Even members of the Group of Seven tried their hand at free verse and modern themes. With his volume of Whitmanesque poetry entitled Contrasts: A Book of Verse, published in 1922, Lawren Harris showed himself to be less adept at modern verse than at painting. In January 1923, Forum arts editor Barker Fairley reviewed Harris's work and was clearly unimpressed by the author's free verse attempt to portray the squalor and misery of the urban landscape. Although a keen supporter of Harris's paintings, Fairley dismissed the painter's socially conscious poetic efforts: "Mr. Harris has been betrayed by the appalling laxity of the vers-libre habit, now rife on this continent, into publishing an extremely bad book of verse" ("Poetry" 120).

[10] Woodcock's account of the need for new forms of expression during the 1920s bears a marked similarity to comments made by members of the Group of Seven concerning the colonial nature of Canadian painting. For example, Arthur Lismer wrote: "...if ever this country was to receive its interpretative baptism in paint then older theories and rules, to a great extent, must be discarded and a return made to the simpler forms and distinctive design common before the decay of the painter's craft into an exhibition of skill of the hand...a new idiom was needed and...the Group of Seven...moved the art of landscape painting into a more rhythmic and plastic idiom, more in harmony with the energy and quality of our national character" ("Canadian Art" 177.).

1923, Pratt's first volume of poetry, Newfoundland Verse, was published to great critical and public acclaim. Compared to the "usual fifth-rate, airy, fairy stuff," Pratt's "vigorous, red-blooded verse" struck his readers as original and distinctly North American (qtd. in Pitt 232). Critics like Barker Fairley saw in Pratt's poetry a "primal freshness" and recognized "almost for the first time in Canadian poetry, the existence...of a mental climate which is not Anglo-Canadian, but which truly belongs to the uncivilized world" ("Pratt" 149).

Although he has been hailed as a reformer of Canadian poetry, Pratt's work does not represent a radical departure from traditional poetics. Despite an occasional foray into free verse, the poetry in Newfoundland Verse is conservative in its metrics and its form. Pratt did, however, broaden the range of subject matter and modernize diction by "turning away from wilted, sentimental flower gardens, by overcoming its soft femininity, by restoring its pulse with tonic realism and inebriating fun" (Collin 144). In the imagistic "The Shark," for example, Pratt's speaker uses the imagery of modern industry to describe the shark: with a fin "like a piece of sheet-iron" (4), this tubular, smoke-blue, metallic-eyed animal "stirred not a bubble" (7) as it snaked through the harbor. By likening this sea creature to a machine, the speaker associates the shark with the human world so that, for a moment, the shark appears familiar and unthreatening. As he watches the shark manoeuvre slowly through the water, however, the speaker becomes acquainted with the true nature of this brutal, uncompassionate, "strange fish" (27):

> And as he passed the wharf
>
> He turned,

And snapped at a flat-fish

That was dead and floating.

And I saw the flash of a white throat,

And a double row of white teeth,

And eyes of metallic grey,

Hard and narrow and slit. (13-20).

Influenced by his own experiences in Newfoundland and by contemporary ideas of "northness," Pratt in Newfoundland Verse rejected the picturesque and romantic visions of nature popular among the Victorians in favour of the hard, rugged, northern environment championed by the Group of Seven. As a member of the Arts and Letters Club, Pratt associated with the Group of Seven and was, in fact, on close terms with Frederick Varley, who illustrated Newfoundland Verse. Also, because he was a regular contributor, Pratt was familiar with the Canadian Forum and with its modernist cultural nationalism. Although inspired by these progressive currents, Pratt also infused his portraits of man and nature with a romanticized, nineteenth-century version of evolutionary and geological theory. Sandra Djwa contends that Pratt's "post-Darwinian view of nature and...his stress upon an ethical interpretation of Darwinism" was an outgrowth of the Canadian romantic tradition, which began in 1880 with the Confederation poets (Evolutionary 140).[11] This evolutionary view of nature persisted into the twentieth century, when it was reformulated into the pervasive northern ideology that

[11] According to Djwa, "because the Canadian mythos was the product of a hard, sparsely populated country and because the literary vision of Canadian nature developed after Darwin and after the loss of Sir John Franklin at the North Pole, it was already too late in time to gloss successfully the struggle for survival with the Edenic vision of an Emersonian transcendentalism...As a result, Canadian Romanticism was infused from its inception with overtones of Darwin's nature..." ("Canadian" 47).

promotes Canada and its inhabitants as the "true north, strong and free."

In Pratt's poem "Newfoundland," for instance, a raw and vigorous nature acts as both provider and executioner of the tenacious people who inhabit its rocky shores. Here the tides surge and flow "Not with that dull, unsinewed tread of waters / Held under bonds to move / Around unpeopled shores" (2-4) but

> ...with a lusty stroke of life
> Pounding at stubborn gates,
> That they might run
> Within the sluices of men's hearts. (9-12)

Throughout the poem, Pratt repeatedly emphasizes the essential but violent bond between man and nature: "Red is the sea-kelp on the beach, / Red as the heart's blood" (21-22). Here, as in a Group of Seven painting, Pratt accentuates the northern and often savage aspects of the Canadian environment.

The originality of Pratt's voice and vision in poems like "Newfoundland" appealed to a diverse audience. While traditionalists were drawn to Pratt's romanticism and his use of such conventional forms as the sonnet, modern-minded readers were attracted to the vitality and humour of his verse and to his willingness to experiment with contemporary forms and diction. Djwa believes that readers were attracted to

> the "Canadianism" of Pratt's view of nature...Not only were his poems presented within the same evolutionary framework that had characterized some of the earlier poetry of Roberts, Lampman, Campbell and F.G. Scott, but poems such as "Newfoundland," "The Ice-Floes" and The Roosevelt and the Antinoe described the same landscape - hard, vital, northern - that the Group of

Seven had helped to make dominant by 1925. ("The 1920s" 61)

Although many critics have viewed Newfoundland Verse as a leap forward for Canadian poetry, it was, in the opinion of E.K. Brown, poetry by someone who had "not yet come to grips with himself," the work of an experimentalist who was "continuing to clutch at a tradition although that tradition [was] actually stifling him" (Poetry 132). Despite the unevenness of Newfoundland Verse, this work represents a turning point in Canadian poetry. In the words of Northrop Frye, Pratt "clarified and brought into focus a distinctively Canadian kind of imaginative consciousness" ("Poetry" 86).

While Pratt was infusing new life into traditional forms like the sonnet, the enthusiasm of Raymond Knister and W.W.E. Ross for international modernism led them to investigate the possibilities of free verse. Yet, despite the fact that their work appeared in Canadian Forum and Saturday Night, as well as in American and European literary publications, these modernists generated little response in their native country. The domination of the arts by conservative nationalists left little room for this "new" school of Canadian poetry. Unaware of the accomplishments of modern-minded poets like Knister and Ross, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott, for example, assumed that during the early 1920s there was "no Canadian poetry that was new, intelligent and contemporary and no magazine or journal that would publish such poetry were it to appear" (Smith, "Confessions" 5).[12] Except for the Canadian Forum, large Canadian publications like Saturday Night displayed little interest in the new developments in Canadian or

[12] After dismissing Canadian periodicals, Smith corrects himself and acknowledges the Canadian Forum, "the one exception I should have noted above, a journal which from its inception in 1920 until today has championed the cause of modernism in both poetry and criticism" ("Confessions" 107).

international poetry. According to Dudek and Gnarowski, little magazines, rather than large publications, provide

> the setting where new poetry and new poets [have] their beginning. The key developments of modern poetry in Canada take place on this makeshift stage - usually a very unpretentious, modestly-printed...periodical, edited by beginning writers of no standing and having little relation to the general reading public or the large-circulation media of communication. The little magazine is a form of semi-private publication which aims at public success and eventual victory over whatever is established in literary taste. (203)

The most influential "little" publication to appear during the 1920s was the McGill Fortnightly Review, founded in November 1925.[13] In this journal, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott attempted through criticism and experimentation to promote modernism and to reform Canadian poetry. It was a campaign that had begun a year earlier, when Smith established the McGill Daily Literary Supplement, the Fortnightly's precursor.[14] A four page literary and arts review, the Supplement was edited by Smith and fellow McGill undergraduates A.B. Latham and Otto Klineberg. In a mandate similar to that of the Canadian Forum, Smith promoted the magazine as a vehicle for "new methods of

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[13] Due to its academic orientation and non-literary content, The McGill Fortnightly Review, according to Michael Gnarowski, "was not a little magazine in the strict sense and meaning of the term" (214). Gnarowski defines the little magazine "as a periodical intended to print artistic work which for any one of several reasons is considered unprintable or unacceptable in commercially oriented presses or periodicals" (212). Although the Fortnightly contained "unprintable" articles and poems critiquing orthodoxy or promoting modernism, it retained ties to the literary establishment and McGill University.

[14] Smith had been instrumental in establishing the Supplement. Previously in charge of the McGill Daily's "Dilettante" column, Smith persuaded McGill's Student Council to allow him and his fellow editors to publish a literary supplement to the student newspaper.

criticism and new forms of verse" ("Prospectus" 228). In its inaugural edition on 8 October 1924, Smith's "Prospectus" introduced the Supplement as "a place where those who desire to do so may write freely on questions of taste, however unorthodox their opinions may be" (228).

Smith's own poetic efforts in the Supplement, however, bore only slight resemblance to the new genres of poetry he endorsed on the magazine's pages. In his autobiographical essay "Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist," Smith declared that the Supplement contained his "apprenticeship verse," which was based upon the "new poetry of Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot, Yeats in his middle period, Conrad Aiken, and H.D." (106).[15] As Brian Trehearne points out, Smith's Supplement poems "show him intrigued with the effects of 1920s dandyism, becoming aware of the demands of modern poetry, but still more tempted by beauty..." (261). During the brief existence of the Supplement (1924-1925), Smith had not yet abandoned his nineteenth-century models; Aestheticism and Romanticism continued to influence his work. For example, Smith's "Prayer," published in the March 11, 1925 Supplement, is a blatantly nationalistic poem infused with romantic imagery and sentiment. In "Prayer," the speaker wishes to create through words the essence of Canadian life:

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[15] In the same essay, Smith writes that he was introduced to the new poetry in 1917, when, at the age of 15, he discovered a volume entitled The New Poetry edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson in the Westmount Library (106). Also, during a family trip to England in 1918, Smith visited Harold Monroe's Poetry Bookshop, where he came across the works of the Georgian Poets. In "Who is This Man Smith?," Sandra Djwa contends that the Westmount Library did not in fact have a copy of The New Poetry in 1917 and that Smith probably encountered this work and other examples of modern poetry at a later date, most likely in the mid-1920s (210-11). Also, Djwa believes that it was Lancelot Hogben, an assistant professor in McGill's science department, who in 1925 exposed Smith to the works of T.S. Eliot (211). Thus, Smith's knowledge of contemporary poetry during the Supplement years, and at the time of the Fortnightly's inception, was marginal.

as strong as a jack pine

as white as our snow;

as clear and as cold

as our ice

as our birds

in our sunshine (2-7)

This "bold" song, however, will also be

sweet as the winds that blows

in the spring to entice

our young lovers again

to the sun and the rain... (9-12)

Despite its free verse form, Smith's "Prayer" has more in common with the dated poetry championed by the C.A.A. than with the modernism to which he aspired.[16] The poem does reveal Smith's awareness of Canadian northern mythology and the "jack pine" paintings of the Group of Seven.[17] An avid reader of the Canadian Forum, Smith was undoubtedly aware of the artistic debate on whether or not Canadian visual art could be both Canadian and modern. In "Prayer," Smith tentatively explores the possibility of merging modernist forms with uniquely Canadian subjects.

When in late 1925 the Supplement disbanded ultimately because of a lack of funds,

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[16] The obvious romanticism of this poem evidently bothered Smith, who revised the poem in 1927. I will examine the revision, retitled "For A Canadian Anthology," later in this chapter.

[17] After the Canadian success at Wembley, the popular press and the Canadian public enthusiastically followed the Group's escapades and battles. The Group's January 1925 exhibition, for example, was reviewed in the Canadian Forum, Saturday Night and various Toronto newspapers. From this point onward, Dennis Reid notes, "anything connected with the exploits of the Group of Seven was guaranteed a news column, at least, in each of the Toronto papers, and a "human interest" story or two" (Group 199).

Smith and colleagues Latham, F.R. Scott, A.P.R. Coulburn and Leon Edel founded The McGill Fortnightly Review, a literary journal independently financed by its editorial board and by subscriptions secured in advance.[18] Although Smith referred to the Fortnightly as a "radical undergraduate political magazine," the politics of the journal were in fact restricted to student matters, and did not refer to issues of national or international consequence (Heenan, "Interview" 75). This "independent journal of literature, the arts, and student affairs," however, intended to present "an independent opinion of its own on all matters," especially with regards to Canadian poetry ("Editorial" 3).[19] For the McGill Group, as Smith, Scott, Edel and Leo Kennedy collectively came to be known, the Fortnightly was a medium through which the members could freely expresses their opinions on Canadian poetry and modern verse.

"When we founded the Fortnightly," wrote F.R. Scott, "we were protesting against the literary standards of the time -- particularly against the poetic standards" ("Interview" 13). According to Leon Edel, the Fortnightly's campaign against the prevailing poetic standards was led by Smith and Scott, who were the journal's "verbal activists" (qtd. in Warkentin xxiii). In the eyes of Smith and Scott, the Canadian Authors Association represented one of the chief obstacles hindering the advancement of Canadian poetry. The C.A.A.'s uncritical approach to literature, its conservatism and boosterism disgusted

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[18] In the fall of 1925, McGill's Student Council deemed the Supplement too costly and so withdrew its funding. Leon Edel, however, speculates that the Supplement's "high tone, the spermatozoa, the anti-war articles" led to its demise ("Warrior" 10). "Spermatozoa," according to Edel, refers to Ezra Pound's poem "Fifth Philosopher's Song," which Smith quoted in the Supplement's last issue in the Spring of 1925 ("Warrior" 10).

[19] The name of the journal was derived in part from a popular but conservative nineteenth century English magazine, The Fortnightly. But the editors of the McGill Fortnightly Review modeled the journal's critical tone after H.L. Mencken's The American Mercury.

these young poets.[20] Smith and Scott were further repulsed by the self-consciously nationalistic and derivative nature of the verse produced by C.A.A. members.[21] For example, in his satiric poem "The Canadian Authors Meet" (Vol. II, no. 10), Scott attacks the "self-unction" (1) and "Victorian saintliness" (6) of these colonial writers.[22] The poem's most bitter attack on the C.A.A. occurs in the sixth stanza, in which he lambastes the association for its encouragement of unoriginal work and its obvious literary nationalism:

> O Canada, O Canada, O can
>
> A day go by without new authors springing
>
> To paint the native maple, and to plan
>
> More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing? (21-24)[23]

Opposed to the literary and self-promotional methods of the C.A.A., Smith and Scott repudiated traditional and accepted modes of expression. Instead, they seized upon modernism as a means of expressing an emerging sense of national identity in a powerful

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[20] The C.A.A. was a frequent target of the Fortnightly crew. In the second issue of the journal, for example, the editorial denounced the C.A.A.'s "commercial boosting of mediocre books" during its annual Canadian Book Week (10).

[21] During their early careers, both poets were guilty of infusing their poetry with the same sentimental nationalism they so abhorred in the more traditional-minded Canadian poets. As I mention above, Smith's "Prayer" was an exercise in nationalist feeling, as were many of Scott's early nature poems.

[22] This poem was written in early 1927, when Scott accompanied Smith to a meeting of the Montreal Branch of the C.A.A., at which Smith was to receive two poetry prizes (Djwa, Scott 91).

[23] When the poem was first published in the 27 April 1927 Fortnightly, it concluded with the following stanza:

> Far in a corner sits (though none would know it)
> The very picture of disconsolation,
> A rather lewd and most ungodly poet
> Writing these verses, for his soul's salvation. (25-28)

Although Desmond Pacey deems this stanza "superfluous," Brian Trehearne views the last two lines of the stanza as an example of Scott's affinity with the "Decadent poet, who had a keen sense of his own sinfulness and a desperate belief that he could be redeemed in the purifying fire of art" (Pacey 249; Trehearne 170-1).

international form. As there was no Canadian model for this type of poetry, the McGill Group turned to international modernism for inspiration.[24] Drawing from the work of contemporary British and American poets such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and H.D., Smith and Scott tentatively infused their criticism and verse with the new forms and ideas of modernism.[25]

In his article "The Young Warrior in the Twenties," Leon Edel claims that he and his colleagues of the Fortnightly "were modern...long before Edmund Wilson put the moderns together in Axel's Castle and the avant-garde became a subject of respectable study in academe" (14) -- an assertion that Djwa, in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, supports by describing the Fortnightly as an "iconoclastic journal of modernist literature and opinion" (734). Yet, this commonly held view of the Fortnightly is erroneous, for not only does it disregard the profusion of pre-modernist sentiment and verse in the magazine, but it fails to acknowledge the influence of Romanticism, Aestheticism and nationalism on both A.J.M. Smith's and F.R. Scott's work. Critics often confine their analyses of the journal to Smith's critical essays on modern poetry (e.g. "Symbolism in Poetry," "Hamlet in Modern Dress" and "Contemporary Poetry") and to those poems which display "a real Modernist orientation" (Norris 61). But in his book Aestheticism and the Canadian Modernists, Brian Trehearne views the Fortnightly as "the

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[24] "The McGill Group" commonly refers to those poets associated with the McGill Fortnightly Review and, later, the Canadian Mercury. This group includes Smith, Scott, Edel, Leo Kennedy, John Glassco and A.M. Klein.

[25] Prior to his meeting with Smith in the fall of 1925, Scott had been "encrusted with the Victorians, particularly Tennyson." At this time, Scott was unaware of the new poetry, having "not read a word of Frost or Williams of Pound or Eliot, or even head of Poetry [Chicago]." Smith, however, quickly introduced his friend to "the wonders of the world [Scott] had been missing" ("Smith" 79-80).

production of two dedicated but uncertain young poets on a mutual path to Modernism" (172). In Smith's case, says Trehearne, the Fortnightly was a "sounding board that he could use freely as he struggled to define himself vis-a-vis nineteenth-century and modern literature" (252). The same can be said of F.R. Scott, whose poetry in the Fortnightly vacillates between Aestheticism and a brand of modernism that is infused with romantic elements.[26] Due to the transitional nature of the poetry and attitudes published therein, Trehearne presents the Fortnightly not as the "herald of Canadian Modernism" but

> as the gathering ground of a number of significant poets who later established their modern tones, but who at the time of its publication were still firmly linked to the nineteenth-century poetry that they were ultimately to reject. (252)

Responding to the cultural nationalism of the period, Smith and Scott attempted to create a distinctively Canadian verse by combining modern forms and diction with purely Canadian content. The two poets believed that by coupling modern forms and indigenous subjects, they could release Canadian poetry from Victorian strictures and, at the same time, produce verse strong enough to withstand international scrutiny. In order to

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[26] In Aestheticism and the Canadian Modernists: Aspects of a Poetic Influence, Brian Trehearne clearly establishes that Aestheticism strongly influenced Canadian modernism. Due to a three decade time lag, Aestheticism appeared in Canadian verse at the same time as modernism (308-309). "So necessary is Aestheticism to the birth of Modernism," argues Trehearne, "that, in a country where no significant Aesthetic period had existed, one had to be created before Modernism could occur" (314). The overlap between modernism and Aestheticism, Trehearne contends, accounts for elements of traditionalism in the poetry of such avowed modernists as A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott (314). According to Trehearne, these poets maintained the "principles and practices of Aestheticism" in their modernism "so that they tended to produce poetry that reflected Modernist themes, imagery, and diction in relatively traditional forms" (314). This is certainly true of a large part of the work written by Smith and Scott during their McGill Fortnightly Review tenure.

accomplish this goal, Smith and Scott imported such modernist techniques as Imagism. In Pound's formula, Imagism demands the "direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective", and the use of poetic images which present "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," so that only the words contributing to the presentation may be used (1158-59).[27] Yet, as D.M.R. Bentley notes, neither Smith nor Scott completely adhered to Pound's imagist principles in their landscape poetry. Bentley remarks that Smith and his colleagues, like the Group of Seven before them, adapted the techniques which they imported to suit their own style and content ("Not of Things" 26-27). Indeed, although working in radically different media, the Group of Seven and the McGill Group adopted the "eclectic detachment" that Smith, many decades later, describes in the following way:

> [the Canadian writer] selects those elements from varied and often disparate sources that are useful to him, and rejects those that are not...Where freedom of choice comes in is in the intellectual effort of the artist as maker who seeks to eliminate bad taste and encourage good, who chooses the true note and rejects the false. ("Detachment" 12)

In Smith's view, the Canadian artist, poet or painter, is well-positioned especially to practise eclectic detachment, because in Canada there is "an absence of conventional bonds that fasten us to an oppressively superior tradition such as that of English poetry and leaves us free to pick and choose just those poets (or just those aspects of those poets)

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[27] Smith incorporated these theories into his "Rejected Preface" to the 1936 anthology New Provinces: "the imagist seeks with perfect objectivity and impersonality to recreate a thing or arrest an experience as precisely and vividly and simply as possible" (xxx).

that can satisfy our need" ("Detachment" 12).[28] Smith and Scott aptly demonstrate this process of selection and adaptation in their Fortnightly nature poetry. Largely written in free verse, these poems tend to draw their imagery from the Group of Seven and their style from such varied sources as Imagism and Aestheticism.

The transitional nature of Smith's and Scott's modernism is most apparent in their landscape poems. In Smith's much anthologized "The Lonely Land," for example, the poet combines Imagist techniques with Georgian language and sentiment. First published in the 9 January 1926 edition of the Fortnightly, the poem was originally subtitled "The Group of Seven." In a letter to Sandra Djwa, Smith writes that it was

> Thomson's great painting "The Jack Pine" (seen only in colour reproduction) that helped me get started on "The Lonely Land"...There was also a fine print of J.E.H. MacDonald's Georgian Bay painting that, perhaps between the first draft and last helped too... ("Who" 208).

With its sparse language and exactness of image, the first stanza of the poem presents an unmediated, although fragmented, vision of a northern landscape. As portrayed by Smith, the forces of nature are pitted against one another:

> Cedar and jagged fir uplift
>
> Accusing barbs against the grey
>
> And cloud-piled sky;
>
> And in the bay

[28] In the McGill Fortnightly Review, Smith and Scott wrote poetry based on a variety of styles: seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry, Romanticism, Aestheticism, Symbolism and Imagism, to name a few. Smith, in particular, wrote a variety of poems based on the styles of other poets. W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, and John Donne are just a few of the poets that Smith imitated and parodied.

Blown spume and windrift

And thin, bitter spray

Snap at the whirling sky;

And the pine trees lean one way. (1-8)

Smith injects a painterly quality to the stanza through use of texture ("jagged," "smooth") and rhythmic movement ("uplift," "snap" and "whirling"). These effects combined with hard diction ("sharp", "bitter," "barbs") create a mood of tension and discord. As Sandra Djwa has noted, the imagery and sense of movement of this imagist stanza were largely derived from H.D.'s poem "Oread"("A New Soil" 12).[29] H.D.'s influence, however, is largely limited to the first stanza. Although some of the concrete, definite imagery of imagism remains, stanzas two and three are more Yeatsian and Romantic, than imagist, in sentiment and language.[30] In these stanzas, Smith diffuses the modernist flavour of the poem by returning to poetic language ("Hark," "monstrous plaint"), personification ("wild duck's cry") and pathetic fallacy ("grey grief"). Here, the cold, northern landscape is used to convey the inner turmoil of a Romantic speaker, who comes to this place "Of desolate splendour and grey grief" (15) to "Find for a tired heart relief" (17).

When the poem reappeared in July 1927 in the Canadian Forum, it was structurally

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[29] H.D.'s "Oread" was first published in the 1923 edition of Monroe and Henderson's The New Poetry. While acknowledging Smith's debt to H.D.'s "Oread," Michael Darling contends that H.D.'s "Sheltered Garden" also influenced Smith's poem ("Smith" 250). While the first version of the poem certainly bears a resemblance to "Oread," Smith's second and third versions incorporate imagery and diction from both "Oread" and "Sheltered Garden."

[30] In "Who is This Man Smith?," Djwa links the "desolate splendour and grey grief" of "The Lonely Land" to Smith's descriptions of Yeats' Irish homeland in his master's thesis "The Poetry of W.B. Yeats" (207).

and thematically very different from its Fortnightly version.[31] In the first stanza, Smith merely rearranged the structure in order to place greater emphasis on the upward motions and hostility of the stanza's elements: "Blown spume and windrift / And thin, bitter spray / Snap / At the whirling sky" (6-9). The second and third stanzas, however, differ radically from their previous versions. In stanza two, Smith excised all romantic emotion and archaic language. Inaudible in the first draft, the call of the wild duck to her mate now reverberates through the stark landscape onto the rocks along the shore:

> And the ragged
>
> And passionate tones
>
> Stagger and fall,
>
> And recover,
>
> And stagger and fall
>
> On these stones;
>
> Are lost
>
> In the lapping of water
>
> On smooth, flat stones. (14-22)

The flagrantly nationalist tone of the final stanza, however, overpowers and diminishes Smith's poetic innovations of stanzas one and two. Smith begins this section by affirming the beauty of this harsh, wild landscape:

> This is a beauty of dissonance,
>
> This is a desolate splendour,

[31] The poem appeared in its third and final form in the June 1929 edition of The Dial. This revision is discussed in Chapter Four.

This resonance of stony strand,

This smoky cry curled over a black pine (23-26).

The speaker then proclaims that "These are poems of Canada, / Resinous scent of the balsam / Cold sting of the blown spray / Cry of the wild duck over Long Lake" (27-30). Bentley views Smith's insertion of this "baldly nationalistic statement" and "an emblematically Canadian place name" as the poet's attempt to suit the poem to the audience: in this case, the Canadian Forum ("Not of Things" 42). The same can be said to be true of Smith's revisions of "To Hold in a Poem." Bentley contends that perhaps Smith was

> attempting a patriation of the Yeatsian ideal of a national poetry which, in the Canadian poet's own description, would "mean something to vigorous, simple men." A presumed audience so constituted would go someway towards explaining, if not pardoning, the affective nature of [these poems].
>
> ("Not of Things" 28)

In revising "To Hold in a Poem," Smith verbally attempts to capture the distinctive Canadian qualities of the northern landscape. In March 1927, Smith published the revision under the title of "For a Canadian Anthology" in the Supplement to the McGill News. Setting aside free verse, Smith rearranges the poem into conventional quatrains and an abab rhyme scheme. Although references to spring, lovers and God are omitted, the romantic flavour of the original poem remains. Self-consciously nationalistic, the poem is far from neutral in its presentation of nature. The speaker would take words

As clear as and as cold

As our ice; as strong as a jack pine;

As young as a trillium; as old

As the Rockies' irregular line... (5-8)

The poem, however, does bear the imprint of imagism; each line contains a brief but concentrated presentation of a recognizably Canadian image. Bentley points out that the fourth stanza is remarkable for its "clear articulation of the imagistic doctrine of the transparency of language and form" ("Not of Things" 29). As presented by Smith, the function of the poet is to convey an unmediated vision ("Like water in colourless glass") of Canadian "spirit" to his readers.[32]

To hold in a poem of words

Like water in colourless glass

The spirit of mountains like birds,

Of forests as pointed as grass... (13-16)

The second drafts of "The Lonely Land" and "To Hold in a Poem" disprove D.G. Jones' claim that Smith "has had no special interest in Canadian nationalism, Canadian space, or the Canadian idiom" (274). Both poems demonstrate that despite Smith's avowed modernism, he has not yet rejected his Romantic past. In his revisions to these poems, Smith proclaims his participation, albeit brief, in the nationalistic frenzy of the 1920s.

Scott, unlike his friend Smith, was deeply involved in the nationalist movement of

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[32] A third version of the poem appears in Smith's 1954 collection, A Sort of Ecstasy. Significantly, Smith revises the poem's final two lines of the last stanza ("Lonely, untouchable, clear / As the eagle's high, loneliest eyrie") to read "Lonely, unbuyable, dear, /The North, as a deed, and forever" (23-24). In Smith's view, the north and poetry are immortal. Neither can be bought or sold.

the decade. His strong interest in Canadian politics and culture led him, along with friends Brooke Claxton, Terry McDermot, Ronnie McCall, Jack Farthing, Raleigh Parkin, Brooke Claxton, Arthur Terroux, and V.C. Wansborough, to form a discussion group, aptly titled "The Group," in 1924 (Djwa, "Twenties" 15). Sandra Djwa believes that Scott's involvement in the Group helped to "consolidate his Canadianism - in art as in politics" ("Twenties" 15). The Group's close ties to Montreal's artistic community were reflected in the establishment of the Leonardo Society in 1925.[33] Several members of "The Group," including Scott, created the Leonardo Society as a means of distributing fine art reproductions and promoting modern Canadian art. Echoing the Group of Seven, the Leonardo Society intended to improve conditions for "original" artists:

> Apart from the annual exhibition of the Art Association, it has scarcely been possible for the younger artists to show, much less to sell, their sketches and canvases in Montreal. The favourable press given to Canadian exhibits at Wembley in 1924...drew wider attention to the freshness and vigor that characterizes the work of some of our artists, who find their inspiration...in the starkness of their native woods, lakes and hills. ("Leonardo" 1)

Like those of the painters that he admired, Scott's poetic efforts in the Fortnightly were inspired by Canada's northern landscape. "I in my innocence," wrote Scott, "was feeling that we could start afresh in Canada. I was...deeply impressed by the northland, its great lakes and rivers, its old mountains, and its sense of something to be made

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[33] Djwa notes that Ronald McCall owned a collection of Group of Seven paintings and that Terry MacDermot and Brooke Claxton were married to the sisters of painter Anne Savage (Scott, 78). Also, Scott began seeing artist Marion Dale in the fall of 1925 (Scott, 78).

("Documents" 92). Sandra Djwa writes that

> For Scott, as for the Group of Seven, the enormous age of the land was transmuted into a substitute for an historical past; but, at the same time, because of its associations with the new nationalism and because it was open, unexplored, and unpeopled, the land presented itself as *tabula rasa* or fresh canvas for the artists' impression. ("Scott" 195)

In his Fortnightly nature poetry, Scott draws upon the forms and techniques of international modernism to convey the stark beauty of the Laurentian landscape of Quebec. As did Smith, Scott took from Imagism what he needed and then diluted it with other poetic strains. Scott's 1926 poem "New Paths," for example, is an imagist experiment which conveys nationalist sentiment through archetypal Canadian imagery. In this poem, Scott makes an impassioned plea to Canadians, children of the North, to reject "all the burdensome inheritance, the binding legacies, / Of the Old World and the East" (5-6) and instead embrace the limitless potential of the untouched Canadian landscape:[34]

> Walk with me among these indigent firs,
> Climb these rough crags
> And let winds that have swept lone cityless plains,
> Gathering no sad tales of past endeavour,
> Tell you of fresh beauty and full growth. (9-13)

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[34] The unpublished version of this poem first appeared in Sandra Djwa's 1977 "A New Soil and a Sharp Sun: The Landscape of a Modern Canadian Poetry." Because the poem was not printed in its entirety, I have used the revised version of Scott's Collected Poems.

The most striking feature of this poem is the imagist line "Here is a new soil and sharp sun" (7). In this line, Scott clearly and concisely conveys the freshness, vitality and untold possibility--artistic and otherwise--of the Canadian environment.

In "New Names," Scott again presents a landscape unmarred by human activity. As in "New Paths," the speaker celebrates the unspoiled beauty of the land and its lack of "old myths" (9). In this invigorating landscape, the speaker no longer longs for the "tales of Babylon / Or Rome" of the old world (15-16) but, rather, is inspired to start anew:

> Let us give new names
>
> To the stars.
>
> What does Venus mean
>
> Or Mars? (1-4)

The chief attraction of "New Paths," is, not its form, but rather its embodiment of nationalist ideals. Such a poem demonstrates Scott's kinship with the Group of Seven and their land-based nationalism; both felt that the new art could be built on the Canadian landscape.

Scott's unusual little poem "Abstract" first appeared as part of selection of verse entitled "Fancies" in the 1 December 1926 Fortnightly. Whereas "New Names" hovers between the traditional and the new, "Abstract" is an experiment in free verse and sharp imagery:

> Sharply place a cube edgewise
>
> By a still, dark water.
>
> Let the tall cone float on a disc of stone.

> Peel bark from trees so broken stems can stare
>
> At the winged skeleton of the extinct bird
>
> Poised, angular, over the moon-bright rock.

In this poetic canvas, Scott reduces each natural element to a geometric form. These forms are then manipulated by the poet, who creates an idea of a landscape rather than a visual representation of it. Like a painter, Scott in "Abstract" attempts to express the essence of a northern landscape. The poem, in fact, bears more than a passing similarity to the semi-abstract paintings of Lawren Harris in the late 1920s. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Harris' work from this period was inspired by his travels to the area surrounding Lake Superior. His 1926 work "North Shore, Lake Superior," for example, consists of a tree stump rising majestically towards the light-filled sky. Mountains, clouds and Lake Superior loom in the distance. According to Paul Mellen, Harris in his Lake Superior paintings "wanted to embody the spirit of the North, to reveal its universality" (148). Scott was undoubtedly familiar with Harris's work through his friendship with Ronnie McCall, an avid collector of Group of Seven' landscapes. In a letter dated December 2, 1927, fellow Leonardo Society member McCall wrote to Scott of Harris's work:

> Harris is doing a very interesting canvas, the subject being black rock, blue lake and sky, and white trees of an unearthly bone-whiteness. Needless to say, the trees are dead trees. It is a canvas I should like to possess. (2b-3a)

By arranging recognizable natural elements into abstract patterns, Scott creates a verbal representation of a Harris landscape.

In their Fortnightly poetry, Smith and Scott took their tentative first steps towards modernism. Like the Group of Seven before them, these poets were inspired by the new nationalism of the 1920s and the modernist art emanating from Europe and the United States. Marlene Shore writes:

> As nationalists, they regarded the Victorian style as an embarrassing mark of colonialism; as modernists, they considered it to be inadequate for conveying problems for an urban, industrial age...The modernist movement insisted upon the artist's concern for all of humanity and this often conflicted with the desire...to create a unique Canadian culture. (32)

The metamorphosis of Scott and Smith from tentative to assured modernists would not occur until the 1930s. Uncomfortable with the Romantic elements of his early poetry, Smith later considerably revised and reworked the poems like "The Lonely Land" and "For A Canadian Anthology" for future publications. Scott's definition of modernism, however, did not exclude Canadian subjects or nationalist sentiment. Throughout his poetic career, Scott continued to write poems which articulated national identity through landscape imagery.

The final issue of the McGill Fortnightly review appeared in April 1927. Having recently completed his Master of Arts degree, Smith left Montreal for Edinburgh, Scotland, where he was to begin his Ph.D. with Metaphysical scholar H.J.C. Grierson (Darling, "Smith" 231). Scott, however, remained in Montreal, where he joined a private law practice (Djwa, Scott 97). Although the interests of these two poets diverged during the 1930s, they remained united in their commitment to push Canadian poetry in the

direction of modernism. In 1934, Smith and Scott would again join forces to edit the first anthology of modern Canadian poetry, New Province: Poems of Several Authors.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Changing Climate: The Group of Seven, Smith and Scott (1927-1936)

In the late twenties and thirties, the Group of Seven and the poets Smith and Scott continued their campaign to modernize the Canadian arts. In the case of the Group of Seven, the fight for acceptance and recognition had been largely achieved. Internationally and nationally acknowledged, the Group now risked becoming the new academy. The poets' fight to reform Canadian poetry, however, was still in its infancy. But the Great Depression, which began in 1929, radically altered their poetic paths. Although the poets continued to work together, their diverging interests slowly drew them apart.

During the later half of the 1920s, the Toronto artists' art and ideals dominated the Canadian art scene. After years of struggle, the Group of Seven was now largely accepted as Canada's premier artistic group. This rise in stature was due in part to the Group's critical success in exhibitions held in Europe and the United States. The painters participated in another Wembley exhibition in 1925 and were featured in a show on Canadian artists at Paris's Musée Jeu de Paume in 1927. The modernist efforts of the Group were lauded by the foreign press who, in the words of Charles Hill, "confirmed the impression that the only living Canadian art was that of the Group of Seven and its followers" (Thirties 21). International acclaim guaranteed national comment in Canadian

journals and papers, which now monitored closely the Group of Seven's activities.[1]

The painters abetted this situation by maintaining their aggressive promotional campaign. High profile events like the 1926 publication of Fred Housser's A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven also greatly advanced the Group's cause. The first in-depth study of Group of Seven and its ideals, Housser's book chronicled the rise of the Canadian art movement through anecdotes, letters and articles by and on the Group.[2] The importance of A Canadian Art Movement was not lost on its reviewers, who for the most part praised the author's insightful approach to the Group and its art. Reid contends that

> [the] importance of this book in propagating the ideas of the Group of Seven can hardly be overlooked. It is the only work ever published on a "movement" in Canadian art, and its eloquent presentation of the ideals and aspirations of these Canadian painters spread across the country. Published by a prominent Toronto house and available in every English bookstore in the nation, the book clearly established the Group as the standard by which advanced painting was to be measured in Canada. (Group 196)

The book did, however, have its faults; Mellen notes Housser's "overemphasis on

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[1] From 1925 onwards, articles on the Group appeared regularly in the Canadian newspapers as well as journals such as the Canadian Forum and the Canadian Bookman. The Canadian Bookman's Bess Housser, for example, was a staunch supporter of the Group and actively promoted the Group's work and activities in her column. Married to Group of Seven biographer Fred Housser, Bess was closely allied with the Group of Seven. Her relationship and subsequent marriage to Lawren Harris in 1934 caused discord among the Seven and its associates.

[2] Housser's book was preceded by Newton MacTavish's The Fine Arts in Canada, published in December 1925. MacTavish's work was the "first effort to write a broad history of art in Canada, and as such the book was generally well received" (Hill, Seven 162).

nationalism, a misrepresentation of the critics, and an incomplete understanding of European influences" (109); Hill adds that the work "as a history...is limited by an absence of context and a neglect of other informing factors," namely Quebec's and Ontario's artistic precedents (Seven 170-171).[3] Despite these limitations, the book was a resounding success in Canada, where 2,700 copies were sold in two years (Hill, Seven 171).

The publication and popularity of A Canadian Art Movement definitely aided the Group in expanding its Canadian audience. From its inception, the Group of Seven cast itself as a national movement, not just a Toronto rebellion. To accomplish this goal, the Group expanded the geographic range of its sketching sites and increased its exhibition circuit during the later half of the decade. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the National Gallery's Eric Brown greatly aided the Group by helping it to organize these roadshows. The stalwart support of the National Gallery--particularly of its director Brown--enraged the conservative R.C.A. and its supporters, who had not forgiven the National Gallery for wresting away control of the 1924 and 1925 Wembley exhibitions. In 1926, the R.C.A. was further aggravated when the Group of Seven were selected as the Canadian representative in the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition (Reid, Group 200). The resulting favourable reviews disgusted the conservative front, who verbally assaulted Eric Brown for his flagrant promotion of the Group of Seven and for his supposed neglect of

[3] Even some Group of Seven supporters took exception to Housser's work. Artist Clarence Gagnon, for example, criticized the book's disregard of earlier artistic developments by Canadian artists Maurice Cullen, Horatio Walker and even Gagnon himself; "That fact is that Mr. Housser was not grown out of boy's 'panties' in 1910...or he would have known that Cullen was tramping on snow-shoes in the Laurentians and exhibiting in Paris pine trees, frozen rivers at the Paris Salons" (qtd. in Hill, Seven 170).

more "worthy" artists.[4] Reid contends that the R.C.A.'s attack on Brown was "a struggle for life on the part of the Academy and those artists who depended upon its diminishing prestige for the public esteem and their self-respect" (Group 200). A similar attack on progressive painting by cultural conservatives occurred in Vancouver in 1928, when eighteen works by the Group of Seven were selected for the Vancouver Exhibition (Hill, Seven 213). Although the majority of the fifty-seven works presented were conservative in nature, traditionalists like Reverend J. Williams Ogden denounced the inclusion--albeit modest--of modernist art. In a letter published in the 13 August Vancouver Daily Province, Ogden denounced the wild abandon of the new art:

> We know that these 'freakists' by political influence and press manipulation have, for the time, captured the seats of power in connection with the National Gallery of this Dominion and that good public money is being paid for the purchase of the works of these men. (7)

These hostile Western conservatives, like their counterparts in the East, resented the financial and promotional support that the National Gallery bestowed on non-traditional artists like the Group of Seven. The controversy surrounding the Group, however, did not dampen its rising popularity among the Canadian public; rather, rancorous events and sympathetic foreign press heightened the public's interest in the artists. Even in Vancouver where the controversy reigned for close to four months, crowds clamoured to

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[4] The R.C.A.'s denunciation of Brown appeared in "Painters Demand the Head of Art Dictator of Canada," published in the 20 November 1926 Toronto Star. The battle between Brown and the R.C.A. continued up to 1932, when members from the R.C.A. presented a petition to the Federal Government demanding the resignation of Brown. In response, Brown's supporters drew up their own petition affirming Brown and his policies. Nothing was resolved, and the controversy soon died down. For a thorough discussion of this controversy, see Reid, Group 200-203; Jackson, Country 99-102; McLeish 87-8.

see the modernists' works; Hill observes that "the exhibition was a *succès de scandale*, realizing an attendance of 65,000" (Seven 215).[5] Yet large crowds and intense public interest did not automatically result in widespread acceptance. As Reid points out, "the years 1925-1931 were still a period of struggle [for the Group of Seven], though now it was a struggle from a position of some eminence" (197). Although drawn to the Group's nationalist ideals, the general public was slow to accept the painters' modernist-inspired landscapes. During these years, the Group of Seven also had to contend with the hostility of the R.C.A, whose opposition to the painters, the National Gallery and modernist art continued well into the 1930s.

Greater and more immediate support for the Group's art was found among the more progressive elements of Canada's artistic community.[6] Young artists, in particular, were quick to seize upon and imitate the Group's advanced style and subjects.[7] The Group of Seven's vision appealed also to more established artists like Emily Carr, Edwin Holgate and Betram Brooker.[8] As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Group's sphere of influence was not limited to the fine arts; Canadian poets, writers, dramatists and musicians were drawn to the Group of Seven's aesthetic. As a result, there was a proliferation of Group-

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[5] Large crowds and positive reviews did not necessarily translate into sales. Conservative and older artists continued to dominate the Canadian art market. As in the early 1920s, the Group members were forced to supplement their meagre income by teaching and, in the case of Casson and Carmichael, graphic work. It was not until the late 1920s that sales of the Group's paintings significantly increased.

[6] The Group actively promoted the work of other progressive-minded artists by inviting these painters to contribute to Group shows. In the 1928 exhibition, for instance, thirty-seven of the ninety-four works were by invited contributors.

[7] Many of these young painters studied under members of the Group at the Ontario College of Art and the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts. From 1926 onward, Lismer, MacDonald and Varley devoted the majority of their time to teaching.

[8] Emily Carr was first introduced to the Group by Eric Brown in 1927. Carr formed a close friendship with Lawren Harris, whose correspondence with Carr provides great insight into his mysticism and changing artistic values. She exhibited in the 1930 Group of Seven Exhibition in Toronto. See Larisey 107-8.

inspired art by the later half of the decade.

The increasing dominance of the Group of Seven unsettled fellow artist Clarence Gagnon, who was suspicious of what Hector Charlesworth once termed "the group system in art" ("Group System" 3). Like Charlesworth, Gagnon believed that the Group's style was restrictive, and that it stifled individualism:

> Nothing can be done to change matters as long as the Group of Seven will fight and dictate to all other artists in Canada, nothing will happen to make things better. The younger generation of artists seeing that they cannot enter the House of Seven because all of the Seven Rooms are occupied by the Seven Wise Men, rather than sleep on the steps will move along and build a house of their own...Then it would be again the old question, a fight for supremacy.
>
> (qtd. in Harper 365)

Even Group supporters were beginning to critique the Group's excessive emphasis on landscape and the narrowness of its painterly approach. In his 1928 article "The Seven Arts," Betram Brooker observed the dangers facing the Group:

> So long as the Group of Seven operated to release young Canadian painters from the stuffy ties of Victorian atmosphericism, and encouraged them to find new ways of seeing and expressing the Canadian scene as honestly as they could and as 'individually' as possible, their influence...can only be regarded as a healthy and helpful one. But already--although the Canadian public has by no means accepted the Seven--the influence of their work shows signs of hardening into a formula which a good many painters are adopting as being, so to speak, the 'fashionable' native school of painting. (n.pag.)

As noted by their critics, the widespread acceptance of the Group was slowly leading to 'academization' of the painters' art and ideas. According to Mellen, the "Group's influence was so powerful that most artists either emulated them, while claiming individuality, or broke away from them altogether" (184). The Group of Seven's apparent monopoly of Canadian art effectively silenced other artists, whose work did not conform to Group principles.

By 1927, the members of the Group also were beginning to feel the limitations of their combined effort. After close to twenty years as an artistic movement, the Group of Seven's rebellious spirit and sense of artistic exploration was noticeably diminishing. No longer bound by shared goals and ideals, the painters began moving in different directions and pursuing other interests.[9] Although the members of the Group exhibited together in 1930 and in 1931, the Group as a unified art movement was slowly disintegrating.

Varley was the first to leave the confines of Toronto and the fold of the Group of Seven. In September 1926, he accepted the position of head of drawing and painting at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (Mellen 170). Unlike his fellow painters, Varley was not a committed nationalist, nor did he share their enthusiasm for wilderness subjects.[10] It was not until he moved to British Columbia in 1926 that Varley began to paint natural scenes in earnest. Paul Mellon writes that Varley's Vancouver

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[9] In 1926, the Group consisted of Harris, MacDonald, Varley, Lismer, Jackson, Carmichael and new member, A.J. Casson. In the same year, Carmichael and Casson joined forces with Fred Brigden to form the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour. According to Mellen, considerably younger members Carmichael and Casson "always remained slightly on the fringes of the Group" (158).

[10] Mellen contends that Varley's "bohemian ways and his moody temperament caused a great deal of friction with other members of the Group, who in turn presented a confusing image of him as a person. In public, he was made to appear an eager supporter of the Group, and all the personality conflicts were carefully disguised" (172).

work "took on a new freedom and individuality, as if he had been suddenly released from the confines of the Group approach" (171). Even though he participated in the 1928 and 1930 Group of Seven's shows, Varley eschewed all other Group activities henceforth.

The years 1927-1936 also saw the gradual dispersement of the remaining members of the Group of Seven. Due to his increased responsibilities at the Ontario College of Art, MacDonald no longer sketched with the Group, and limited his outdoor work to an annual trip West.[11] Like MacDonald, Lismer's educational efforts dominated his time and he was forced to limit his painting activities.[12] Casson and Carmichael worked full-time as commercial artists and could not join the others on their excursions. Only Jackson and, to some extent, Harris continued the aggressive pattern of outdoor sketching followed by intense painting that characterized early Group activities.[13]

The members of the Group also began to differ in their painterly approach to the Canadian landscape. Although Varley's, MacDonald's and Harris's works from this period exhibit great developments in style and technique, Lismer, Jackson, Carmichael and Casson remained firmly committed to Group of Seven style. Mellen observes that Jackson, for example, "had already established a set style, which was to remain unchanged, except for variations in subject matter" (174). In contrast to Jackson, Harris was moving progressively forward in his artistic interests and approach. In 1926, Harris was asked by Katherine Dreier, president of the *Société Anonyme*, to participate in the

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[11] MacDonald held the position of acting principal of the Ontario College of Art from 1928 to 1930.
[12] In addition to his duties as principal of the Ontario College of Art's summer program, Lismer held the position of educational supervisor of the Art Gallery of Toronto (McLeish 102). During this period, Lismer also began cross-country lectures on art education for children and adults.
[13] In July 1927, Jackson finally experienced the true north when he and Dr. Frederick Banting joined the Boethic on its annual voyage to the Canadian Arctic (Mellen 174). In 1930, Harris accompanied Jackson on his second Arctic journey. See Mellen 178-181.

International Exhibition of Modern Art to be held at the Brooklyn Museum in November 1926 (Hill, Seven 204). Harris later hosted the same *Société* exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto in April 1927. This exhibition was perhaps the important collection of modern art to grace Canada since the War Memorial Exhibitions of the early 1920s. For the vast majority of attendees, the show was their first encounter with the abstract art of such distinguished modernists as Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso and Piet Mondrian. As to be expected, the exhibition received mixed reviews from press and public alike. In the May edition of the Canadian Forum, Harris and onetime Group member Frank Johnston presented opposing views on the radical artistic developments featured in the exhibition. For his part, Johnston claims that "most of the creatures that perpetrated these monstrosities have 'leprous brains,' if any" (241). Johnston's comments regarding the admirers of abstract art were equally damning:

> The very people in Toronto who are raving about the esoteric qualities in these works are those who raise the greatest 'hullabaloo' when a side-show shows physical abortions and freaks of nature. Then why in the name of common-sense and fair-mindedness endorse these mental miscarriages? (242)

In response, Harris suggests that "most of the pictures required of the spectator a new way of seeing and without this adjustment the pictures naturally seemed meaningless, bizarre, even ugly" ("Modern Art" 240). Noting that the majority of the works were abstract, Harris assures readers that the art presented in the exhibition would not result in similar responses in Canadian art; "Our way is not that of Europe, and, when we evolve abstractions, the approach, direction, and spirit will be somewhat different" ("Modern Art" 241). Strongly influenced by the antimaterialist and mystical principles of

theosophy, Harris held that the Canadian environment had a determining influence on the direction of Canadian art. In the December 1928 issue of the Supplement of the McGill News, Harris clearly outlines his theories on Canadian art in "Creative Art and Canada." In this article, Harris argues that the "modern European artists serve 'a consciously held idea of art' derived from its great treasure-houses of art, its museums, galleries, palaces, and cathedrals" (184). The Canadian artist, on the other hand,

> serves the spirit of his land and people. He is aware of the spiritual flow from the replenishing North...North to him is a single, simple vision of high things and can, through its transmuting agency, shape our souls into its own spiritual expressiveness. He believes that this will create a new sense and use of design and a new feeling for space and light and formal relationships. (184)

The new developments in Canadian art that Harris predicts are strongly evident in his own work, which featured geometrized landscapes of great simplicity and limited colour. These paintings reveal Harris's growing disenchantment with representation and awareness of the possibilities of abstraction.

Peter Larisey contends that Harris in the late 1920s "was experiencing limitations as a painter and was having difficulty understanding his art and his own feelings" (107). Unlike his fellow painters, Harris felt increasingly constrained by the Group's nationalist rhetoric and dependence on landscape subjects. Nevertheless despite his defence of abstract art, Harris was not ready to sever his ties to the Group of Seven, nationalism or representational art. Although he continued to defend the Group and its ideals, Harris was slowly divorcing himself through his philosophical and painterly explorations from the Canadian art movement. Other members of the Group were pursuing their own

interests and devoted little time to painting or Group activities. With little left to unite it, the Group of Seven began to disintegrate.

From 1927-36, a similar difference in interests developed between poets Smith and Scott. After the demise of the Fortnightly in 1927, the McGill poets dispersed. With Smith in Scotland and Scott in Montreal, the two poets found it difficult to combine efforts to restart their campaign to modernize Canadian literature.[14] The physical distance between the poets mirrored their increasingly different literary concerns. Increasingly distrustful of nationalism, Smith attempted to rid his poetry of romantic sentiment and overtly Canadian subjects. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, Smith wrote highly intellectual poems which reflected universal rather than local concerns. Scott's Canadianism, on the other hand, permeated his verse and political activities. Though in the 1930s the two poets would join forces to campaign for the new poetry, their diverging interests, like those of the Group of Seven, drove them in different artistic directions.

Like Harris, poet A.J.M. Smith in the late 1920s grew uneasy with naturalistic representation and nationalistic sentiment. While strongly supporting the development of Canadian poetry, Smith's poetic experimentation and expanding interest in metaphysical and classical subjects slowly drew him away from romantic and flagrantly Canadian verse.[15] Although he continued to write landscape poetry, Smith avoided the subjectivity

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[14] After the demise of the Fortnightly in 1927, Smith spent the following two years at the University of Edinburgh beginning his doctorate on the metaphysical poets of the Anglican Church of the seventeenth century. While in Edinburgh, Smith continued to write and publish criticism and poetry in North American magazines and journals.

[15] As late as 1927, Smith was still calling for "a literature that should be roughly complementary to the art of the Group of Seven" (qtd. in Burke, "Letters" 116).

and emotion which characterized earlier poems such as "The Lonely Land." In keeping with his metaphysical interests, these nature poems are analytical examinations rather than personal reflections on nature. According to Leon Edel, Smith's nature poems are

> a picture, all sharp clear almost chiselled picture [*sic*]: the conventional retouched by modernity, the old sentimentalities scraped away in favour of the hard clear word and focused image. The familiar, the oft-seen, the oft-felt, becomes unfamiliar; where we normally see through a blur of feeling an entire landscape, the poet shows us its essence. ("Wordly Muse" 211-12)

As would Lawren Harris in a later work, Smith abstracts the natural world to its essentials in order to reveal the mystery contained within.

Smith's 1928 poem "The Creek" is a good example of his changing attitude towards nature poetry.[16] In this poem, Smith analyzes the brief interaction between the creek's waters and shore. The imagery of the first stanza simply yet precisely conveys the entanglement of stones, roots, straw, leaves, grass and herbs without diminishing the objects' variety in shape, size and texture:

> Stones
> still wet with cold black earth,
> roots, whips of roots
> and wisps of straw,
> green soaked crushed leaves

[16] "The Creek" first appeared in the November 1928 issue of The Dial, the most prestigious literary journal of the period. Smith described "The Creek" as an example "of a simple kind of imagistic verse" in which "the development of the poem depends upon metrical devices as much as on images; the music is harsh and the rhythm difficult" ("Rejected Preface" xxx). To convey the interaction between creek and shore, Smith relies on description, alliteration, assonance, consonance, internal rhyme and repetition.

mudsoiled where hoof has touched them,

twisted grass

and hairs of herbs

that lip the ledge of the stream's edge... (1-9)

Smith emphasizes the temporal bond between the objects by referring to them as "these" in line 10. This line also effectively separates the naturalistic description of stanza one from the interaction between creek and shore in following paragraph. In stanza two, the brief order imposed on nature by the speaker is quickly dispersed by the movement of the water:

then foamfroth, waterweed,

and windblown bits of straw

that rise, subside, float wide,

come round again, subside... (11-14)

Twisted and turned by the motion of the creek, the objects of stanza one are "a little changed / and stranger" (15-16). The speaker scrutinises the water only to see "nothing" (17) as the water sweeps the shore clean. The concluding line ("These") implies that this state of flux is constant and that the dance between objects and water will endlessly repeat. Although highly descriptive, Smith's "The Creek" illustrates the intellectual aspect of Smith's nature poetry. "The Creek" is a meditation on, rather than an exposition of, the forces of nature. Despite its subject matter, the poem is not particularly Canadian and has little in common with his earlier nature verse.

Smith's withdrawal from nationalism was evident also in his critical work from this period. In the April 1928 Canadian Forum, Smith's highly contentious "Wanted--

Canadian Criticism" was published. In it, Smith railed against patriotic verse, the Canadian Authors Association and the generally low standard of criticism and poetry in Canada. Smith's thesis was that Canadian culture as conceived and perpetuated by the C.A.A. lacked critical intelligence. As seen by Smith, Canadian literature "as art has fought a losing battle with commerce":

> If you write, apparently, of the far north and the wild west and the picturesque east, seasoning well with allusions to the Canada goose, fir trees, maple leaves, snowshoes, northern lights etc., the public grasp the fact that you are a Canadian poet, whose works are to be bought from the same patriotic motive that prompts the purchase of Eddy's matches or a Massey-Harris farm implement, and read along with Ralph Connor and Eaton's catalogue. (222)

Without criticism, Smith contends, "Canadian writers are like a leaderless army. They find themselves in an atmosphere of materialism that is only too ready to seduce them from their allegiance to art, and with an audience that only wishes to be flattered" (222). According to Smith, Canadian writers require critical guidance and artistic freedom in their choice and treatment of subject matter.[17] Smith strongly felt that Canadian poets were overly conscious of their environment and not conscious enough of their position in time. In Smith's view, intelligence was the answer:

> To be unconscious or overconscious - that is to be merely conventional, and it is one of these two ways that our literature to-day fails as an adequate and

[17] Echoing Douglas Bush in "A Plea for Original Sin" quoted above on page 59, Smith damns puritanism and asserts that "our condition will not improve until we have been thoroughly shocked by the appearance in our midst of a work of art that is at once successful and obscene."

> artistic expression of our national life...Modernity and tradition alike demand that the contemporary artist who survives adolescence shall be an intellectual. Sensibility is no longer enough, intelligence is also required. Even in Canada. (224)

The dictatorial tone of Smith's article prompted a quick rejoinder from F.R. Scott. In a letter to the Canadian Forum in June 1928, Scott dismissed Smith's assertion that until a body of good criticism exists Canadian writers should cease writing: "As well hope to hasten the harvest by amassing the harvesters in May" (qtd. in Pacey 229). Scott critiqued Smith's position as a whole: "An analysis of Mr. Smith's position compels one to class him as one of that very group of 'Canada-conscious' patriots whose presence on the literary scene he so rightly deplores. If not exactly one of them, he is spiritually their kith and kin" (qtd. in Pacey 229). Although disparaging of the C.A.A.'s methods and deliberate nationalism, Smith, as Scott points out, desired the same end: a Canadian literature which was distinct yet able to hold its own on the international stage.

Although critical of the tone and approach of Smith's article, Scott shared the author's disgust with the low level of literary criticism and poetry in Canada. Scott, like Smith, was concerned with freeing Canadian poetry from past traditions and "blinkered" nationalism. Scott, however, differed from Smith in that Scott wished to create a poetry that was uniquely Canadian yet modern at the same time. Unlike Smith, Scott was not adverse to using recognizably Canadian images in his poetry. Also, whereas Smith was content to work independently, Scott was actively involved in the wider movement to emancipate Canadian letters. In 1928, for example, Scott was asked to join the editorial board of the Canadian Forum as its Montreal representative. In December of the same

year, Scott, along with Leo Schwartz, Jean Burton, Leo Kennedy and Felix Walter, began publication of The Canadian Mercury, a small literary journal similar in vein to its predecessor The McGill Fortnightly Review. Unlike the Fortnightly, however, the Mercury was a private enterprise and had no affiliation with McGill University or with any other organization. The relative independence of the journal allowed its writers to concentrate almost solely on literature and criticism. The opening editorial loudly declares the editorial board's critical spirit:

> We have no preconceived ideas of Canadian literature which we are endeavouring to propagate...We believe that an order will come out of the void, an order of a distinct type, reflecting, as modern Canadian painting has begun to do, a unique experience of nature and life. (3)

The editors of the Mercury hoped that Canadian writers would follow the example of the Group of Seven and produce an art that was both modern and Canadian. In order to accomplish this goal, Canadian literature first had to be emancipated "from the state of amiable mediocrity and insipidity" ("Editorial" 3). To achieve this aim, Scott and his Mercury crew regularly published articles on new developments in literature as well as critical attacks on the Maple Leaf School of poetry and the Canadian Authors Association. In "The Future of Canadian Literature" (issue 5-6), Leo Kennedy rails against the C.A.A. ("that pillar of flim-flam") for promoting Victorian poetic traditions to the detriment of Canadian literature. Dismissing the outpouring of the C.A.A.'s writers, Kennedy argues that the future of Canadian literature resides in poets like himself, who are "distrustful of the dignified cultural stupidities of their elders" (100). Familiar with the works of other moderns, these young artists will be concerned

> with writing something that is true and enduring, desiring to declare what is fine and not necessarily best-selling, they will commence, and come in time to express themselves with gratifying clarity. They will approach the task of expression fortified by new ideas and original conceptions; they will learn the lesson of all precursors, discovering in a western grain field, a Quebec *maison*, or in a Montreal nightclub, a spirit and a consciousness distinctly Canadian. (100)[18]

The nationalist aims of the editors of the Mercury were clear; they strongly believed that a living Canadian literature would evolve from the modernist-inspired verse of young writers like themselves.

Smith, however, was not satisfied by the Canadian Mercury, which he viewed as an "average Fortnightly" ("Letter" 1). According to Desmond Pacey, Smith "had by no means given up his self-appointed mission of introducing the new poetry to Canada" (200).[19] Lawren Harris, on the other hand, was greatly impressed by the small journal. A short correspondence between Scott and Harris occurred in 1929. Scott had asked Lawren Harris to write an article on the future of Canadian painting for the Mercury. In a letter dated January 6, 1929, Harris offered to send Scott examples of his own poetry and suggested that the Mercury run a series of articles on Canadian cities. On 18 February 1929, Harris again wrote Scott regarding the proposed article, which Harris had been

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[18] The Canadian Mercury contained many examples of the new poetry and critical attitude proposed by Kennedy. Alongside articles by Stephen Leacock were short stories by Dorothy Livesay and poems by Kennedy, Klein, Smith and Scott.

[19] In 1927, Smith had gone so far as to invite Raymond Knister to join him in starting a "Canadian literary journal that should represent a break from the English tradition and the complacent inanities of the Canadian Authors Association" (qtd. in Burke, "Letters" 116). The journal, however, never materialized.

unable to write due to painting commitments. In Harris's view, "The Canadian Mercury has improved with each issue and if it keeps on doing so at the same rate there won't be anything else in the country to compare to it. It's good news." Harris was undoubtedly pleased by the editors' recognition of the Group of Seven's modernist campaign.

The harsh northern landscape featured in poems like Scott's "Old Song" would also appeal to Harris's sensibilities. Published in the February 1929 edition of the Mercury, "Old Song" presents a desolate Laurentian landscape where the fleeting existence of man and nature are compared to the "elemental song" (5) rippling below the surface of the river. The ephemerality of "far voices / and fretting leaves" contrasts greatly with the "long aeons" (9) of the land.[20] Scott viewed the Canadian landscape as "wonderful, open, empty, vast, and speaking a kind of eternal language in its mountains, rivers and lakes...Geologic time made ancient civilizations seem but yesterday's picnic" (qtd. in Watt 56). Breathtaking in its immensity and vast geological history, the land in Scott's view represented Canada's past and future. Like the Group of Seven, Scott felt that the essence of Canada was lay not in its cities or industry but in the land.

In addition to nature poems like "Old Song," Scott was contributing satirical verse to the Mercury. Scott, for example, lambasted the pitiful standards of the Canadian Authors Association and its members in "God Bless the C.A.A.," published in the June 1929 issue. In the same issue, Scott also took a shot at C.A.A. idol Bliss Carman in a review of Carman's recent poetic effort Wild Garden: "Carman's technique and form is undiluted 1880; he seems impervious to change. He has no conception of rhythm, but

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[20] Djwa notes that the "force, which animates nature, personified in the powerful last image, is evolutionary process, invested Bergson's with *élan vital*" ("Scott" 196).

only metrical accuracy" ("Wild Garden" 140). As in the Fortnightly, the editors of The Canadian Mercury directed their attacks on the archaic standards and the mediocre output of Canadian poetry at the literary establishment, represented by the Canadian Authors Association.

The Canadian Mercury fell victim to the great crash of 1929; the seventh and final issue appeared in June. Djwa notes that The Canadian Forum took over its subscription lists, "becoming, in effect, almost a poetry magazine" ("Forum" 20). As the Montreal representative of the editorial board of the Forum, Scott, contends Djwa, "played a major role in developing a modernist spirit in the pages of the Forum throughout the thirties" ("Forum" 20). In 1931, Scott outlined his thoughts on modern poetry in a two part article entitled "New Poems for Old." Published in the May issue, the first instalment thoroughly summarizes the modern movement and the resulting radical change in sensibilities:

> Every line of investigation explored intelligently seemed to lead to the same conclusion--that the orthodox was wrong. The old order of politics needs no consideration; the fact of the war was proof enough of its adolescence. The old order of Deity was shown by anthropologists to be built not upon rock, but upon the sands of primitive social custom. Socialism and Communism cast overwhelming doubt upon the value of the old economic order...Morality disappeared in mere behaviour. Amid the crash of systems, was Romantic poetry to survive? It would be a miracle had no literary revolution occurred. (297)

In Canadian literature, this "crash of systems" had not yet taken place. As evidenced by the profusion of romantic nationalist-inspired verse, Canadian poetry languished far behind its international siblings. In the second part of the article, Scott asserts that poetry must "be released from the confines of this pretty garden" if any advances are to be made (337). The modern poet had been kicked out onto the street to "seek amongst the haunts and habits of living men for the stuff from which a vital and humane art might be created" (337). Scott's poetic manifesto reveals his developing belief that new poetry should reflect the new social order.[21] This desire to create "a vital and humane art" was reflected in Scott's own poetry, which increasingly expressed his social concerns.

The political radicalism of the 1930s was to have a lasting effect on Scott's views and poetry. During this period, Scott became actively involved in Canadian politics. In 1932, Scott and Forum columnist Frank Underhill founded the League for Social Reconstruction (L.S.R.), a political research group based on Fabian principles (Djwa, Scott 131-135). In the following year, Scott contributed to the drafting of the Regina Manifesto, which resulted in the organization of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.) under J.S. Woodsworth.[22] Scott's deep commitment to social issues was further reflected in his work as a professor of constitutional and federal law. In the 1930s, Scott began his instrumental work on the role of government in constitutional affairs (Djwa, "Scott" 174).

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[21] The Canadian Forum during the 1930s became a ready vehicle for the new poetry advocated by Scott. In response to the changing currents of Canadian life, the Forum had already begun aligning itself with the bold political and cultural movements of the period. Articles on the activities of the League for Social Reconstruction appeared on its pages as well as the socially oriented verse of Norman Bethune, E.J. Pratt, and Scott.

[22] The L.S.R. was incorporated into the C.C.F., which later became the New Democratic Party.

During the 1930s, Scott did not confine his writing to current political events and issues.[23] Scott's strong land-based nationalism repeatedly drew him to the harsh northern wilderness. As Djwa points out, though Scott

> continued to draw upon international sources for the new forms and techniques of his poetry, [he] did not reject Canadian subjects. His sense of the modern...continued to build on a Canadian and evolutionary landscape, and it was this emphasis which was to prove dominant for the next four decades. ("Scott" 179)

In "Trees in Ice," for example, Scott plays with diction and form in an attempt to convey the cold, formal beauty of his subject.[24] In the first imagistic stanza, Scott uses sharp and hard diction to great effect:

> these gaunt prongs and points of trees
> pierce the zero air with flame
> every finger of black ice
> stealing the sun's drawn fire
> to make a burning of a barren bush. (1-5)

The central section of the poem mimics through the use of space the physical shape of branches encased in ice. The movement of these three lines contrasts with the static image of the tree in the opening section. In the last section of the poem, Scott reminds the reader that the poem is a work of art ("this cruelty is a formal loveliness") and the

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[23] Scott's satires of the 1930s were directed towards social injustice, rabid capitalism and government inaction. The landscapes featured in these satiric poems are generally viewed through Scott's socialist perspective.

[24] The poem was originally published in the 31 December 1931 Canadian Forum.

"cruelty" and "pain" of the poem are artificial. In this poem, Scott comes closer to realizing the poetic abstraction first made evident in his earlier poem "Abstract." No longer content merely to describe, Scott represents his subject visually.

Compared to Scott, Smith had great difficulty adjusting to the demands of the Depression. Smith returned from Edinburgh in 1929 to find the country on the brink of disaster. Unable to find an academic position in Canada, he was forced to accept a series of short-term contracts in the United States. It was not until 1936 that Smith obtained a tenure track position at Michigan State University. While in the United States, Smith attempted to maintain contact with the Canadian poetic scene. To this end, he continued to contribute to Canadian periodicals and journals. Although a number of these poems express social criticism, Smith remained detached from the politics of the period. According to Michael Darling,

> Smith's social poems do not focus on specific events, nor do they criticize individuals or institutions. Rather, they consider the impact of the modern world on an individual, a persona who may or may not be identified with the poet himself. ("Smith" 255).

Whereas Scott was rapidly developing into a socialist poet, Smith was developing what Darling terms his "social metaphysical" voice ("Smith" 255). As with Lawren Harris, Smith was interested in expressing universal rather than regional themes in his work. In their art, Harris and Smith retreat from the material world and its spiritual devastation. Anne Compton's observations on Smith's metaphysical poetry can be applied equally to Harris's semi-abstract paintings:

> The intellectual aspect of Smith's poetry does not mean that Smith was an unemotional man; Smith reroutes personal emotion through the intellect and gives it dramatic expression. (101)

In both cases, the artists during the 1930s began to produce highly analytical and abstract works, which drew fire from critics who reproached the artists for their lack of social engagement.

In fact, the members of the Group of Seven as a whole were chastised for refusal to incorporate contemporary concerns and issues in their work. The Great Depression had little effect on the Group of Seven's program; unlike the poets, the painters did not re-evaluate their art or incorporate political or social content into their paintings. As before, the Group members remained focused on interpreting the Canadian landscape, which they believed revealed the Canadian experience. No longer the *enfant terrible* of the Canadian art scene, the Group now faced growing resentment from other artists, who critiqued the painters' narrow nationalism and limited vision.

The Group itself was aware that it had to adjust or dissolve. In 1931, the Group attempted to remedy the situation by expanding the membership of the association. In an announcement to the press shortly after the opening of the 1931 exhibition, the Group declared that

> The interest in a freer form of art expression in Canada has become so general that we believe that the time has arrived when the Group of Seven should expand, and the original members become the members of a larger group of artists, with no officials or constitution, but held together by common intention of doing original and sincere work. (qtd. in Salinger, "Expansion" n.pag)

In response to the Group's announcement and the lacklustre 1931 exhibition, reviewers prematurely announced the end of the Canadian art movement. Critics like Jehanne Biétry Saligner proclaimed that "[the Group of Seven] has died, in the sense that each of the leaders, who were its members, has gone on by himself, that the paths of the Seven have parted" ("Comment" 143). While recognizing the contributions of the Group to Canadian art, Thoreau MacDonald damned the current direction of the Group:

> The Group--or at least their followers--in their efforts to be modern and free are in danger of becoming more conventional than older societies. They lack the life that comes from keeping their feet on the ploughed ground and eyes on the face of nature. If the Group intends to be a nursery for incompetent painters, then all right, but if the aim is to raise the standard of painting in Canada and to increase the love and understanding of our country, then something different must be done. (144)

With MacDonald's death in 1932, the members of the Group finally agreed to disband and reform as a larger society consisting of modern painters from across the country. Before announcing the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters, however, the Group issued a manifesto, which defended the modernism and ideals of the movement:

> While the works of the Group are far removed from the extreme expressions of modern art in Europe, nevertheless, their works are modern, in the sense that they are not literal imitations of nature, but are re-creations of a scene or mood or the spirit of a place inspired by a new and artistically little explored country. This means creative adventure and consequent disregard of outworn

conventions irreconcilable with the spirit of the country.

(qtd. in Hill, Seven 284)

While Carmichael, Casson, Jackson and Lismer continued to propagate the ideas and style of Group with the new association, Harris's interests led him away from representational painting, nationalism and Canada. In 1934, Harris divorced himself from the Toronto art scene and moved to New Hampshire. It was here, away from the Group of Seven's influence, that Harris finally fully embraced abstraction.

While Harris was charting new paths artistically, Smith and Scott joined forces once again to restart their campaign for modern Canadian poetry. Early in 1934, the two poets began assembling material for what would become New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors.[25] Unable to publish on their own, Smith and Scott, along with Kennedy, Klein, Robert Finch and E.J. Pratt, joined forces to create the first anthology of modern Canadian poetry. Like the painters before them, Smith and Scott realized that if they wanted to establish the new poetry in Canada, they had to reach a wider audience than that of The Canadian Forum. When in May 1936 New Provinces finally appeared, it did not bring the poets the recognition and critical success they aspired to. The anthology received scant critical attention and sold few copies. Gnarowski notes that only 82 copies were sold in the first year, 10 of which were bought by contributor F.R. Scott ("Introduction" xxi).

Both Smith and Scott contributed examples of their landscape poetry to the anthology. Whereas Scott in "Surfaces" repeats themes from earlier poetry like "Old

[25] Michael Gnarowski's "Introduction" to the republication of New Provinces provides a thorough examination of the events surrounding the publication of this work.

Song," Smith's third edition of the "Lonely Land" differs greatly from its previous incarnations.[26] Smith rid the poem of its romantic sentiment, personification and rhyme. Freed from these trappings, the poem skilfully blends the sound and beauty of the cold northern landscape. According to Bentley, the abstraction "beauty / of dissonance" (23-24) "yokes together sensual and visual impression for the purpose of conveying a feeling of the elemental movement and the enduring strength of the North" ("Not of Things" 43). This is a north which survives all oppositions:

> This is the beauty
>
> of strength
>
> broken by strength
>
> and still strong. (35-38)

The modernism and distinctive Canadianism of "The Lonely Land" and other works in New Provinces did not go unnoticed by critics. In his review of the anthology, E.K. Brown proclaimed that the work "marks the emergence before the general readers of the country...of a group of poets who may well have as vivifying an effect on Canadian poetry as the Group of Seven had on Canadian painting" (qtd. in Pacey 204). Although the poets' profile was significantly smaller than that of the painters during the 1930s, publications like New Provinces guaranteed that the poetic developments of Smith and Scott would not be forgotten. The publication of W.E. Collin's White Savannahs shortly after New Provinces further enhanced the profile of the poets. Collin's work was the first full length critical work on Smith, Scott and the McGill poets. In it, he recognized the

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[26] The third and final version of "The Lonely Land" was originally published in the July 1929 edition of The Dial.

poets' efforts to guide Canadian poetry in the direction of modernism.

By the time of the publication of New Provinces, Smith and Scott had parted ways. Although the poets remained friends, their most intensive phase of shared activity ended. Neither man, however, gave up the fight to bring modern poetry into the Canadian forefront. Individually, Smith and Scott actively promoted the new poetry and higher critical standards through their poetry and criticism. While the poets continued to struggle, the Group of Seven were by the mid-1930s officially recognized as Canada's premier art movement. The 1936 retrospective of the Group's art was evidence that the painters had won their battle to revitalize and modernize Canadian art. The following years would see an overwhelming response to the painters and poets as a younger generation of Canadian artists discovered the artistic advancements of Scott, Smith and the Group.

CONCLUSION

When the painters and poets first began their modernist campaigns, they were reacting against the conservatism and low critical standards espoused by the cultural establishment as represented by the Royal Canadian Academy and the Canadian Authors Association. The R.C.A. and the C.A.A. shared a similar approach to the Canadian arts; both desired a "distinctive" Canadian culture without disrupting accepted modes of expression or diminishing their control. The view of the R.C.A. and C.A.A. was shared by the vast majority of Canadian poets, painters and critics. In the eyes of these cultural conservatives, modernism as expressed by the Group, Smith and Scott was an aberration and not suited to Canadian sensibilities.

The Group of Seven objected strongly to the colonial attitude of the R.C.A. and of its supporters, who revered and imitated the European stylings of the late nineteenth-century. The painters felt that artistic innovation was necessary if Canadian art was to advance into the twentieth-century. In line with the Group of Seven's ideology, Smith and Scott wanted Canadian letters to reflect contemporary, not Victorian, issues and aesthetics. In their articles and criticism, the poets protested the commercialism, boosterism and conservatism of the C.A.A. and of its members.

The poets and painters viewed modernism as a means to revitalize and reform Canadian culture. The Group of Seven, Smith and Scott adopted then adapted international modernism to suit their own requirements. The painters drew inspiration from their Scandinavian counterparts and experimented with the techniques and styles of Post-Impressionism and commercial art. Inspired by English and American modernist writers, Smith and Scott imported and explored such modernist techniques as Imagism in

their poetry. These poets and painters were among the first artists in their respective fields in Canada to explore the liberating possibilities of modernism.

With no one else willing to champion the cause, these men appointed themselves spokesmen for the Canadian modern movement. By forming creative alliances, the artists felt that they could more forcefully convey their ideas and aims to a wider audience. In 1920 after nearly ten years of close association, the painters came together as the Group of Seven. As a group, it was easier for the painters to organize exhibitions and to relay their ideas. Like the Group of Seven, Smith and Scott saw the benefits of working as a unified front. With few creative outlets open to them, Smith and Scott organized "little magazines" such as The McGill Fortnightly Review and The Canadian Mercury, which they used to promote their poetry and criticism. The poets and painters also received endorsement from other progressive elements in the Canadian arts. The Group of Seven, Smith and Scott had a strong ally in The Canadian Forum, which published their work and promoted their ideas. The painters also benefited from the unwavering support of the National Gallery and of its director Eric Brown, who shared and defended the Group's aims. As a collective, the Forum, the National Gallery and the artists fought to improve critical standards and to increase awareness of the arts in Canada.

Although working in radically different mediums, the painters and poets displayed at times distinct similarities in choice of subject matter. During the 1920s, both groups prominently featured northern Canadian landscape imagery in their art. Inspired by the prevailing nationalism of the period, the Group of Seven, Smith and Scott through their use of landscape subjects were attempting to create an art that was at the same time modern and distinctly Canadian. The Group of Seven in its paintings was concerned

almost exclusively with Canada's wilderness. This preoccupation with the land was partly a response to the prevalent idealization of the north and of the wilderness which permeated Canadian life. The Group was highly nationalistic and later used such a nationalistic format to diffuse the more controversial aspects of its program--namely, its modernism. Smith and Scott, on the other hand, turned to Canadian subjects largely because it suited their medium. Due to the popularity of the Group of Seven's vision, the poets felt that the Canadianism of their work might increase their appeal to the general public. Although later uncomfortable with the romantic elements of his early poetry, Smith for a brief period shared his friend Scott's nationalism. In the 1930s, both Smith and the painter Lawren Harris became uneasy with naturalistic representation and turned to abstraction.

The similarities between these two artistic movements cannot be denied. The painters and the poets seized upon modernism as a means of expressing an emerging sense of national identity in a powerful contemporary form. These artists championed a Canadian culture which looked beyond the country's boundaries to its place within the international forum. Through their articles, painting and poetry, the Group of Seven, A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott created a distinctly modern Canadian art.

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