

HOW CANADA STOLE THE IDEA OF NATIVE ART:
THE GROUP OF SEVEN AND IMAGES OF THE INDIAN IN THE 1920'S

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the conflicted relationships between the construction of a national culture and identity located in landscape painting and the continuing presence of Native art and identity in Canada in the 1920s. It contends that the first was predicated on the assumed disappearance of the second. The first of five case studies examines and questions the validation of the Group of Seven at the imperial centre: the British Empire Exhibitions held at Wembley in 1924 and 1925, from which Native presence was excluded. The critical responses, collected and republished in Canada, are analyzed to show the unspoken influences of British landscape traditions, the means by which Group paintings were used to re-territorialize the nation, and to destabilize the myth of an essential Canadian national consciousness. The first confrontation between Canadian native and Native art occurred when a small group of Northwest Coast carvings was included within a related exhibition in Paris in 1927. The French critical responses validated the Native pieces but withheld recognition of the Group's works as national and modern. The reviews were collected but suppressed. The third study examines the work of the American artist Langdon Kihn. He was employed by the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways to work with the folklorist/ethnologist Marius Barbeau in producing images of the Stoney in Alberta and Gitksan in British Columbia. His ambiguous works supported claims to Native presence and cultural continuity, which ran contrary to repressive government policies, but were critically disciplined to ensure a message of discontinuity. The fourth investigates a program to restore the poles of the Gitksan, while changing their meaning to one signifying cultural decrepitude. Gitksan resistance testified to their agency, cultural continuity and identity. The fifth examines a program fostered by Barbeau to turn the Gitksan and their poles into the subjects of Canadian painting as "background" for the emerging nation's identity. This confrontation, which included Jackson, Carr and others, foregrounded all the problems. The exhibition which resulted in 1927 unsuccessfully attempted to join Canadian native and Native art and effect closure on the "narration of the nation".

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Introduction

“The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada?”¹

“The ambivalence of settlers toward natives was sharpened by an emerging preoccupation with national identity. . . . Settlers also, of course, frequently wanted to emphasize their modernity and connections with Britain and Europe; hence the use of native reference to proclaim a distinct culture was never the sole basis for declaring identity, but rather one strategy that was often inconsistent with others.”²

This thesis examines the relationships between the formation of a myth of a homogeneous Canadian national culture and identity as defined in the visual arts, and located in the landscapes of the Group of Seven, and the role, or rather lack thereof, which Native identity and presence played in this imaginary and inventive construction, particularly during several crucial years in the mid and late 1920s. I posit that the existence of the first was predicated on and negotiated around the assumed disappearance of the second. It was believed axiomatically at the time when the Dominion was striving for nationhood that Native culture and peoples in Canada were on the verge of extinction and that they no longer belonged to or had a viable place within the new emerging native Canadian culture. The corollary to this was that the latter could take up and occupy the spaces vacated by this presumed absence to proclaim an essential Canadian character, different from its colonial parents because of its profound attachment to the land.

The formation in the post-World War I period of a unique Canadian national identity and culture invested in the visual arts, and specifically in landscape, was not as straightforward as it has sometimes been represented. As with any claim to a new national difference emerging after a period of colonization, this construction was a complex, conflicted and contradictory affair. It

¹Terry Goldie, **Fear and Temptation: the Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literature**, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, p. 12.

²Nicholas Thomas, **Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture**, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, p. 12.

invoked a variety of discourses and disciplines, involved a host of institutions, organizations and individuals acting for a wide diversity of audiences, constituencies and interests and had to be negotiated along many fronts. These did not always proceed harmoniously. Since there were many competing interests and nationalisms at stake here, the emerging image of a national identity was extremely unstable and fragile. It was by no means a simple, clear binary opposition to a colonial parent, although it was often presented as such. Indeed, any claim to a singular, unified national identity involved a multiplicity of ambiguities and ambivalences. This was particularly so because the emerging nation was not only defining itself in terms of Britain, but also in relationship to its neighbor to the south, the United States. In addition it did not have a homogenous internal population, but consisted of several colonizing and immigrant groups, including those who traced their ancestry to France and their occupation of the land back for several hundred years.

But most importantly, the Dominion also had resident indigenous populations predating colonization, whose presence extended into the past for millennia. These diverse peoples were seen as an essentialized collective whole, a single race collectively identified as "Indian" which was bordering on inevitable extinction or assimilation.³ This belief had been extended to a discursive truth which appeared everywhere. Within this context, it served several important functions. Not only did it ensure that the dualism of indigenous and colonialist remained stable, but it privileged the second term by erasing the first, thus allowing an unimpeded construction of the subsequent colonialist/nationalist opposition. Nonetheless, just as the formation of a Canadian identity and difference was riven with divisions and anxieties in the years following the war, so too were the discourses of Native difference and disappearance. It is a further contention of this thesis that they were undergoing a growing crisis during this period and that they were confronting a combination of mounting internal contradictions and external oppositional and resistant voices. The clamor threatened to destabilize what up to that point had long been held as

³I recognize the inherent problems of these terms. I have used *Indian* to signify the constructed, homogeneous race which came into existence through the imperial and colonialist gaze. *Indigenous* and *Native* are used throughout in relationship with the various peoples of the continent who predated colonization.

foundational truths for the discipline of ethnography, the principles of museum collecting and the formation of government policy and legislation, as well as the practice of art in Canada. The ruptures which eventually led to their complete fragmentation were, however, just forming at this point. The initial conflicts they produced resulted in a counter campaign of images in which the management, policing and discipline of the imaginary representation of the Indian became as much a matter of concern as the actuality. This in turn produced a discursive phantasm which corresponded less and less to its original subject and which would have to be abandoned and reformulated in the subsequent decades.

In the meantime, these two mutually supporting discourses - a distinct Canadian identity and a disappearing Native one - intersected at several crucial occasions, when all of the components representing them coalesced. In this thesis I have attempted to isolate these events and examine the mechanisms that directed their progress. I have also, however, added other terms to the discussion to demonstrate how complex and unstable, if not volatile, they actually were.

The case studies that I present occurred more or less simultaneously within a few brief years and were overlapping. Some began somewhat earlier, some ended a little later, but they were all closely linked, intertwined and concurrent. I have separated them into five chapters organized both by individual program and by geographic location. The latter extends from the national capital of Ottawa and the metropolitan centres of London and Paris to the regional and rural areas of Banff, Alberta, and the Gitksan territories in the Upper Skeena Valley, British Columbia. Such textual divisions may tend to create the perception that the events can be considered in historical isolation. This is not the case. Equally, because they are not precisely parallel in time, strict chronological order must sometimes be violated in order to both initiate and complete the discussion of each aspect of this complex set of imbricated events. I hope that I have taken sufficient care to preserve historical specificity and to establish a precise chronology, even if this means, at times, moving back and forth in time, and between the various programs and locations under discussion.

The first two chapters deal with a series of three related exhibitions of Canadian art that were held in London in 1924 and 1925 and in Paris in 1927. These exhibitions provide an entryway into and a route through a set of labyrinthine structures and relationships. This path has, in many important respects, never been fully opened up and at times has been obscured by the narrators of Canadian history. All three exhibitions focused on the Group of Seven and were staged at important sites for negotiating national identities at the international level. A close examination of these intimately related displays, however, demonstrates that there were significant differences that distinguished the content of the shows, their critical receptions and their positions with the narration of Canada as a nation.

The first two exhibitions of Canadian art of interest here were held at one of the primary sites, at that time, for establishing national identity and colonial differences. The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, one in a long series of international expositions, was staged in 1924 and 1925. The Canadian Section for Fine Arts presented in the first year highlighted the Group's works. It was revised and more finely focused on them in the second. The positive responses of British critics to the new Canadian landscapes were interpreted as proof positive of the recognition of Canadian difference and the validation at the Imperial centre of its essentialized and naturalized national identity and culture. The National Gallery of Canada capitalized on this reception by collecting, republishing and distributing the responses to a wide audience in Canada. But while the critical successes of the Wembley shows seemed to confirm that the nationalist discourse which surrounded the Group was secure, evidence shows that it still remained conflicted, unstable and ambivalent.

In fact, I have taken somewhat of a contrarian's position on these "successes". My re-interpretation of the positive critical response challenges the fundamental claims that Group landscape conventions and practices broke decisively and completely with colonial precedents, and that their work sprang primarily from the land itself figured as nature, i.e. that it was "native", autochthonic, originary and thus different from its imperial parent. My readings are founded on an extensive comparison of their production with the history of British landscape

painting which shows very close, yet continuously unspoken, affinities between the new Canadian and the old imperial forms. This re-reading demonstrates that Group work can be seen to recapitulate the primary principles and practices of the picturesque as formulated in the late 1700s, as well as many other aspects of British landscape painting. Making these links apparent tends to clarify why the British critics were successfully able to read the deeper messages of work with which they were ostensibly unfamiliar. But more importantly, it destabilizes one of the major elements of the projected duality on which Canada's claims to a post-colonial identity and difference were based and allows for a more complex and nuanced examination. Furthermore, pointing out the British precedents and sameness within the work of the Group demonstrates how their landscapes were employed to maintain a solidarity with the empire, re-territorialize the country, dispense with other preemptive claims and situate the vast and diverse geography within the imaginary construction of a unified national community.

The second chapter explores the followup exhibition held in Paris in 1927. This was largely based on the second Wembley show, but with some important differences. It too was meant to showcase the Group and further assert its nationalism and identity within a continental and modernist context. But it also included a few pieces of Native work. This small addition to the exhibition was extremely important. It was emblematic of the competing interests in defining Canadian identity that existed among the various immigrant and colonizing groups. In particular, Eric Brown, the English director of the National Gallery of Canada, and Marius Barbeau, the French-Canadian ethnologist/folklorist working for the National Museum, had divergent views on the topic. In addition, Barbeau's cultural interests introduced yet more terms, particularly those of French speaking Canada, which further destabilized and made more complex the now shaky duality. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Native material led to a dramatic shift in the critical responses. Unfamiliar with picturesque precedents, the Parisian critics tended to reverse the expected order and to privilege the Northwest Coast carvings while devaluing the Group work. Indeed, in opposition to the English critics, the French by and large dismissed the claims of the Group to both modernity and nationality. In accounting for the shift within this new audience, I have turned to the history of the "primitive" in the artistic and critical discourses of

Paris and London, as well as what constituted the language of nationalism in each location.

The French reviews, although diligently collected by the National Gallery, were suppressed rather than broadcast. This leads to an examination of why the critical reception in England was seen in Canada as a triumph while that in France was experienced as an embarrassing failure, which had to be concealed and written out of Canadian art history. Definitions of what constituted these successes and failures leads to a further discussion on the role of Native art and culture within the destabilized construction of Canadian identity in this period.

The third chapter turns from the Group to an alternative vision of the Native as represented in the paintings of Langdon Kihn, an American artist invited by the railroads to work with Marius Barbeau in the early twenties in Western Canada. Kihn adds yet one more conflicting element to this complex discourse. His early pre-Canadian experience in the American Southwest placed him in contact with emerging proposals that advocated the preservation of Native cultures - which were seen as continuous - as a means of fostering a distinct, non-European American identity and aesthetic. Kihn's portraits of the Stoneys of Alberta and the Gitksan of the Upper Skeena River done in 1922 and 1924, were, at first, highly successful. They were even displayed at the second Wembley exhibition and were thus integrated into the emerging national culture. I argue, however, that their inherent ambiguities, which tended to produce both Native difference and presence, subsequently ran afoul of the discourses on both the construction of a Canadian identity, which had been destabilized in Paris, and the growing anxiety and uncertainty surrounding the disappearance of the Indian.

This pending disappearance was especially important to both Barbeau and his colleague, Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, who also had a vested interest in formulating a monocultural Canadian identity. Scott found Barbeau's views on the inevitable termination of the Indian race in Canada useful for the state's purposes and collaborated with him in formulating and dispersing this precept to both a popular and scholarly audience. I have examined Barbeau's attempts to shape public perception of Kihn's pictures,

which appeared in two of his books. Barbeau's texts cued his audiences to read Kihn's accompanying illustrations as emblematic of the principles of both Indian racial sameness and disappearance, which, in being primarily portraits of actual people from different groups living in the present, they tended to resist. The chapter examines the conflicted relationships among Barbeau's theories, the state's policies under Scott, and Kihn's images. Chapter Three also takes into account the resistance of Native groups, both on the Prairies and in the Upper Skeena, to Scott's attempts to suppress all traces of Native culture and identity. Indeed, growing opposition from the Native communities threatened to undermine the discourse of disappearance. Kihn's images ultimately lay on the wrong side of this conflict, eventually resulting in his systematic exclusion from the Paris exhibition, as well as from other painting and publishing projects.

The fourth chapter focuses exclusively on the Skeena region, where these joint discursive constructions found their most clear expression, overlapped most extensively and at the same time entered a period of crisis. Two projects within this region formed the sites in which all of the forces and interests coalesced. The first involved a plan to restore the totem poles of the Gitksan people who inhabited the region and who were still actively resisting colonial occupation of their territories. The restoration program was begun in 1925 and was carried on jointly by the National Museum, the Department of Indian Affairs and the Canadian National Railway. The project was ostensibly based on the premise that Gitksan culture was in a state of decrepitude and disappearance. Consequently, it was assumed that they would no longer be raising poles since they had lost all social and artistic aspects of their culture. This precept was distributed as an axiomatic "truth" and was reproduced at every opportunity to as wide an audience as possible in order to naturalize it, that is to make it unquestionable to common sense. It also gave the project the aura of humanitarian concern. Conversely, little public mention was made of the government's attempts to systematically destroy that culture through such policies as the potlatch ban. This concealment led, however, to many problems.

The restoration program soon ran into trouble when the Native population began openly to question the real relationships between the project, the continuity of their culture, the potlatch

ban and the denial of their land claims. As these issues were not open for discussion, the project was actively resisted and by 1927 had begun to fall apart. Given that Gitksan resistance caused the cessation of the program, they can be said to have had agency over it. This in turn attests to their cultural continuity, collective identity, and ability to negotiate successfully and was a testament to the fact that the Indian was not disappearing on schedule. If anything, the opposite was now becoming undeniably evident. Along with resistance on the Prairies and an oppositional stance which appeared within the discipline of ethnology at this time, as represented by Barbeau's colleague, Edward Sapir, this threw into further doubt the fragile discourse of the vanishing Indian as well as that of Canadian identity.

Growing recognition of this anxious situation necessitated further action to shore up these increasingly unstable and linked constructions. Kihn's representations of Native peoples as present and in possession of their culture became problematic, particularly in the face of growing Native resistance and organization. Since policing the image of the Indian now became of primary importance, Kihn's ambiguous works had to be excluded, and replacements found that were more in keeping with the government's position. Not only was he excluded from exhibitions and other projects, in 1925, A. Y. Jackson from the Group of Seven and other associated artists were called in by Barbeau to repaint the same scenes of the Gitksan on the premise or pretext that the specific features of the region formed a new area for a truly Canadian subject matter: namely their villages, their (now termed "our") poles and landscape. Their work would then declare and validate the discourse of the disappearance of the Indian and take possession of both the land and Native culture, whose ownership and vitality was under open dispute. Within this process of re-territorialization, the work asserted a Canadian presence at the same time as it proclaimed a Native absence. Chapter Five examines this work in detail, as well as the subsequent failure of the project, which also met with Native resistance.

Chapter Five further examines the display of the work at the 1927 and 1928 exhibition held in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, called **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, at which all of these disparate elements coalesced for the last time. This exhibition has largely been

seen as the launching pad for Emily Carr's career on the national stage. This has tended to overshadow and obscure other important issues. I have concentrated on the pressures that shaped and modified the initial concept of the exhibition, the actual layout and installation of the material and the critical responses by Canadian commentators to the Native work which attempted to reposition and negotiate its role within the confines of Canadian national identity. Unlike Paris, this discussion was subject to much greater control by those involved and could be shaped according to the necessary agendas. Nonetheless, the two discourses which formed the premises on which the exhibition was based were by this time in tatters. The following decades would then see substantial modifications in each as Canadian identity moved from a monocultural model based on British precedents to a pluralistic "cultural mosaic", as modernism became associated with internationalism, rather than nationalism and as the discourse around Native culture and identity moved first toward one of "revival" and more recently towards one of "survival".

But as much as this dissertation is an attempt to re-examine certain received truths and discursive frameworks concerning native and Native identity as well as colonial and imperial culture in Canada within a specific historical period, it is likewise a product of its own historical setting. This study is, then, also an engagement with the range of critical theory that is currently deployed in any such analysis. Being embedded in its era, my work is based on and shaped by the discussions and methodologies which have given rise to what is now called "post-colonial studies".

Several key works in this field have been especially important. My investigations have been extensively informed by Michael Foucault's theories on discourse as presented in **The Archeology of Knowledge**.⁴ After the events in Paris in 1968, Foucault realized that his concepts of discourse and knowledge were closely linked to power. He explored these

⁴ Michel Foucault, **The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discourse of Language**, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, originally published in French under the title **L'Archéologie du Savoir** by Éditions Gallimard, 1969. Foucault put these theories into practice in **Power/Knowledge**, 1972, **Discipline and Punish**, 1975, and the **History of Sexuality**, especially Volume I, 1978.

relationships in a series of works, including the essays in **Power/Knowledge, Discipline and Punish**, and the **History of Sexuality**, especially Volume I. I have, in particular, used discourse theory to frame the ideas both of the formation of Canadian identity and the disappearance or absence of Indian identity and presence. Foucault defines discursive constructions as complex cultural structures that form truths about their subjects by restricting how they are known, what can be said about them and who has the right to speak with authority on and thus exert power over them. Such discourses are of necessity interdisciplinary and diffuse, and cut across institutional boundaries and diverse practices. This thesis maintains that the construction of Canadian national identity and the disappearance of the Indian were discursive formations within the precise meaning of Foucault's term. These two instances will be the exclusive realms in which I will use the term within the context of Canada. At times, however these discursive frameworks came into contact with others operating on the international scale. These will only be cited as such if clear evidence exists that they too fulfil Foucault's definition.

Foucault's theories have also been put into practice in areas that he approached only obliquely. It has been widely noted that he was deficient in his investigations into colonial and post-colonial relationships. This was left to others. As Robert J. C. Young has stated: "Colonial discourse analysis was initiated as an academic sub-discipline within literary and cultural theory by Edward Said's **Orientalism** in 1978."⁵ Said demonstrated that Foucault's theories could be applied fruitfully to investigating the manner in which a cultural Other was defined from a European viewpoint and can be used to point out discrepancies that could occur between the discursive formations and the actuality.⁶ Such an approach has been of use here in helping to show how the Indian was constructed as a discursive subject in Canada.⁷ Young did, however, criticize Said for completely divorcing the discipline of Orientalism from its subject.

⁵Robert J. C. Young, **Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race**, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 159.

⁶Edward Said, **Orientalism**, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

⁷Said's account of Foucault has itself become a matter of debate and disagreement. See for example, James Clifford, "On *Orientalism*", in James Clifford, **The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art**, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 255 - 276.

I have, as many others working in this area, supplemented both Foucault and Said with the ideas of Homi Bhabha, and especially his work on the formation of nationalism and the nation and the problematic and anxious relationships that exist between colonizers and colonized peoples. In my own work, Bhabha's essays in **The Location of Culture** and **Nation and Narration** have been most helpful.⁸ I have, however, modified both Foucault and Bhabha somewhat by using the theories of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to explain the specific and varying critical receptions to the works of art which will be examined within this discursive framework. Here I have referred both to **Distinction** and **The Field of Cultural Production**, especially the essay "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception".⁹ Of most value have been Bourdieu's postulates that reading a work of art does not depend on taste or any essentialized aesthetic qualities, but rather on a competence in the codes by which it is constructed, and that restricted access to these codes can reinforce a certain social structure and identity through a sense of inclusion and belonging. While it is true that Bourdieu has a limited notion of what constitutes the field of cultural production, seeing the function of art as largely an affirmation of entrenched class structures and that he does not theorize the existence of an oppositional avant garde, or a politically engaged artistic practice, his model can still be used effectively within this discussion. Although there are many affinities between Foucault and Bourdieu, who were friends at the College de France, disparities still exist between the two.¹⁰ For example, Bourdieu differs from Foucault in his ideas of the production of the social and the artistic. His formations are frequently less interdisciplinary, and tend to fall into autonomous "fields", which while linked, are not joined in the complex discursive frameworks of Foucault. In addition, Bourdieu's theories are largely class-based, a formulation eschewed in Foucault's anti-Marxist stance. On the other hand, unlike Bourdieu, Foucault, in his attempts both to indicate that discourses are formed through a multiplicity of sources and avenues that are difficult to isolate and to avoid any

⁸Homi Bhabha, ed., **Nation and Narration**, London: Routledge, 1990. Homi Bhabha, **The Location of Culture**, London: Routledge, 1994.

⁹Pierre Bourdieu, **Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste**, Cambridge: Harvard, 1984. Pierre Bourdieu, "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception", in **The Field of Cultural Production**, New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁰Bourdieu, **The Field of Cultural Production**, p. 1.

Marxist tendency which would place them exclusively in the hands of one class or power base, diminished the role of the state as a central body in the formation of discourse and power. In the present case, however, it can be demonstrated that the state played a major role in the formation of these two discourses since the disciplines, institutions and individuals which are examined, i.e. art, the museum, the gallery, the railroad, art history, ethnography, curatorial practice, art criticism and so on were at that time all closely, indeed inextricably bound to the state. Thus, I have followed the path many have taken and have also included something of the ideas concerning the construction of subject positions and “the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” which Althusser expressed in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”¹¹

I am also deeply indebted to the work of Annie Coombes, Nicholas Thomas and James Clifford in opening up new terrain in the field of post-colonial discourses. While admittedly something of a heterodox methodological and interdisciplinary cocktail, I think it is a potent mix that leads to clarity rather than delirium.

Any exploration of the complex proceedings outlined above would have been impossible without the extensive scholarly research that has occurred within the various areas under investigation. The topic itself had its origins in the research for my Master’s thesis where I first encountered the complex negotiations ongoing in the 1920s in the Skeena.¹² I pursued the subject of government programs in the area while working with Dennis Reid at the University of Toronto.¹³ While provoking little interest at the time, the topic has since been the subject of intense scrutiny, as I discovered when I returned to it. Although it is impossible to list all the material that has appeared, I would like to point to several texts that have been of great importance for my own

¹¹Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971, p. 170.

¹²Leslie Dawn, “Ksan: Museum, Cultural and Artistic Activity Among the Gitksan Indians of the Upper Skeena, 1920 - 1973”, MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1981.

¹³Leslie Dawn, “Native Art in the 1920s: Exposure and Response”, research paper, University of Toronto, 1985.

work. Maureen Ryan's 1990 article "Picturing Canada's Native Landscape: Colonial Expansion, National Identity, and the Image of a 'Dying Race'", established several principles operative in the late nineteenth century that I will take up for the early twentieth.¹⁴ Much of the most recent work focusing on the various aspects of the activities in the precise area of my investigation are in the form of unpublished graduate and post-graduate work. In particular I would like to cite Ann Morrison's 1991 Master's thesis done at UBC, "Canadian Art and Cultural Appropriation: Emily Carr and the 1927 Exhibition of **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**"¹⁵, Lynda Jessup's 1992 dissertation from the University of Toronto, "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and 'The Business of Becoming a Nation'"¹⁶ and Sandra Dyck's 1995 Master's thesis from Carleton, "'These Things are Our Totems:' Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s"¹⁷ as important contributions to the field.

My first encounter with the idea that the paintings of the Group could be seen as an extension of the British picturesque tradition and whose claims to representing an inclusive, unified national identity could thus be questioned, came from reading François-Marc Gagnon's article, "Painting in Quebec in the Thirties".¹⁸ Although it appeared over twenty-five years ago, the concept has never, to my knowledge, been adequately followed up. This has not been for the lack of supporting material. In the interim, and especially since the mid-1980s, there has been a wide variety of studies into the political aspects of landscape painting in Britain and of the picturesque itself. Many of these, such as Ann Bermingham's investigation into landscape and ideology, to

¹⁴Maureen Ryan, "Picturing Canada's Native Landscape: Colonial Expansion, National Identity, and the Image of a 'Dying Race'", *RACAR*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1990, pp. 138 - 149.

¹⁵Ann Katherine Morrison, "Canadian Art and Cultural Appropriation: Emily Carr and the 1927 Exhibition of **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**", MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1991.

¹⁶Lynda Jessup, "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and 'The Business of Becoming a Nation'", Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Toronto, 1992.

¹⁷Sandra Dyck, "'These Things Are Our Totems:' Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s", MA thesis, Carleton University, 1995.

¹⁸François-Marc Gagnon, "Painting in Quebec in the Thirties", *Journal of Canadian Art History*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1976), pp. 2 - 20.

which I owe much, were, in turn, indebted to John Barrell's seminal work, **The Dark Side of the Landscape**.¹⁹ Malcolm Andrews, who has recently published a general history of Western landscape painting, produced his study of the picturesque in 1989.²⁰ Also of great importance to the current task was the appearance of W. J. T. Mitchell's anthology on **Landscape and Power**.²¹ Mitchell points out the substantial emerging literature on the holdover of the picturesque in the British colonies. He both calls for an investigation into the imperial landscape in terms of its "historical function in the formation of a colonial and national identity" and an exploration of the "ideological use of their conventions in a specific place and time."²² The studies he cites have been, however, largely confined to India, Australia and New Zealand, and have almost entirely excluded Canada. Mitchell indicates that the primary difference between these countries and North America lies in the complexities that arise from the resistance of the Native populations within the latter. It is my hope that I have taken up where Mitchell has left off.

But perhaps above all, it was Scott Watson's provocative article which appeared in the **Canadas** issue of **Semiotext(e)** which I helped edit, that spurred my return to the subject. His invocation - "Canadians are often told that the challenge to visualize this territory, to confront and psychically own the land of Canada has been the highest task of her writers and artists. But few question the relation of this tradition to historical reality" - was a tremendous stimulus.²³

¹⁹Ann Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. John Barrell, **The Dark Side of the Landscape: the Rural Poor in English Landscape Painting, 1730 - 1840**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

²⁰Malcolm Andrews, **The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760 - 1800**, Aldershot and Stanford, 1989. Malcolm Andrews, **Landscape and Western Art**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

²¹W. J. T. Mitchell, **Landscape and Power**, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.

²²Mitchell, p. 23.

²³Scott Watson, "Race, Wilderness, Territory and the Origins of Modern Canadian Landscape Painting", in **Canadas**, New York: Semiotext(e), 1994, pp. 93 - 104.

What follows, will, I hope not only throw new light on the investigations I began over two decades ago by placing them within a larger historical context and a more contemporary theoretical framework, but also open up to re-evaluation certain critical, but hitherto essentially unexamined, events.

Chapter 1

The Englishness of Canadian Art

“We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable, paradox: modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so ‘natural’ as to require no definition other than self-assertion.”¹

Canada: Constructing an Identity

The 1920s were a heady decade for Canada. As the general histories tell us, the young Dominion, although still a part of the British Empire and not yet fully recognized as a separate country, was “coming of age” and “cutting its apron strings”.² This was not, however, an easy maturation. Stated less metaphorically, it can be said that in the years before and after World War I, the emerging, modern nation underwent an anxious and contested transformation. Various agencies and institutions were attempting along many fronts to imagine and establish a singular national culture and identity which would clearly signal the independent post-colonial status to which it aspired politically, and which the Statute of Westminster would make official in 1931.³

¹Eric Hobsbawm, “The Nation as Invented Tradition”, in J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, **Nationalism**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 76.

²“To members of English Canada’s intellectual community, the end of the Great War symbolized their country’s coming of age. The only attribute of full-grown nationhood that post-war Canada appeared to them to lack was a culture that could reflect this new national status and demonstrate, to Canadians and the world, that Canada had left behind her unlettered adolescence and entered a more refined adulthood.” John Herd Thomson with Allen Seager, **Canada 1922 - 1939: Decades of Discord**, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985, p. 158.

³“A resurgence of Canadian nationalism characterized the 1920s. . . . The Great War may have been fought for the British empire, but both its course and outcome made Canadians more conscious of their nation’s distinctiveness. In the 1920s Canadian nationalism wore a dual face. On the one hand, it had to reflect Canada’s new international status. On the other, it had to protect the country from being overwhelmed by foreign culture. . . . The task was . . . to organize national cultural organizations and institutions that would mobilize a new sense of national consciousness.” J. M. Bumsted, **A History of the Canadian Peoples**, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 290 - 291. Bumsted goes on to outline several journals, awards, and the Group of Seven as part of this enterprise.

The process was not without problems. Until 1900 the Dominion had closely identified itself with its colonial parent. Furthermore, in attempting to define itself as different from Britain in the twentieth century, Canada was already following the lead of England, which had been engaged in a project to define its own national culture under both the Liberals and Conservatives since the turn of the century.⁴ A similar attempt had been underway in France since the 1890s.⁵ Somewhat ironically, then, attempts in Canada to proclaim its post-colonial independence through recourse to a homogeneous national identity also reaffirmed its allegiance to and dependence on Britain and France, which served as models for its enterprise. This paradoxical situation, however, corresponded to Canadian foreign policy developed throughout the war: maintaining imperial solidarity and at the same time asserting independence from England. Here we can see the first sign that declarations and constructions of colonial dependence and independence, and national difference and similarity, were entwined in complex, equivocal, contradictory and even paradoxical ways.

Many factors within Canada mitigated against the fulfilment and realization of the desire for such an idealistic project. Even though the war is usually depicted as consolidating the drive to independence, especially in its later phases when Canada successfully asserted its rights to control its own troops, it did not assist in unifying the nation.⁶ English and French speaking

⁴Annie Coombes, **Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 187. "Over the period 1902 to 1910, the constitution of a 'national' culture was a feature of the bid for political ascendancy by both Tory and Liberal administrations in Britain." Coombes also points out the extent to which colonial exhibitions contributed to this cause during the period of "consolidation" prior to the war.

⁵On the formation of a French national identity see E. Weber, **Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France, 1870 -1914**, London: Chatto & Windus, 1979.

⁶The war not only split French speaking Canada from Anglophones, but also led to the repression of many other ethnic and immigrant groups who were not British. Bumsted points out: "French Canada was not alone in becoming isolated by the war. Members of Canada's other ethnic minorities, many of them originating in parts of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire, found themselves under attack. The government became increasingly repressive as the war continued. It interned 'aliens' by Order in Council and suppressed much of the foreign language press." In short, the imposition of an Anglophone monoculture, loyal to England, seemed the objective. Bumsted, p. 262. As we will see systematic repression also applied to Native culture during this period, for different but related reasons. It should be noted that labor also suffered under this repression when strikes and lockouts were outlawed. After the war and the General Strike in Winnipeg in 1919, unrest was again blamed on "foreign rioters", while "[t]he Canadian naturalization Act was hastily amended in early June 1919 to allow for the instant deportation

groups, the latter bitterly opposing the introduction of conscription, and each already having its own identity, history, and cultural agenda, now further separated politically, particularly after the 1917 elections when voting split along linguistic lines. There was, consequently, concerted resistance to those who wished to foster a homogenous national identity, even within the institutions which were attempting to construct it. Indeed, there was little unanimity on the question of what shape the unity would take. The necessity of an identity which, at least ostensibly, cut across the borders of the two official languages was however evident.

Furthermore, the Dominion was relatively young and lacked a deep history, spanned a vast and diverse geography, contained differing colonizing and immigrant groups, and had a resident indigenous population predating colonization. Bertram Brooker summarized this condition succinctly in 1929: “[G]eographically we are not unified . . . Racially we are split ‘forty ways’ . . . Historically we have no past as a people.” He concluded: “We are *not yet* a people!”⁷ Still, nothing short of a new, singular, seamless, and some would even say racial, identity was mooted and occupied a place within popular and political circles as well as in Brooker’s own publication which was dedicated to the national uniqueness of the Dominion’s arts.⁸ Insofar as this can be construed as a discourse, it had to be constructed, disseminated, circulated, and reproduced as a new “truth” within which Canada, and its differences, could be legitimately discussed, defined and known. Decisions had to be made as to who would belong to or be excluded from it, who would be “Canadian” and who would be “Other”, as well as who had the authority to speak of it. In addition, the tricky question of what it would be based upon also had to be broached. Consensus on these issues was not easy to achieve even within the institutions that promoted them. Given the problems confronting the project, it was, perhaps, doomed to failure from the start. It could thus never be anything but a convenient if difficult to maintain fiction based on a

of any foreign-born radicals who advocated revolution or who belonged to ‘an organization entertaining or teaching disbelief in or opposition to organized government.’” Bumsted, p. 270. Loyalty was also then obligatory to capital.

⁷Bertram Brooker, “When We Awake”, in **The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928 - 1929**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1929, pp. 5 - 6. His emphasis.

⁸See Lawren Harris, “Creative Art and Canada”, in Brooker, **Yearbook**, p. 85 or F. B. Housser, **A Canadian Art Movement: the Story of the Group of Seven**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1926, p. 17.

sequence of shifting and ambiguous boundaries and definitions that had to be continuously renegotiated.⁹ But the stakes were high; it was argued, with some exaggeration, that the future of the country rested on the success of the venture, and so the project proceeded apace.

The Group of Seven: Questioning a Critical Jargon

On the artistic side, with which I am primarily concerned here, programs were going well. The paintings of the Group of Seven, formed in 1920, asserted an autonomous, modern, visual culture rooted in the landscape, severed from colonial ties, and ostensibly, not language dependent. In fact Canada seemed to have led the way in using the visual arts as part of what Hobsbawm would call an “invented tradition” to assert a national identity.¹⁰ The narrative in which this history has usually been told is generally structured around a series of heroic struggles and inevitable triumphs over various oppositions. These include an entrenched and *retardataire* Academy, a philistine and unsupportive public, a hostile critical press, indifferent, albeit wealthy, collectors with conservative tastes who preferred Hague School daubs, and a lack of institutional encouragement amounting to neglect, all blind to the value of the new, modern Canadian art and their own nationalism. In the face of these travails, the Group is represented as being undeterred in their attempts to wrest an unmediated response from the recalcitrant Canadian wilderness.

⁹This uncertain state corresponds to the concept of the modern nation itself. See the various attempts to define the term in Hutchinson and Smith, *passim*. See also Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism**, London: Verso, 1991, rev. ed.

¹⁰Hobsbawm, p. 77. Canadian efforts to join painting and nationalism are now recognized as exemplary. Malcolm Andrews in his recent study **Landscape and Western Art**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 158 - 159, singles out Canada and the Group as demonstrable proof of his theories on landscape and nationalism. See also Richard R. Brettell, **Modern Art 1851 - 1929: Capitalism and Representation**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 206 - 207, in which he illustrates Tom Thomson and Lawren Harris as exemplars of his theory of “National Landscape Painting”. “Each one of the great national collections proves that international art was produced by national artists using native scenery as their raw material. In this way, Tom Thomson (1877 - 1917) or Lawren Harris (1885 -1970) created a bold international image of Canada that linked the pictorial achievements of avant-garde Europeans with the most isolated national scenery of their country . . . Not only were these paintings emblems of pride in Canada, they were routinely exported to the nations that mattered most for Canada: Britain, France, and the United States, for exhibitions of Canadian art. Yet it was precisely their modernity (and, by implication, foreignness) that led many Canadian writers and critics to decry them.” My reading of Group art will diverge somewhat from Brettell’s simplified gloss.

Their art was thus seen as born directly from this encounter with Nature and the land itself. It was, hence, portrayed as native, indigenous and autochthonic, terms that had been applied to the Indian. But since the latter was thought of as disappearing, they were open for appropriation and colonization. The rugged individualists of the Group, in turn, were portrayed as being as vital, vigorous and virile as the isolated, wild, wind swept pines which thrived in this rocky soil and became both their own emblem and that of the young nation. Endlessly repeated with various emphases and figures, this narrative has been naturalized into the history of the country and its art.

Conversely, evidence has now accumulated that has cast doubt on this structure and destabilized it, if not turned it on its head. Recent studies are beginning to coalesce into an entirely different and more complex narrative which circulates largely within academe. In this alternative and still somewhat fragmentary story the Group is portrayed as supported, if not subsidized, by powerful federal, provincial, civic, corporate and local institutions and individuals from well before their actual formation. It argues that the press was for the main part compliant and supportive and that the popular public reaction was positive. Furthermore it claims that the Academy was already marginalized, kept on the defensive and cut off from support by the National Gallery and the Group who were adept at power relationships, infiltration, back room maneuvering, controlling their own press, fostering their own myth and promoting their own interests. In this re-telling, Group paintings appear to be hothouse products, carefully nurtured and tended within a supportive institutional and cultural framework in which the critical climate was carefully controlled.

A brief sampling of the literature limited to the issue of oppositionality indicates the extent to which these two conflicting visions have been presented throughout the Group's history. The future members of the Group had already carefully articulated their claim to oppositionality well before their actual formation. Indeed, they used it to great advantage. As early as 1917, J. E. H. MacDonald published "A Landmark of Canadian Art" in **The Rebel** as a tribute to Tom Thomson. MacDonald here inscribed the myth.

Scribbling habitués of the theaters looked on their work as new vaudeville, and primly found fault with their painting of Nature. There were ribald criticisms and Donnybrook controversies, only kept in check by the law of libel and the timidity of unrebelling editors. Thomson took little part in these things, beyond supplying a goodly share of exasperating art for the critics.¹¹

MacDonald was less reticent than Thomson and would go on to repeat these claims for himself and his associates whenever the occasion seemed to offer advantage. What he always failed to point out were the volumes of positive press and the enormous support from various institutions that they were receiving.

On the occasion of the first Group exhibition, Harris re-inscribed the principle of critical oppositionality into the foreword to the catalogue. He stated that, "it seems inevitable when something vital and distinctive arises it will be met . . . by ridicule, abuse or indifference." In case this did not provide sufficient emphasis he repeated the statement in the final paragraph: "The artists invite adverse criticism."¹² A image of oppositionality was, then, integral to their program.

After the Group's formation, F. H. Housser consolidated the myth for popular consumption.

There was nought to be gained either of fame or money by going to the backwoods and painting in a manner which they knew would be disliked by those who judged their work; nor by launching into an adventure in which they have to this day persisted through ridicule and even slander. They set their conviction against the entire press of the country and the opinion of those whose word was accepted as authoritative in Canada on questions of art.¹³

Housser seems unaware of the irony involved in painting the Group as rejecting fame, fortune and validation in the eyes of Canadians at the same time as he is ensuring all of these.

¹¹MacDonald, cited in Douglas Fetherling, ed., **Documents in Canadian Art**, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1987, p. 40.

¹²Lawren Harris, "Foreword", **Group of Seven Catalogue of Paintings, 1920**, Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, n.p.

¹³Housser, **A Canadian Art Movement**, p. 118.

The notion of oppositionality was deeply ingrained within the identity of the Group from its very formation and is still endlessly repeated and circulated. It is in fact difficult to abandon without undermining their most fundamental claims. R. H. Hubbard repeated it without question in 1960. Speaking of the first exhibition of the Group, he stated, “[t]he storm of abuse which these unconventional pictures drew down upon the artists lasted all through the twenties.”¹⁴ J. Russell Harper took this further when he claimed that, “the daily press during and long after the First World War published reams of bitter denunciation and invective about the decadent ideas which future Group members were spreading in their paintings and which most columnists felt were an affront to common decency.”¹⁵ Charles Hill’s 1995 monumental and otherwise well-researched catalogue for the Group of Seven exhibition is a case in point in which these tropes are, to a degree, still played out.¹⁶ He was, however, more explicit and less moderate in an earlier essay published in 1991 in which the conflict is reduced to an elegant, if fictitious, binary between progressive, farseeing artists and their supporters and conservative, philistine academicians.¹⁷ This drastically oversimplifies the actuality.

In order to maintain this impression of critical oppositionality, Housser, Harper and Hill were all obliged to overlook actual historical fact. As early as 1970, Peter Mellen had documented what he called the Group’s “hypersensitivity to criticism” and “distorted picture of reactions to the first Group shows” and their exaggerated insistence on being the targets of a uniformly hostile press. Having actually reviewed the reviews, rather than repeating received ideas, he stated, “Surprisingly, the reaction of the press to the 1920 show was almost the exact opposite of what the Group [and many others] claimed it to be. . . . It seems amazing now that scarcely one word

¹⁴R. H. Hubbard, *An Anthology of Canadian Art*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 25.

¹⁵J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: a History*, Second Edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, p. 263. First published, 1966.

¹⁶Charles Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995.

¹⁷Charles Hill, “The National Gallery, a National Art, Critical Judgement and the State”, in Michael Tooby, ed., *The True North: Canadian Landscape Painting 1896 - 1939*, London: Lund Humphries, 1991, pp. 65 - 83.

of adverse criticism can be found in the original newspaper reviews."¹⁸ It now seems that Housser, Harper and Hill, and the Group themselves, participated in creating and reproducing a self-supporting discursive formation which ran contrary to actual events. To the extent that this is so, it could be said that Said's concept of Orientalism, defined as a method for constructing a fictional controlling knowledge of a foreign Other, can also be applied to the formation of a knowledge of a national Self.

The unity of this Self is, however, now under question. It is currently recognized, at least within academic circles, that the Group occupied anything but an oppositional position. The institutional support and subsidization of the Group by the National Gallery, as well as the defensive position of the Academy, has been well documented by Ann Davis.¹⁹ She has also clearly indicated the limited number, albeit highly sensational and hence much republished, jeremiads of Hector Charlesworth. These usually play a large role in these retellings despite the fact that in the overall context of critical support they are hardly representative of the general positive but less spectacular reviews and articles. She also has pointed out the positive public response which corresponded to the general tenor of most of the reviews of Group work.²⁰

Despite this, populist anthologies such as Douglas Fetherling's **Documents in Canadian Art**, continue to reprint only the notorious negative reviews by Gadsby and Charlesworth, and ignore the rest. This presents a highly selective, if singular, vision which does much to perpetuate the mythic claim of a uniformly hostile press.²¹ Any positive account has been excluded from this and other histories. The careful selection of and emphasis on negative criticisms does more than just reinforce the Group's claims to oppositionality and thereby create and perpetuate a discursive

¹⁸Peter Mellen, **The Group of Seven**, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, pp. 99 - 101.

¹⁹Ann Davis, "The Wembley Controversy in Canadian Art", **Canadian Historical Review**, Vol. 54 (March 1973), pp. 48 - 74.

²⁰See also: Douglas Cole, "Artists, Patrons and Public: an Inquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven", **Journal of Canadian Studies**, Vol. 13 (Summer 1978), pp. 69 - 78.

²¹Douglas Fetherling, ed., **Documents in Canadian Art**, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1987, p. 40.

“truth”. It also prevents any investigation into the possibility that such claims might have been, and still may be, a necessary strategy to disguise and stave off criticism of the degree to which they were supported and subsidized. Indeed, we still await an investigation into the manner in which the members of the Group strategically invited, parried, exaggerated and employed adverse criticism to their advantage. It was often the case that one piece of bad press could be used to generate a contrived and controlled “controversy” that would ignite a whole host of supportive responses, far outweighing the initial piece of invective.²² Such an overview could open up another aspect of their practice that, while running counter to accepted histories, would be highly instructive.

In any case, using the space opened up by these alternative narratives, I would like to reexamine in this chapter certain other aspects of the myth of the Group that I think have still not been fully explored. Bhabha’s theories on what he terms the narration of nations provide access to the ambiguities and uncertainties that underscore the broadly accepted concept of the unified nation, as well as the hierarchies and dualities on which such claims are based. I hope to demonstrate how such hierarchies and binaries were put into play during this period, but equally how unstable and incommensurable they were with the concept of Canada as a “nation”. I shall argue that the work of the Group of Seven was necessary for this new Canadian identity, not so much because it reaffirmed or represented an essential Canadianness already existing and awaiting form, that was different from its colonial parent(s), but rather because it filled an imposing lacuna in the text of the nation, that is an anxious lack that threatened that very construction.²³ National necessity, not

²²See Peter Larisey, **Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris’s Work and Life - An Interpretation**, Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993, p. 29. “Gadsby’s article was the single negative response they received at this stage: reaction was usually favourable. They attempted to fan any mention of criticism into a public issue.” It should, of course, also be mentioned that Gadsby’s notorious “Hot Mush” review never mentions them or their art by name, or by any identifiable inference and seems, in fact, targeted elsewhere, but was claimed by the future Group members as directed solely at themselves and characteristic of the general response at the time. See Larisey, note 27, p. 185.

²³ “I am attempting to write of the western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture. This locality is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity: a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; more symbolic than ‘society’; more connotative than ‘country’; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than the reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen; more collective than ‘the subject’; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications - gender, race or class - than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary

Nature, was the mother of this “invention”, and it was lack, rather than presence that brought it into existence.

For example, Bhabha indicates that

[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation - or narration - might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous primeval present of the *Volk*.²⁴

As we have seen, Canada, as it was conceived by those wishing to foster a national culture and identity in the 1920s, lacked such a deep history and a *volk* as well as other qualities which were deemed essential to nationhood.

The sense of necessity and urgency that this “lack” produced accounts for the broad institutional support which the Group received from the very beginning. Those wishing to promote and establish such an identity found it necessary to invent and construct an autochthonic national myth as compensation for the absence of a unique, unifying geography, a distant past which could claim that land or an ancient *volk* with its accompanying lore which could underwrite its claims as a nation.²⁵ This mythically originary, yet at the same time, modern, national image, invested in the Group of Seven, rested on several claims, which have long been taken for granted and even naturalized into the nationalist discourse, but which need to be opened up to question.

The second aspect of the myth of the Group that I will explore in this chapter is the premise that

structuring of social antagonism.” Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation”, in H.K. Bhabha, ed., **Nation and Narration**, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 292.

²⁴Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation”, in Bhabha, **Nation and Narration**, p. 1.

²⁵See Anderson, p. 11. “If nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past.”

their work and this identity formed a distinctive departure in the history of artistic production in Canada in which colonialist conventions were supplanted abruptly with modern, indigenous, native forms, albeit with some references to Post-Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Scandinavian art. I want particularly to focus on the supposition that the production of the Group was, aside from these influences, native, indigenous and autochthonic, that is that its conventions sprang primarily from a direct experience of the land, portrayed as an empty wilderness. Insofar as the work could be seen as rejecting colonial connections, it was heralded as being distinctly and natively Canadian, and thus different from English and European precedents. This simple dualism which has served so long as the foundation of the myth does not, however, take into account the ambiguities of the situation and its complex negotiations.

Using the first staging of the Group in England at the British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley as a primary site in which this claim was first put to the test, I will examine the critical reception to the work. This will demonstrate that the positive responses, seen as proof of the success of the nationalist enterprise, were, on the contrary, based on the fact that the work recapitulated the subject matter, pictorial conventions, painting practices and political claims of British landscape traditions. These include not only many of the pictorial conventions and practices of the picturesque but also what Malcolm Andrews calls the “issues of property and territorial control”, “the propagandistic transmission of national identity” and the ability to represent “pictorial colonization” and what Young calls “re-territorialization”.²⁶ In one more turn of the myth, I will assert that, despite the fact that the work was heralded as native, autochthonic and indigenous, it owed much, including its most cherished claims, to its colonial parent, thus proclaiming both difference and similarity at the same time. In short, I would like to suggest that the Group is as much the last gasp of colonialism as it the first breath of the new nation.

Eric Brown, the director of the National Gallery of Canada, who had been actively collecting and promoting what would become famous as Group of Seven work since he first took his post

²⁶Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, pp. 157-158 and 162. Andrews refers here directly to Lawren Harris. Young, pp. 169 - 174.

before the war, was one of the instrumental figures at the forefront of the institutional drive for a singular national visual identity.²⁷ Brown, who emigrated from England to Canada in 1909, was not a professional in the field of art. His wife later attested to his somewhat thin credentials for the elevated positions he was given by citing his direct experience with the principles and practices of British landscape painting. He learned these from “his elder brother Arnesby (later Sir Arnesby) . . . [who] had acquired a reputation as a landscape painter. . . . In the summer months Arnesby and [his wife] Mia joined the artist’s colony of St Ives, known as the Newlyn School of open-air painters, and here again when Eric was with them he learnt much of the artist’s outlook.”²⁸ Although limited, this background was sufficient to provide him with a career in Canada. Here he met Byron Edmund Walker, the president of the Bank of Commerce, who had become chairman of the Advisory Arts Council to the National Gallery in 1909.²⁹ Walker, a staunch supporter of maintaining close ties with the Empire, hired Brown as curator in 1911 and appointed him director in 1912.³⁰ The following year the gallery was given official status and

²⁷See Anne Whitelaw, “‘Whiffs of Balsam, Pine, and Spruce’: Art Museums and the Production of a Canadian Aesthetic”, in Jody Berland and Shelly Hornstein, eds., **Capital Culture: a Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art**, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000, p. 122, for a discussion of the manner in which the National Gallery, “ascribe[d] a coherence to, as well as to contain, a diverse set of practices and traditions that may be characterized as ‘Canadian,’ advancing a single unified national culture that would effect a (unified) national identity.”

²⁸Maud Brown, **Breaking Barriers: Eric Brown and the National Gallery**, s.l.: the Society for Art Publications, 1963, pp. 12 - 13.

²⁹Brown’s surprising lack of background for such a prestigious position has largely escaped comment as has the fact of his recent arrival in the country. Hill, for example, says that he had “studied art in England”. Hill, “The National Gallery, A National Art, Critical Judgement and the State”, p. 70, citing Maud Brown as the source. Sitting at the elbow of his brother in St. Ives, however, is not exactly the same thing as specialized study in the field. Philip Dodd indicates, on the other hand, that this experience may have been very pertinent to the task Brown faced in Canada. Both the St. Ives and Newlyn art colonies played a role in appropriating Celtic territory and history in Cornwall into a larger English national identity in a relationship of centre and periphery expressed through landscape painting in the late 1800s. “Englishness and the National Culture”, in David Boswell and Jessica Evans, eds., **Representing the Nation: a Reader: Histories, Heritage and Museums**, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 97 - 98. The Newlyn and St. Ives groups insisted on the principle of picturesque plein air painting, especially in rural surroundings at some remove from urban centres. It was so much the better if it involved roughing it in inclement weather. See for example the entry on Stanhope Forbes, one of the leading Newlyn painters, in Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre, eds., **Painting in Newlyn 1880 - 1930**, London: Barbicon Art Gallery, [1985], p. 58.

³⁰In 1911 Walker “led the way” in bringing down the Laurier government for its proposed policy of continental reciprocity which it was felt “put continentalism ahead of the British connection” and “would weaken the ties which bind Canada to the Empire.” J. L. Finlay and D. N. Sprague, **The Structure of Canadian History**, Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1979, p. 231.

entered a new period in its existence.³¹

A mandate to foster a distinctly Canadian art must have been made clear immediately. Almost from the start, Brown took an interest in the painters who would form the Group of Seven. By 1912 he was already calling for a distinctly Canadian art and within a year was buying significant quantities of work by these artists, as well as by Tom Thomson.³² By 1914 Brown was in communication with and receiving advice from A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris.³³ This rapid predisposition towards presumably relative unknowns is remarkable given both his newness to the country, the newness of the painters and ostensible newness of the style and subject which they had suddenly adopted and in which they were all now working. Nonetheless, from this date forward they received the continued favourable attention of the most prestigious and powerful art institution of the country. By the time the Group was actually in place in 1920, Brown, with others sympathetic to the cause, and with the aid of the Group itself, had constructed, reproduced and put into circulation a critical jargon which articulated how their works sprang from the land itself, were without outside, or at least without colonial, influence and represented a unique national identity which went beyond the divisions of language and geographic barriers.³⁴ Indeed, a critical literature, resulting from a series of important exhibitions in Canada and the United States which immediately followed, rapidly arose to offer support to this assertion to a growing public. Yet several paradoxes inhabit this claim to being autochthonic, native, indigenous and national. As Bhabha indicates, national myths are frequently unstable, ambivalent and riddled

³¹One of the National Gallery's first acts under its new status in 1913 was to acquire a painting by Arnsby Brown. *In Suffolk* (61 x 72") had been illustrated in *Studio* and was precisely the formula against which the Group would later rail. It shows a herd of cows in a tonal landscape. R. H. Hubbard, **The National Gallery of Canada: Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture, Volume II, Modern European Schools**, University of Toronto Press, 1960, p. 60.

³²In 1913, "... the National Gallery of Canada bought works by Harris, Jackson, Lismer, MacDonald and Tom Thomson. Walker had already been instrumental in persuading the government of Ontario to buy a Thomson, a Lismer and a MacDonald." Larisey, p. 30.

³³Cole, "Artists, Patrons and Public", p. 75.

³⁴See Hill, **The Group of Seven**, Chapters 1 through 4. The classic example, albeit after the fact, is F. H. Housser's **A Canadian Art Movement**. It is no coincidence that his book appeared at this critical moment. Its fundamental assertions, however, as Hill demonstrates, had been in circulation for over a decade.

with internal contradictions.

By the mid-1920s the project, with the active support, and even subsidization, of various institutions beyond the National Gallery, had undergone several trials at home and seemed secure. The time had come to test these claims to a new national native visual identity in the international arena. The two shows held in 1924 and 1925 at the British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley were a golden opportunity. The location was of great importance. England was the colonial parent, the so-called “mother country”, from whom Canada was perceived as cutting its apron strings and hence gaining its own autonomous cultural and political identity.³⁵ Canada, then, returned ritualistically to the colonial centre for recognition of its independence and difference won during the War, while at the same time, declaring its solidarity with the Empire. Much rode on these shows, in which various audiences and publics compared Canadian modern art, albeit in a non-art forum designed to showcase colonial achievements, with that from other areas of the Empire, such as Australia, India, New Zealand, Burma and South Africa, as well as that of England.

The two Canadian exhibitions at Wembley in 1924 and 1925 were organized by the National Gallery, whose board of trustees appointed the jury for selecting the works. The first was a large and mixed affair, with 270 works by 108 artists. According to Hill “Group members and Tom Thomson [were] represented by only 20 canvases.”³⁶ At less than ten percent of the total, it would seem, especially with the insertion of the “only”, that they were almost neglected. One needs, however, to look as critically at his statistics as his semantics. He strategically downplays their actual presence by counting neither their numerous prints, nor the twelve sketches by

³⁵Ramsay Cook equates the importance of this exhibition, along with the publication of Housser’s **A Canadian Art Movement** with that of the Balfour Declaration in the development of Canadian national identity in 1926. The Balfour Declaration “provided the theoretical explanation for the autonomy of the Dominions within the British Commonwealth. The Dominions were now recognized as nations in the traditional sense of having the right to control fully both internal and external policies.” Ramsay Cook, “Landscape Painting and National Sentiment in Canada”, **Historical Reflections**, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1974), pp. 263 - 283.

³⁶Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 143.

Thomson which were listed collectively under one number in the catalogue.³⁷ Conversely, Hill reports that, unlike any other “group”, they were given their own salon and Brown’s foreword to the catalogue, “took on the tone of a Group manifesto.”³⁸ If all of this was not enough, the cover design, featuring a lake, canoe, rocks and a single pine tree, was done by J. E. H. Macdonald.³⁹ The Group was separated out, highlighted and flagged in both installation and text as deserving special attention apart from the one hundred or so other artists. This treatment led to protests both by the Royal Canadian Academy, who felt they should have been placed in charge of the exhibition, and by those left out who felt Brown was featuring the Group at their expense. Scandal erupted as they mounted a public campaign calling for Brown’s resignation on the grounds of bias in his selection for these and other international shows, and his collecting policies, which had long favoured the Group, even before its official formation in 1920. The complex conflicts and acrimonious negotiations between the National Gallery and the Royal Canadian Academy, and the scandals which preceded and plagued the staging of the exhibitions, which reflected deep divisions at home, have, however, been covered elsewhere.⁴⁰ But even with these setbacks, the Wembley shows were seen as triumphs by the fostering institution. That which was gained was worth the troubles, risks and divisions they caused.⁴¹

³⁷Casson’s six wood-block prints and Lismer’s six lithographs, along with the twelve Thomson sketches more than doubles the number given by Hill. British Empire Exhibition, **Canadian Section of Fine Arts Catalogue, 1924**. Morrice, by way of comparison, was represented by two works.

³⁸Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 143. There were only two rooms in the Canadian section, indicating the importance given the Group work. See illustration 6. Hill, however, exaggerates the rhetorical content of Brown’s brief catalogue essay. Its use of the jargon surrounding the Group is limited to oblique references in the opening and closing sentences: “Not all the pioneering in Canada has been done in her forests and plains by any means. . . . Canada will at least show that she possesses an indigenous and vigorous school of painting and sculpture, moulded by the tremendously intense character of her country and colour of her seasons.” Eric Brown, “Foreword”, **Canadian Section of Fine Arts Catalogue, 1924**, p. 3.

³⁹See illustration 5.

⁴⁰See especially Davis, pp. 48 - 74.

⁴¹See Hill, **The Group of Seven**, pp. 142 - 151.

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley: Surveying the Site

Although art had taken an important place in world fairs and colonial exhibitions since the Paris *Exposition Internationale* of 1855, many of the issues in London in 1924 and 1925 into which the Canadian works were inserted were unique to the time.⁴² England staged the two back-to-back spectacles to proclaim primacy of place in post-war Europe. This assumption of innate imperial superiority was, however, extremely precarious and under threat on several fronts. Although Germany had been defeated, America and Japan were on the ascendency. Furthermore the country was suffering a post-war depression accompanied by unprecedented unemployment and general strikes, while socialist and anti-monarchist movements threatened the stability of the social structure. On a less well publicized note, then, the exhibitions were designed to shore up support for nationalism and capitalism from audiences at home through recourse to a ritualistic display of solidarity within the Empire.⁴³ But they had a larger dimension. They were also designed to showcase the developments and progress of the loyal colonies and Dominions. This demonstration was especially important at a time when the Empire itself was undergoing an anxious transitional period. Critical questions of its identity were arising as it took on the form of a Commonwealth composed of independent dominions.⁴⁴ One of the main factors causing

⁴²See Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851 - 1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988, esp. Chapter 8, "The Fine Arts", pp. 198 - 223.

⁴³On the role of international and colonial expositions and museums in producing "national coherence" and "a broad basis of consent for the imperial project" "in defense of national and empire" addressed primarily to the working class in England prior to the War, see Annie Coombes, "Ethnography and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities", in Susan Hiller, ed., *The Myth of Primitivism*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 189 - 214.

⁴⁴King George V gave voice to some of this in his opening address on April 23. Basing the Empire on a contained model which conflated the intimacy of family and with the breadth of international capital, he stated: "The exhibition may be said to reveal to us the whole Empire in little, containing within its 220 acres of ground a vivid model of the architecture, art, and industry of all the races which come under the British flag. . . . We believe that this exhibition will bring the peoples of the Empire to a better knowledge of how to meet their reciprocal wants and aspirations, and that where brotherly feeling and the habit of united action already exist the growth of inter-Imperial trade will make the bonds of sympathy yet closer and stronger. Business relations [sic] between strangers may or may not lead to friendship. Co-operation between brothers for the better development of the family estate can hardly fail to promote affection. And we hope further that the success of the Exhibition may bring lasting benefits not to the Empire only, but to mankind in general." *London Illustrated News*, April 26, 1924, pp. 747-749.

The Exhibition was accompanied by the publication of a monumental twelve volume set which addressed

problems during the post-war period was the growing recognition of the separate national identities and independent aspirations of its constituent parts, such as Canada.⁴⁵ The exhibition was seen at the time as a means of drawing these potentially disruptive elements together at the imperial centre through a representation of the Empire as a harmonious, spectacular, unified and contained miniature, albeit one produced on a gigantic scale.⁴⁶ The importance given to these considerations was emphasized by its dimensions.⁴⁷ It sprawled over 220 acres (more than half again the size of the White City site) and cost over £10,000,000 before it even opened. It was expected to attract over 30,000,000 visitors.⁴⁸

Although the arts, as was usual, played a secondary role in the overall spectacle whose main displays centred on British genius in the area of technology and industry, they had their place.⁴⁹ The Palace of Arts, even if far smaller than the nearby eleven acre Palace of Engineering, was

the problems of unity in an Empire made up of diversity. A review of the first four volumes spoke of the "the Empire as a union of apparent incompatibles". Problems also arose from the lack of constitutional or formal unity, and the emergence of the League of Nations, to which various members of the Empire were independently linked. Canada was singled out as causing concern with its "recent claims in the matter of treaty negotiations". The same review noted that in Canada railway construction served as "a political instrument . . . [which] binds a nation together". "The British Empire: a Survey in Twelve Volumes", **Times Literary Supplement**, July 3, 1924, p. 411.

For a prelude to Wembley, see Annie Coombes' chapter, "National Unity and Racial and Ethnic Identities: the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908", in **Reinventing Africa**, pp. 186 - 213. Coombes' study ends in 1913.

⁴⁵Canada, it appears, hesitated in participating in this display of unity. E.A. Heaman points out, "At the Wembley United Empire Exhibition of 1924-25, Canada hung back, because of the expense, until the Prince of Wales personally solicited its attendance." E.A. Heaman, **The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. 215.

⁴⁶"The British Empire in Microcosm: the largest exhibition ever planned as it will appear", **London Illustrated News**, January 19, 1924, pp. 104 - 105.

⁴⁷See illustrations 1 and 2.

⁴⁸The projected attendance figure comes from "Wembley the Magnet: Exhibition Visitors in their Thousands", **London Illustrated News**, July 19, 1924, p. 105.

⁴⁹For example, in the volume on "The Literature and Art of the Empire" within the twelve volume set noted above, the visual arts get cursory treatment and are relegated to a few pages at the back of a text devoted primarily to literature. Nonetheless the review of the book noted that ". . . a true nationalism is not inconsistent with the highest form of art" and that in the painting of the Dominions there is "the beginnings of a truly national flowering of art bearing beneath its soil seeds which may some day be fructified by a wider vision and deeper humanity". **Times Literary Supplement**, London, December 11, 1924, p. 848.

considered a major draw, although the miniature doll house of the Queen was by far its largest attraction.⁵⁰

The exhibition of Canadian art within the Palace of Arts was displayed along with that of other colonies and Dominions. The two rooms of Canadian painting, sculpture, printmaking and drawing were, then, situated apart from the imposing Canadian Pavilion. This large, if somewhat solemn, edifice did not feature any indigenous architectural features, which Canada seemed to lack, but was in a style termed “Neogrec”. One of several similar pavilions placed at the heart of the Exhibition, it shared its central location with those of Australia and India. It was flanked by two smaller pavilions dedicated to the country’s main railroads, the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific, which, all acknowledged, had played the role of nation builders for the Dominion.⁵¹ In both its exhibitions, Canada used the opportunity to further assert its own identity as a separate nation, but also to capitalize on the chance to encourage tourism for which

⁵⁰This miniature palace, situated within the miniature model of the Empire, designed by Sir Edward Lutyens, and equipped with all manner of miniature fixtures, right down to tiny bottles of vintage wines, was among the hits of the show, even though it required a separate entry fee. See **London Illustrated News**, Feb. 9, 1924, pp. 220 -221. It remains popular to this day. For a brief, but interesting and not unrelated study theorizing the miniature and in particular this dollhouse, see Susan Stewart, **On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection**, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, pp. 61 - 64. Stewart tends, however, to lift it out of its historic context.

⁵¹The architecture varied from pavilion to pavilion. India’s was an exotic orientalist fantasy, already popularized at White City, based on the “Taj Mahal at Agra and the Jama Masjid at Delhi”, while the West African display contained a “reproduction of Kana City, a complete mud-built, fortified town, surrounded by mud walls . . .” New Zealand offered a structure in “English classic Renaissance, and . . . a beautifully carved Maori house”. Newfoundland’s small pavilion was of the “Renaissance type”. The major pavilions, including Canada, Australia, India, the Palace of Engineering, the Palace of Industry, and the Palace of Arts, were all situated around a central lake and picturesque park. All of these pavilions, except possibly India’s, were in concrete. “The British Empire in Microcosm”, p. 105. Although advanced at the time in material, their paucity of innovation in appropriate design came up for criticism from arbiters of taste such as Roger Fry, who roundly attacked them. “Architecture at Wembley”, **The Nation & the Athenaeum**, London, May 24, 1924, pp. 242 - 243. The latter journal took a rather dim view of the exhibition and pilloried it on several occasions, although the art exhibitions were never reviewed there.

Coombes has discussed how the relative permanence of the various pavilions at the 1908 Franco-British Exposition at White City, which highly influenced Wembley, reflected “an arbitrary racial hierarchy. This hierarchy effectively operated as the equivalent to an evolutionary scale, with, in the case of the British exhibits, the African colonies at the bottom, Indian somewhere considerably higher up the ladder, and the Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand at the top.” Annie Coombes, **Reinventing Africa**, p. 192.

Greenhalgh interprets the Wembley structures differently. “Splendid classical pavilions from New Zealand, Canada, Australia and South Africa stood as confirmation that the colonial stage had been transcended, and independence had been gained not only materially but culturally also.” p. 63.

the picturesque landscape was an important attraction.

But if the arts played a lesser, albeit not insignificant, role in the overall exhibition, Canadian Native peoples, culture and history played almost none at all. Contrary to the King's opening statements that claimed the exhibition featured all the races of the Empire, the indigenous populations of Canada, in stark contrast to most of the other pavilions, were conspicuous by their complete absence.⁵² As Jonathan King has pointed out, this exclusion was not within the established tradition of British Colonial Exhibitions and world's fairs in general as they had developed since 1851.⁵³ He notes, for example, that in the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, "[o]f the 81 exhibits eleven were contributed by Indians," including "argillite materials."⁵⁴ Rydell states that "[f]ollowing the example of colonial villages established at the 1889 Paris exhibition, [to which Canada did not contribute] living ethnological displays of Native Americans and other nonwhite people were introduced en masse at the Chicago fair and appeared at subsequent expositions [such as St. Louis in 1904] as well."⁵⁵

These were not, however, under the auspices of the Canadian government or the Department of Indian Affairs. The reconstructed Kwakiutl (now Kwakwaka'wakw) village and its attendant ceremonies at Chicago in 1893 were, for example, seen as profoundly embarrassing to the Canadian government, who experienced their "barbarity" as a defiance of Canada's policies of "civilizing" assimilation, featured elsewhere in the exhibition in displays of children from

⁵²The official guide listed and enumerated the races both in residence and those who lived off the site. This included Malays, Burmans, Hong Kong Chinese, West Africans, Palestinians, Indians, Singhalese, West Indians, and Natives of New Guiana. No Natives from Canada, Australia or New Zealand are mentioned, although New Zealand's pavilion did feature a Maori house. Greenhalgh, p. 95.

⁵³J. C. H. King, "A Century of Indian Shows, Canadian and United States Exhibitions in London 1825 - 1925", *European Review of Native American Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1991), pp. 35 - 42.

⁵⁴King, p. 38.

⁵⁵Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876 - 1916*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 7. He also notes that they were used "to illustrate the progress of civilization" in a hierarchical structure with Anglo-Saxon culture at the apex. p. 56.

residential schools.⁵⁶ Protests were launched and an injunction sought to suppress the highly popular dances. These actions were, however, ineffective as the display was not part of the country's official contribution but was organized by the American ethnologist Franz Boas.

Although similar exhibits would occur again at St. Louis in 1904, such ethnographic displays would have been difficult, if not impossible, in London within a situation controlled by the Canadian government which had no desire to witness a traditional native presence. Indeed, nothing of the same scale was reached at either of the subsequent Imperial Exhibitions in 1908 and 1911 at White City, although King mentions two exhibitions at Earls Court, including "the North American Indian Village of 1905 and the Red Man Spectacle of 1909".⁵⁷ By the 1920s, however, such were no longer to be seen in England.⁵⁸ Natives officially no longer played a role as either exemplars of the persistence of traditional cultures or the success of assimilationist "civilizing" policies in the construction and exhibition of a Canadian identity within or without the Empire.⁵⁹

⁵⁶This has received extensive coverage in the literature. See Douglas Cole, **Captured Heritage: the Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts**, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985, pp. 126 - 131. Heaman provides a summary of this account and a much needed history of the context of Natives and exhibitions within Canada in his chapter on "Making a Spectacle: Exhibitions of the First Nations", Heaman, pp. 302 - 304. For an even more recent and detailed investigation see: Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: the Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair", **Canadian Historical Review**, Vol. 81, No. 2 (June 2000), pp. 157 - 190.

Heaman, p. 307, points out that at this time "Natives were exhibited in a way that white people were not. Ontario and Quebec battled for educational prizes, but neither sent the schoolchildren themselves, for they were children first and objects of knowledge second, unlike native children. Yet the Canadian government did not encourage the exhibition of native adults, as the United States did. Parsimony was one reason; another was the fear that such an exhibition would reveal the failure of assimilationist policies."

⁵⁷King, p. 39. Needless to say these were not put on as official representations of Canada.

⁵⁸This despite the presence of a "rodeo" in which riders and stock were brought in from North America. In England, given the presence of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows since 1889, a rodeo would have been associated with Native presence. As we shall see, a disputed Native presence also characterized the by now well established Calgary Stampede, where Native riders were frequently, at this time, the winners of the main events. The lack of such representation at Wembley is then of note.

⁵⁹Trudy Nicks, "Indian Villages and Entertainments", in Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, **Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 304, states that "From the 1860s through the first decade of the twentieth century, Kahnawake families traveled to Great Britain and Europe to perform before royalty and at public venues, including the Universal Exhibition in Paris, as well as various events at Earl's Court, White City and Wembly [sic] in London." The sources

Thus the only full Native figures standing at Wembley, despite their proven track record in England and elsewhere as a popular draw, occurred in a butter sculpture of the Prince of Wales in the Canadian Pavilion.⁶⁰ The refrigerated diorama, sculpted for the second year, was ostensibly meant to showcase the progressive dairy productivity of the now domesticated Prairies. This spectacle of oleo-gelatinous virtuosity featured the Prince dressed in full Native regalia including a feathered headdress and beaded buckskin robes. He sat relaxed and at his ease next to and in front of a butter teepee housing a Native nuclear family from the Stony reserve outside of Banff, Alberta. Native presence here was twice displaced, once in the material and again in the Prince's "cultural cross-dressing". The "civilized" butter signified that their "primitive" life had melted into the past, while their regal, exotic robes and names, and the powers that those conveyed, were now appropriated by princely, and hence imperial, prerogative. In the exercise of colonial power the Prairies became colonized homesteads, extensions of the Empire supported and preserved by the triumphs of superior English technology. In the process, the Native seems to have been displaced into this double simulacrum.⁶¹

As King concluded, even as Canada's post-contact history was spelled out in detail at a special

she offers however do not mention any such events at Wembley. In fact, she cites King, who states the reverse, as one of three references.

⁶⁰Illustrated in King, p. 40, fig. 8. See also, "The Prince of Wales in Butter: New and Old Wembley Tableaux", *London Illustrated News*, May 16, 1925, p. 968. The caption reads ". . . the Prince appears in his picturesque costume as the chief, 'Morning Star', of the Stony Indians . . . The Alberta model was made by Mr. George D. Kent and Mr. Beauchamp Hawkins, sculptors to the Canadian Government Commission." The Prince owned a ranch (one wants to say "spread") in Alberta which had formed the subject for the previous year's butter sculpture. See illustrations 3 and 4.

⁶¹See "Cultural Cross-dressing in British America", in Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 81 - 109. Using ideas drawn from gender and queer studies, Tobin examines this phenomenon in eighteenth century portraits and provides a colonial context for the practice. Her description of a portrait of an English gentleman, Sir John Caldwell, in Native garb is instructive here: "The excess of finery alerts us to the masquerade and reveals his true identity as the British gentleman, who, in playing at being an Indian chief, reminds us of his ability to appropriate the unfamiliar without being transformed by it." She also states, "By decontextualizing the Indian artifacts, Caldwell denies to them the power to speak of Indian culture and Indian political power. . . . His Indian outfit functions as souvenir, carrying within it his narrative of having lived in Indian country." p. 86. The Prince was the ultimate Grand Tourist, traveling the Empire in the stead of his father.

The *London Illustrated News* illustration cut the Stony family out of the picture and showed only the half of the diorama with the Prince in masquerade and grand tour garb.

pageant at the exhibition, “[l]ittle was left to the imagination except the history and culture of the aboriginal population of the country”.⁶² As far as the exhibition was concerned, the Indian no longer existed. Given this absence, neither the establishing of racial “difference” with colonized populations nor the construction of a knowledge around them were issues for Canada as they were with the other pavilions, especially those from Africa. The issue of national identity, which manifestly did not include the Indian, was far more important. In retrospect it seemed as if Canada proclaimed its difference from the other Dominions and regions of the Empire by not using the venue to recognize the existence of its indigenous peoples. The Canadian art exhibition was, then, exclusively by white artists. Nothing produced by the indigenous peoples of Canada appeared.

Wembley: Reviewing the Critical Responses

In the absence of Canadian Indians, and their deep histories and different cultures, the English audiences were offered an alternative unified view of what constituted the “native, autochthonous and indigenous” in Canada in the form of the new and modern landscapes of the Group of Seven. British critics proved highly receptive to the Group’s work. Indeed, the National Gallery diligently collected the reviews from both exhibitions which highlighted the Group and handed them on to the Canadian press for national distribution to the widest possible audience across the country as a way both of justifying the exhibitions and further spreading the word on the Group and their nationalist message. The National Gallery also shouldered the expense of publishing them in two booklets as a permanent record of the exhibitions’ successes. The opening lines of the first stated:

The Canadian Section of the Fine Arts at the British Empire Exhibition is the most important exhibition of Canadian art ever held outside of the Dominion and the first opportunity Canadian art has had of measuring itself against that of the other British Dominions. The verdict and views of the British and other art critics therefore becomes

⁶²King, p. 40.

of great importance to all Canadian artists and art collectors and it is for the purpose of placing them on record and to show the very great interest and high opinion of Canadian art held abroad that the Trustees of the National Gallery have decided to publish this summary.⁶³

It appears from these compilations that British critics of all stripes were able to distinguish and critically appreciate the Group of Seven and their project and fully recognize the aspirations and uniqueness, that is the modernity, nationality and difference of the new Canadian painting. They perceived no threat in this declaration of artistic independence. The following selection of comments, all from 1924, recapitulate the jargon as it had appeared in Canada and characterize the overall positive critical reception: "Canada is developing a school of landscape painters who are strongly racy of the soil."⁶⁴ "The first impression of the Canadian Galleries is that there is emerging a native school of landscape, awaiting a wider recognition abroad."⁶⁵ "Landscape is the strength of the collection, as is the case with Canada's, but the latter brings surprises, for there is evidence of an original school absorbing 'modern' tendencies in the representation of native scenery."⁶⁶ "[T]hese Canadians are standing on their own feet, revealing their own country with gay virility."⁶⁷

⁶³Press Comments on The Canadian Section of Fine Arts, British Empire Exhibition, [Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada], 1924, n.p.

⁶⁴"Palace of Fine Arts, Dominion Tendencies", *The Times*, London, May 6, 1924. This citation and the following are all taken from *Press Comments, 1924*. Interestingly, the word picturesque never occurs; the landscape style is described most often as "decorative".

⁶⁵"Palace of Arts, Colonial Painting", *Morning Post*, London, April 22, 1924,

⁶⁶*Liverpool Post*, May 28, 1924.

⁶⁷C. Lewis Hind, "Life and I", *Daily Chronicle*, London, April 30, 1924. Hind had had some experience with Canadian art. Hill points out that he had been introduced to the Group as early as "1919 by Doris Mills, a Christian Scientist and friend of MacDonald's wife". Hill, *The Group of Seven*, p. 113. Furthermore, in 1920, he had been brought to Canada, "visited the Canadian National Exhibition" and wrote a "laudatory" review. *Ibid.*, p. 117. Hind's Wembley review was quoted by the press in Canada as offering "authoritative recognition, not only of 'superb' work - a description which no Canadian critic has had the courage or the insight to employ - but of a spirit in these Canadian pictures which is distinctively national and as definite in expression as the art of many much older countries or schools". *Ottawa Journal*, May 21, 1924. The *Journal* of course, exaggerated the negative critical home response to the Group. By 1924 there was broad support for their work and negative reactions were by far in the minority, even though they were trotted out as proof positive of the opposition to the Group and their heroic struggle. Hind's "authority" rested not only on his role of critic, but also on his recently published survey, *Landscape Painting from Giotto to the Present Day*, published by Chapman and Hall in two volumes. He too

In the first year, Anthony Bertram, the critic for the **Saturday Review**, displayed the most competence at deciphering the nationalist codes of the Group's section of the exhibition. Dismissing the work from the other colonies and Dominions as of little significance or originality, he declared that, "[w]ith Canada . . . [w]e can sincerely acclaim a vigorous and original art". Although he did not name the Group of Seven, he listed almost all its members (with some others) as representing this vision and noted that they offer "genuine modes of national feeling".⁶⁸ The British critics, albeit to varying degrees, seem to have had no trouble discerning what could be called the vocabulary of the new Canadian landscapes, or their coded nationalist messages, or singling out and praising those artists whose work was fraught with this meaning, despite the fact that this was for many their first encounter with the paintings.⁶⁹

The recognition of cultural equality and independence was completed when the Tate Gallery in London chose an A.Y. Jackson, **Entrance to Halifax Harbour**, for its collection. This work, while not typical of Jackson's response to the Canadian landscape, may well have been selected since it was part of the Canadian War Memorials Project with which Jackson had been involved. Indeed, there was some spillover between this project and the Wembley exhibition.

This recognition by England of Canada's cultural independence, which paralleled a growing recognition of its political autonomy, was reaffirmed in the followup show in 1925 at the second

knew what it meant to suffer at the hands of an unappreciative press. It was reviewed with great irony in the **Times Literary Supplement**, London, December 14, 1924, p. 817. Taking time out from what amounted to heavy handed sarcasm, the reviewer did note as a redeeming feature that Hind had turned to the landscapes of the Dominions which were almost unknown before Wembley.

⁶⁸Anthony Bertram, "The Palace of Arts, Wembley", **Saturday Review**, London, June 7, 1924. "The New Zealand painting is mostly cold and insipid. . . In South Africa there is . . . a rather tired vigour. . . In the Indian and Burmese Gallery we find the deplorable effect of Western on Eastern art. . . The pre-eminent quality of the Australian work is 'atmospheric'". For Canada he cites as "primarily decorative, Frederick H. Varley's dramatic 'Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay'. . . , Alexander Young Jackson's 'The Northland', . . . and his 'Winter, Georgian Bay'. . . Tom Thomson's 'The West Wind' . . . and his 'The Jack Pine'. . . Lawren Harris's 'Pines, Kempenfelt Bay'. . . J. E. H. MacDonald's 'The Solemn Land' . . . and Arthur Lismer's 'September Gale'." Casson is missing from the list.

⁶⁹It should be noted that not all concurred. For example, the **Glasgow Herald**, May 28, 1924 dissented, stating "That Canada has developed a national school of landscape artists - and this has been asserted - is not at Wembley made plain."

staging of the British Empire Exhibition. Modifications to the display of Canadian art occurred in the interim. The Group and Tom Thomson now had 21 oils and 12 drawings among the 198 works on display, an increase to roughly fifteen per cent of the total.⁷⁰ The second exhibition attracted less critical response than the first, with only six reviews appearing in the London papers. These were more precise in their claims, indicating that the critics were becoming more articulate in the jargon as they became more familiar with the work.⁷¹ **The Times** noted that the Canadian exhibition stood out and was “more solid than last year”.⁷² “Our Art Critic” of the **Sunday Times** was more forthcoming, noting that “the brilliant and original work of the Canadian painters stands out even more prominently than it did last year. The Empire will have to recognise now that Canada possesses a distinctive national school of landscape painters of the highest merit.” He did not, however, separate out the Group artists, and mentioned only Thomson and Harris.⁷³ The **Christian Science Monitor** asserted that “the exception to the general dullness of the galleries is that of the Canadian rooms, which show us incontrovertibly that Canada is well on the way to producing a school of painting entirely her own. And this because her painters show more audacity, and a greater thirst for experiment than those of any other colony.”⁷⁴ As Hill has pointed out, “[o]nce again Thomson, Harris, and Morrice received the greatest attention from reviewers, and the Group’s success in creating an identity for Canadian art was reconfirmed.”

The Wembley exhibitions were the Group of Seven’s major critical success to date, and they drew national attention. Though the artists had worked for years to bring their paintings and ideas to the public, no other factor contributed so swiftly to arousing

⁷⁰See illustration 7.

⁷¹**Press Comments on the Canadian Section of Fine Arts, British Empire Exhibition, 1924 - 1925**, [Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, n.d.]. The second compilation of reviews contained all of those from the first, with some minor editings, plus additional reviews both of that year’s Wembley exhibition and the subsequent tour of the work, along with the notices of the 1925 version of the show and the second tour. It should be noted that Wembley’s second year generated far less interest in general than the first. The number of articles in the **Illustrated London News** declined substantially in 1925.

⁷²“Art at Wembley”, **The Times**, London, May 9, 1925.

⁷³“Art at Wembley”, **Sunday Times**, London, May 10, 1925.

⁷⁴“At Wembley”, **Christian Science Monitor**, London, May 25, 1925.

awareness of modern Canadian art as the debate around the British Empire Exhibitions and the Tate's purchase of a Jackson. . . . The artists, the pioneer collectors, Canada, and Canadian art were all vindicated at Wembley.⁷⁵

While accurate in general, Hill's assessment is loaded with a catalogue of the tropes used to produce the National Gallery's image of the Group and leaves much unspoken that is to be assumed by the reader. Note that it was only the "the artists", rather than the supporting institutions behind them, that laboured for recognition, that the collectors are figured as "pioneers"(thus, with the artists, part of the heroic conquest of the new land), and that Canada as a modern nation is implicitly identified with the works of the Group. These were, along with the nation, in need of "vindication" at the imperial centre, presumably against the slanderous slurs of a phantom hoard of philistine and provincial naysayers at the local level.

Within this second wave of appreciation, one review stood out. Paul G. Konody, a critic for the London **Observer**, had been Lord Beaverbrook's adviser for the Canadian War Memorials Project.⁷⁶ Beaverbrook had been made an agent of the Canadian government during the First World War whereby he was to represent and pursue the policy of imperial solidarity while at the same time promoting Canadian independence. As part of this effort, he organized the Canadian War Memorials Project as a means of documenting Canada's unique contribution to the war, when it was in danger of being absorbed into English initiatives. Konody was his right hand man in this undertaking. After the war, Konody was brought to Canada with Hind. They "visited the Canadian National Exhibition, and their laudatory opinions of the new landscape painting were

⁷⁵Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 150. Hill is incorrect in asserting that Morrice received a great deal of attention. Although his work, when mentioned, was highly praised, it was seldom cited, which, given the paucity of pieces by him, is not surprising.

⁷⁶Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 117. Maria Tippett supplies much more information on Konody both in terms of his relationship with Beaverbrook and his position in the British art world. As well as directing the Canadian War Memorials Fund during the war, Beaverbrook was also given a peerage and a cabinet post as Minister of Information. "Beaverbrook was responsible for propaganda in Allied countries and in the British Dominions." He subsequently abandoned the CWMF and became head of the British Pictorial Propaganda Committee, taking Konody with him on this second project. The Canadian project was more or less handed over to his friend in Canada, Sir Edmund Walker. Maria Tippett, **Art at the Service of the War: Canada, Art, and the Great War**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, pp. 43 - 50.

published in the papers” as proof of “foreign recognition”.⁷⁷ The British critic already had, then, some experience with Canada, its arts, and its politics, as well as with the issues of patriotism, the claims to national identity and political propaganda within those arts. But he would have been especially familiar with the policy which Beaverbrook was charged with pursuing: that of solidarity/independence. He responded to the second Wembley exhibition with some favour and fervor.

Konody’s coverage within this prestigious paper, which was aimed at a more privileged, if much smaller, readership than the general press, was of great importance. Linked as he was to two of the major press barons in England, Lord Beaverbrook and his friend and business partner, Lord Rothermore, for whom Konody also served as art adviser, the critic occupied a position of authority and power within British art circles, although there were those who questioned his credentials and his taste.⁷⁸ He had written several books, including an essay for a deluxe edition on the Canadian War Memorials Project, and much criticism. His assessment was, then, of consequence. He placed Canada and its art at the top of a hierarchical ordering of the colonies and dominions.

Whereas Australian art presents itself as an offshoot of the Royal Academy, slightly modified by Australian atmosphere, and South African art has not begun to show any sign of individual life, Canada has not only gained artistic independence, but can boast of a real national school that owes little or nothing to European influence, is racy of the soil, and expresses Canadian landscape and Canadian life in an idiom of its own. Canadian art has progressed with rapid strides. Not more than seven years ago when I visited Toronto and Montreal, the pioneers of this movement, the ‘Group of Seven’, who had just lost their leader Tom Thomson, the artists’ ‘discoverer’ of the Canadian landscape, were still an isolated clique fighting bravely against the prejudice of the ignorant public. Now, at Wembley, they have it all their own way. They practically fill the two rooms with their daring, decorative and intensely stimulating landscapes. . . . I know of no European school that shows such unity of effort, a similar combination of nature-worship and respect for the laws that rule pictorial design, or a similar balance of the representational element and abstract aesthetic principles, as are to be found in the work of these Canadians, and particularly of Tom Thomson, Lawren Harris, A. H. Robinson, Langdon

⁷⁷Hill, p. 117. In n. 22, p. 297, Hill gives the citation as “Toronto Daily Star 30 Aug. 1920; Hammond 1920c”.

⁷⁸Tippett, pp. 30 - 31. She calls him “[t]he leading critic of his day”.

Kihn, F. Carmichael, C. A. Gagnon, Stanley Turner, A. Lismer, J. E. H. MacDonald, and A. Y. Jackson.⁷⁹

Not only did Konody name the Group and Thomson, who seem to have been brought to his attention seven years earlier, and single them out from the rest of the exhibition, but he repeated all of the key elements of the jargon that had been carefully put into circulation in Canada. Going far beyond what was available in the catalogue, he recapitulated the narrative of struggle, neglect and opposition that already was in place as the basic structure of their history. He cited their unified stance, pointed out the philistine public opposition to their work, reinforced the artist's direct relationship with the land, named their pioneering father figure as Thomson, outlined their successful forging of an independent national identity, and noted the absence of any European influence, which implied that the work sprang up spontaneously from the soil, without colonial precedent, and that it was therefore truly Canadian. His figuring of them as brave combatants equated them with the soldiers on the front, fighting the good fight against an evil, albeit unnamed, enemy. Indeed, this enemy could not be named. Silence on this point was essential. Somewhat ironically, the foe was England itself as represented in Canada by the colonial institution, the Royal Canadian Academy. Konody's tact kept the myth intact as well as preserving Canadian/British solidarity.

Konody's militarist trope not only confirmed the Group's patriotism, dedication and even sacrifice to their country, it also positioned them within the definitions of the avant garde, as did the terms "discovery" and "daring". These artists were not just modern pioneers, they were at the forefront, charting out new territory, literally "discovering" the land and their art, while at the same time doing battle with those who would oppose their explorations to map out, define and claim this new topography. Konody was, then, also cognizant of their modernity, even implying something of an avant garde. The latter was suggested by his militaristic citations of bravery against the oppressor, the Academy, but also by his comparison to other movements, and by his deployment of the word "decorative" which occurred extensively in the British critical responses

⁷⁹P.G. Konody, "Art and Artists: the Palace of Arts at Wembley", *Observer*, London, May 24, 1925. Langdon Kihn, who was not Canadian, will be discussed in detail in the third chapter.

as a catchword to indicate a flattening of space, a simplification of form, a richness of colour and a boldness of facture associated with modernist, European movements since Neo-Impressionism. He again tactfully evaded making this continental connection explicit, however, as it would call into question the previous claims to the Group as being without European influence. In short he was extremely receptive to the message of the work and was able to read it and rearticulate its many and varied, but related, claims with great proficiency.

But one must be wary of the appellation of modernism, let alone “avant gardism”. Most narratives of Canadian art stop at this point, having received imperial confirmation of the Group’s independent nationalist and modernist position. I would like to press on. Further examination proves Konody’s claims are qualified. He clearly stated that he appreciated the Group’s work for its balance of the abstract and figurative. Normalizing and privileging “balance” at that moment implies a conservative attitude that rejected any of the more radical continental innovations of the past three decades.⁸⁰ Indeed, while he claimed a knowledge of Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism, and saw the necessity of artists having something of these as a background, his own taste ran to the eclectic: everything from salon society portraits to the less “unbalanced” work of the English avant garde. While his critical stance could accept some of the Vorticist’s activities, it did not embrace anything of recent work in Russia or other extreme, unbalanced, experiments. For the main part, the other English critics who reviewed the exhibition displayed only a slight knowledge of modernity as it stood elsewhere in Europe and rejected that of which they were aware both there and on the home front. Konody seemed the most knowledgeable, but even this was tempered. It must be kept in mind that England did not have a long tradition of modernism, that radical art had only gained a foothold there in the previous two decades, and that at that moment what did exist was breaking up. But if they lacked a clear understanding of international modernist advances, we can be assured that they

⁸⁰Tippett, p. 32, notes Konody’s position on the war pictures: “Konody’s modernist prescription for painting the Great War did have limitations. He could not fully embrace Vorticism, the most radical movement in British painting, as useful in depicting the war (he condemned the Vorticist work of David Bomberg and Wyndham Lewis as “geometrical obfuscations”). . . . The kind of art Konody could accept lay between conventional illustration and the Vorticists ‘picture puzzles.’ He admired line, order, and harmony.”

would have had a decent understanding of British traditions and artistic practices.

Wembley: Pictur(esque)ing a National Image Abroad

There are good reasons for the positive recognition accorded to the Canadian art on display that have never been sufficiently explored. It has been assumed that the positive responses of the British critics were the natural outcome of the quality of the work, the clarity of its rhetoric and the justness of its claims, that is, that common sense indicated that no further inquiry was necessary. But this smacks of complacent naturalizing of a flattering discourse if not of a universalized, transcendent aesthetic. Recent writings have demonstrated that audiences must be already versed in the complex codes by which works of art are constructed and recognized as such in order to decipher them and that a group identity can be maintained by having access to those codes which provide a sense of inclusion and belonging.

As Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out:

An act of deciphering unrecognized as such, [that is] immediate and adequate 'comprehension', is possible and effective only in the special case in which the cultural code which makes the act of deciphering possible is immediately and completely mastered by the observer (in the form of cultivated ability or inclination) and merges with the cultural code which has rendered the work perceived possible.⁸¹

It follows that what he calls "[a]rtistic competence is therefore defined as the *previous knowledge* of the strictly artistic principles of division which enable a representation to be located, through the classifications of the stylistic indications which it contains, among the possibilities of representation constituting the universe of art."⁸² Furthermore, he maintains that "the readability of a work of art for a particular individual varies according to the divergence between the more or less complex and subtle code required by the work, and the competence of the individual, as

⁸¹Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 216.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 221 - 222. My emphasis.

defined by the degree to which the social code, itself more or less complex and subtle, is mastered.”⁸³ Mastery, competence and familiarity are all closely linked to the ability to read a work of art. The acquisition of these codes is, however, not necessarily a conscious process, but may accrue over time through repeated exposure.

The repeated perception of works of a certain style encourages the unconscious interiorization of the rules which govern the production of these works. Like rules of grammar, these rules are not apprehended as such, and are still less explicitly formulated and formulatable. . . . The unconscious mastery of the instruments of appropriation [of a work of art by a viewer] which are the basis of familiarity with cultural works is acquired by slow familiarization, a long succession of ‘little perceptions’.⁸⁴

Given that the works displayed at Wembley were the first British experiences of the new Canadian landscape painting, some problems in deciphering them should have been anticipated, especially among those critics who ostensibly were not previously “familiar” with the work or “competent” in its “cultural codes”. That no such difficulties seem to have occurred is itself problematic, given the claims to newness and difference. I would like, then, to argue that the work of the Group was legible in England at Wembley by critics like Konody, who had had some previous experience with the work, but especially by all the others, precisely because it contained a deeply embedded yet carefully concealed contradiction. This contradiction corresponded closely to Canada’s paradoxical political position of proclaiming both solidarity with and independence from England.

I will argue that, contrary to accepted belief, the Group’s paintings were not entirely Canadian, nor originary, nor without influence, nor from the land. That is to say they were neither native, indigenous nor autochthonic as the jargon would have it, but rather in many intrinsic ways were indebted to, and proclaimed a solidarity with the very colonial parent they were meant at the same time to signal a separation and difference from, namely England. I would like to suggest that Group landscapes of Canada, by and large, appealed to and addressed the particular

⁸³Ibid., p. 224.

⁸⁴Bourdieu, “Outline”, p. 601

competencies of an exclusively British audience which would already be familiar with the forms and the issues of the work from their own history of landscape painting. Such competencies had been “mythologized and therefore naturalized as part of a shared heritage”, that is a heritage shared by both England and English-speaking Canada.⁸⁵ This would imply that the Group’s works and the “unified” national identity which they signaled, were, very much like the political institutions of the Dominion, largely monocultural, expressly Anglo-Canadian and highly colonial.⁸⁶ In being aimed at a British sensibility they would reassure anyone who shared in that colonial sensibility of being included in and belonging to the national identity. Solidarity and sameness were thus confirmed at the same time as difference and autonomy were paraded. Conversely, those who were not competent could be cast as outsiders.

I am greatly assisted in this investigation by the recent and dramatic growth in the literature on both the history of landscape painting in England, especially the picturesque tradition, and the adjacent investigations into the history of the continuity of that tradition in the various colonies. Remarkably, in the latter category, Canada is rarely mentioned, even though it should take a prominent place.⁸⁷ Recent work on the relationships between nationalism and colonialism, such

⁸⁵The phrase comes from Coombes, **Reinventing Africa**, p. 1.

It is here that I part company with Nicholas Thomas. In his recent book, **Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture**, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, he seems unaware of landscape painting’s history in England or its specific local role in colonized, settler countries such as Australia and Canada. For example, while throughout his first chapter he states explicitly that to represent the land means to claim ownership of it, he never traces this claim to its source, nor does he explain why landscape would be equated with possession. Without this specific investigation, colonial activities and art, and especially landscapes, could become universalized and naturalized.

⁸⁶See also Bourdieu, “Outline”, p. 603: “[I]t is because the creator’s *habitus* as a system of schemes constantly guides choices which, though not deliberate, are nonetheless systematic and, without being arranged and organized expressly in relation to a final goal, are nonetheless bearers of a kind of finality which will be revealed only *post factum*.”

⁸⁷Up to now, research into the British topographical and picturesque representations of colonized countries has focused almost exclusively on India, Australia and New Zealand. See, for example, Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, **From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757 - 1930**, London: Cornell University Press, 1986, or G. H. R. Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British Landscape Painting, 1780 - 1880”, in C. A. Bayly, ed., **The Raj: India and the British 1600 - 1947**, London: National Portrait Gallery, 1990, pp. 141 - 151. Tillotson’s claim to India’s primacy is clearly stated: “The representation of India in British landscape painting is a unique artistic achievement: at no other time has one country been so extensively and

as that by Coombes and Thomas, are also integral to this project. On this basis, then, I contend that Group landscapes depended in many ways on particularly British principles for the representation of nature and that they echoed claims for landscape long familiar in England. In many ways, the Group recapitulated its entire history of landscape painting.

Landscape painting in England achieved recognition as a separate, equal subject matter, which could claim a place next to history painting in importance, in the mid to late 1700s. Earlier English landscapes had originated, to a large part, as portraits of the estates of the new landed gentry, to take the place, one assumes, of a hall of titled ancestors, to prove title to the land under surveillance. To survey, in both senses here, meant to declare ownership. Landscape was hence seen at first merely as utilitarian and without independent artistic merit or status. It had to overcome its lowly origins and lack of prestige by proclaiming its uselessness and its unique aesthetic. Charles Harrison has stated that

[l]andscape achieves autonomy as an artistic genre in England only when the countryside can be viewed as other than the property of the landed gentry - or rather, to be precise, only insofar as the task of representation of the countryside comes to be distinguishable from the business of reinforcement of title. The act of imagination required is clearly not primarily artistic. . . . it entails that the countryside is viewable under some aspect other

minutely observed by artists from another. . . ." This despite the fact that "it was only after the full establishment of an English landscape school in the mid-eighteenth century that India was first visited by a professional landscape painter" and that "[i]n the ensuing decades, the number of British artists visiting or taking up residence in India was never large." p. 141. W. J. T. Mitchell's discussion of the spread of British landscape conventions within the Empire privileges Australia and New Zealand. North America rates only a footnote, and Canada receives no mention at all. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape", in W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., **Landscape and Power**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 20. Mitchell sees the resistance of the aboriginal people as one of the differing factors which distinguish the production of landscape in North America from that in the South Pacific. He does mention one important precedent for this study, Francis Pound's investigation into the problems associated with the persistence of British picturesque conventions in New Zealand's national landscape school. Francis Pound, **Frame on the Land: Landscape Painting in New Zealand**, Auckland, 1983. Pound poses many of the same questions that are found in this chapter. Mitchell criticizes Pound, however, for ignoring New Zealand's national landscape painting's "historical function in the formation of a colonial and national identity. A historical, as distinct from a historicist, understanding of this sort of painting would. . . not simply retrieve their conventionality but explore the ideological use of their conventions in a specific place and time." p. 23. This is precisely what I hope to do here, but including the material which Mitchell himself shied away from, i.e. Native resistance. For a further discussion of Australia, see Mitchell's footnotes and Thomas, *passim*.

A site at which one would have expected a full explanation of the conjunction of the British picturesque and Canadian artistic production in the immediate post-confederation period is in Linda Jessup, "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and 'the Business of Becoming a Nation'", yet Jessup mentions none of the links, nor anything of the literature on the picturesque.

than its aspect as property.

Harrison notes, however, that this other autonomous quality could co-exist with that of affirming property, as in the work of Constable.⁸⁸ Throughout the late 1700s, the transition was effected when figures of such renown as Thomas Gainsborough stepped forward to promote landscape as an independent genre. It is part of my proposition that while it became endowed with other possibilities, English landscape painting never fully lost this claim to entitlement and possession of the land, which, as will be shown, extended proprietorially into the colonies and even to the practices of the Group.

But Group practice can also be traced to the complex aesthetic codes known as the picturesque. The formation of these codes in the mid to late 1700s is viewed as one of the beginnings of independent British landscape painting. They received their widest and most influential distribution when they were popularized, depoliticized, deprofessionalized and democratized at the end of the 1700s and the early 1800s by the Reverend W. Gilpin, who Ann Bermingham calls “the first real theorist of the picturesque.”⁸⁹ She asserts that “[t]he picturesque as a practice or

⁸⁸Charles Harrison, “The Effects of Landscape”, in Mitchell, **Landscape and Power**, p. 215. For the continuation of the tradition of using the landscape to claim possession in America, and specifically in the work of Thomas Cole, see Malcolm Andrews, **Landscape and Western Art**, London: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 160 - 161.

⁸⁹Ann Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic Tradition, 1740 - 1860**, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p. 63.

Although Bourdieu tends to resist the notion that artistic practice can be entirely subsumed within a knowable set of codes, it should be noted that in his terms, Gilpin revealed the underlying codes for the construction and consumption of landscape art. Access to these had previously been posited by Payne and Knight as being restricted to a certain class who were endowed with disinterested taste. Such innate distinction was a sign by which they could identify themselves and legitimate a position of privilege. By revealing the appreciation and construction of landscapes as a as codes, that is by undercutting transcendent claims to aristocratic taste, and by broadly distributing them, Gilpin transgressed this privilege. There is a link that needs to be studied further between this and the fact that he was, at the time and subsequently, much reviled and the art produced under this expansion largely dismissed as lacking in individuality, originality and genius, the keywords which underwrite the claims to aesthetic transcendence. This still goes on. See, for example, Andrew Wilton and Anne Lyles, **The Great Age of British Watercolours 1750 - 1880**, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1993. “It was impossible to be naive about landscape; if there was a loophole for simple-mindedness, Gilpin had plugged it with his exhaustive analysis of the different types of Picturesque. Thanks to him, the most unsophisticated curate or maiden aunt knew how to reduce a view to a satisfactory pictorial formula.” What comes across here as simple elitism or snobbishness, (the examples do not include the aristocracy who presumably are not in need of such instruction) runs far deeper, since the very structure on which distinctions of taste and of class are based are undermined. It is also instructive that both of the examples

way of viewing nature was popularized largely by the guidebooks of Gilpin. The rage for these books peaked in the 1790s and influenced the touring habits of several generations of Englishmen.”⁹⁰ Bermingham also points out that, “[t]hough theoretically the picturesque was supposed to resist artistic codification, its popularization as an aesthetic threatened such resistance.”⁹¹

Gilpin’s formulae, identified by Bermingham as “a purely pictorial code by which a landscape was judged by its “fitness to make a picture”⁹² were published in several books and essays in 1792, of which the most important was **Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape**. The wide distribution of these codes was essential to the broad amateur pursuit of picturesque art and tourism, with which it was linked, throughout the 1800s. Despite the fact that the cult of the picturesque, together with its public, was so widespread as to warrant being parodied for its vulgarity by the beginning of the 1800s in both literature and the visual arts, and despite innovations by Constable and Turner and challenges by the English critic John Ruskin, the basic conventions survived in England and even more so in the colonies into the late 1800s, before reaching a state of near exhaustion towards the turn of the century. Malcolm Andrews has pointed out that although in the early to mid-1800s,

the Picturesque gives way to innovations which we associate with Constable’s naturalism, and, later, Ruskin’s call to artists to observe Truth in their paintings of the natural world. . . the old formulary mode was tenacious These highly stylized modes of both execution and design survived long into the nineteenth century, in spite of Ruskin’s polemics.⁹³

supplied by Wilton and Lyles lack sexuality: a curate and a maiden aunt. This speaks of both excessive diffidence and creative impotence.

⁹⁰Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology**, p. 83.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 84.

⁹²Ibid., p. 57.

⁹³Malcolm Andrews, **The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760 - 1800**, Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989, p. 33.

But the other “dark” side of this movement has also been exposed. Bermingham and John Barrell have pointed out that the picturesque tradition of English landscape was still, at the moment and place at which it was formulated, as much about dispossession as it was about possession, namely the displacement of the rural peasantry from the increasingly enclosed properties claimed by the landed gentry.

The picturesque embodied an early ideological response to this decline of rural paternalism during the war years. Although the picturesque celebrated the old order - by depicting a pastoral, preenclosed landscape - some of its features - the class snobbery, the distancing of the spectator from the picturesque object, and the aestheticization of rural poverty - suggest that at a deeper level the picturesque endorsed the results of agricultural industrialization. Picturesque theory complemented the policies behind such schemes as the Speenhamland system of poor relief. Moreover, the picturesque, like the political debates of the period about the problem of rural poverty, mystified the agency of social change so that fate, and not the economic decisions of the landowning classes, seemed responsible. In this respect, the picturesque represented an attempt to wipe out the fact of enclosure and to minimize its consequences.⁹⁴

As will be shown in later chapters, this too found expression and was adaptable to colonial representations.

Indeed, issues of possession and displacement played an important role in all of Britain’s imperial ventures. W. J. T. Mitchell’s musings on the nature of landscape provide some insight into the reasons why the picturesque reached its greatest dissemination and prominence in the colonies where land was being claimed as British, while it was being progressively disparaged at home. Mitchell links the preeminence of landscape in several locations, but especially in Britain, with the rise of imperialism and colonization. He states that the

semiotic features of landscape, and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ into a ‘natural’ space in a progress that is itself narrated as ‘natural’.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p. 75. See also John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: the Rural Poor in English Painting 1730 - 1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

⁹⁵Mitchell, p. 17.

This occurred both internally and externally in a double motion and produced a “re-shaping and re-presentation of the native land” into picturesque “emblem[s] of national and imperial identity.”⁹⁶ By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the Empire had stopped expanding and consequently landscape became of less importance at the imperial centre, where Mitchell claims it became exhausted. Canada, on the other hand, was now engaged in a process of colonizing its own territories and people. In the Dominion’s and colonies, then, landscape continued to play a vital role. Although Mitchell’s generalized theories need more investigation, they go a long way towards explaining the continuity of picturesque landscape painting in the colonies and Dominions long after it had been devalued at its point of origin.⁹⁷

The arrival of the picturesque, along with other aspects of British landscape painting, in Canada corresponded to the history of English military conquest and colonization in the mid-1700s. As befitting and confirming their status as British upper class gentlemen of the late 1700s and early 1800s, military officers were trained in rendering landscapes in watercolour at the Naval academy at Woolich by teachers of such renown as the picturesque watercolourist, Paul Sandby.⁹⁸ Aside from attesting to the officer’s inherent taste and hence the legitimacy of their class and rank, this instruction served other dual, but contradictory, purposes. In wartime, it allowed them to record the topographic layout of strange lands for strategic purposes of reconnaissance which demanded precision and accuracy, i.e. truth to vision. In peacetime, while the officers were at leisure and their sojourns in the colonies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand or India were recast as part of an aristocratic Grand Tour, their acquisition of the codes of rendering nature offered the pleasure of depicting the landscape in the artificial conventions of the picturesque which demanded that the elements of nature be selected and rearranged to suit its

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷They do not, for example, explain the lack of landscape painting in the French colonial period in Canada.

⁹⁸For a brief but informative discussion of this see Gerald E. Finley, **George Heriot 1759 -1839**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1979.

requirements.⁹⁹ The two opposing British landscape movements were conflated and confused in the colonies where both truth to nature and artificiality were frequently found in the same works.¹⁰⁰

As has already been stated, topographical landscapes had their origins in the depiction of the estates of the wealthy, and were tantamount to a declaration of rightful possession. The fortuitous carryover to imperial conquest was not coincidental. In British eyes, to represent the land was to justify ownership, to re-territorialize, and again, it must be stressed that both ownership and dispossession of the land were as important here as it was in other settler countries such as Australia.¹⁰¹ What Thomas says of landscape painting in Australia also holds true for Canada: “[a]rguably, if white people are to define an alien land as their own, they are bound to dispossess its prior occupants, and establish and celebrate their own investments of labour and sentiment in it.” Thus class, imperial occupation, the imperial landscape, colonization, possession and tourism were joined in complex colonial relationships.

Canada was still identified with colonial dependency, imperial expansion, the picturesque/topographical and the Grand Tour until well after Confederation, even though by this time other influences, especially German and American, were also shaping landscape production

⁹⁹Rendering watercolour souvenirs of landscape vistas that were prescribed as beautiful because they corresponded to the paintings of Poussin, Lorrain, and so on, was an inherent part of the assimilation of culture on which the practice of the Grand Tour was predicated. Finley points out that touring in Britain, and the widespread painting of British landscapes, began during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars when touring on the continent became problematic. He also indicates that the ease of access to the picturesque sites in England that were considered closest to the landscapes of Europe, i.e. the Lake District, tended to democratize a practice which was previously the exclusive domain of the wealthy.

¹⁰⁰The practice of walking tours as coming from the Grand Tour or from British picturesque practices is another area not discussed in Thomas, *Possessions*, in terms of the colonial experience of the landscape. By offering no precedent, he infers that his own walks in the woods or wilds of Australia are simply ordinary. He does not indicate that he is retracing a British path, transposed to and re-mapped onto the new locale. This is similar to the blindness that inhabited Canadian perceptions of its own practices for so long.

¹⁰¹Thomas, *Possessions*, p. 22. Thomas universalizes and naturalizes this somewhat for reasons already given, but his points are nonetheless valid. What he misses making clear, however, is that this possession, which he sees as linked to picturing the land, had already been established as part of the history of English landscape painting and is not part of a generalized colonial ideology, but is attached specifically to English colonialism in very complex ways.

within the Dominion. The monumental **Picturesque Canada**, published in the mid-1880s, is an excellent example of this hybridity, in which non-British elements were subsumed (one could say colonized) under the banner of the picturesque.¹⁰² The images, done largely by American artists and published by American entrepreneurs, were chosen by Lucius O'Brien, the first president of the Royal Canadian Academy, which was of course based on the British Royal Academy, and hence a colonial institution. Despite the source of the pictures, the two volume travelogue, first published in serial form, represented Canadian territory as a sequence of picturesque encounters: souvenirs of a Grand Tour from coast to coast, sent out in advance of the trip that would soon become available on the railways which joined Canada politically, economically and geographically.¹⁰³ Jessup has outlined how a similar format was employed in the display of picturesque Canadian scenes at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886.¹⁰⁴ Until the turn of the century, then, Canada represented itself as proudly British in image and institution. The system of representations of landscape still known as the picturesque playing a central role in establishing the new Dominion's colonial status and connections, as well as its claims to nationhood. Indeed, the picturesque and Canada were, and to a degree still are, interchangeable terms.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²George Grant, ed., **Picturesque Canada: the Country as It Was and Is**, 2 Vols., Toronto: Beldon Bros., 1882 - 1884. Subtitled **A Pictorial Delineation of the Beauty of Canadian Scenery and Life**, it was originally issued in thirty-six installments between 1882 and 1884. It was subsequently consolidated into two volumes of six books and was also published in Britain.

¹⁰³Dennis Reid, **Our Own Country Canada: Being an Account of the National Aspirations of the Principal Landscape Artists in Montreal and Toronto 1860 - 1890**, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 1979, pp. 298 - 316. Reid indicates that O'Brien's contribution of a sepia drawing of Kakabeka Falls, c. 1881, "appears all the more picturesque in the manner of the early nineteenth century, the tiny figures silhouetted against the sublime force of the falls." p. 304.

¹⁰⁴Jessup, pp. 100 - 106. Although her chapter "Making Canada Picturesque, 1876 - 1886" clearly shows the relationships between British and Canadian landscapes in terms of the picturesque, Jessup does not probematize this relationship in terms of colonization and national independence, nor does she cite any of the historical and theoretical literature on the picturesque either in Britain or in the colonies.

¹⁰⁵It is not without significance that the format employed in 1886 was repeated at Wembley, albeit not in the Palace of Arts. **Studio** reported that "The Canadian Pavilion had probably the largest scene painting in the whole exhibition, illustrating the Canadian Rockies, prairies, the inland port of Montreal, etc. The ingenuity shown in depicting the strata of rocks, the feeling of vast distances, and the local colour, is of a high order." Leonard Richmond, "The Lure of Wembley", **Studio**, Vol. 87, 1924, p. 315. Despite the scale and quality of the work, the names of the muralists remain unknown.

The situation shifted again in the late 1800s when both French academic training and modernist conventions had a profound effect on Canadian landscape painting. Coming from outside of England, these contained little of the picturesque, which they tended to displace. Indeed, it appeared as if the best Canadian artists of this period may have been in danger of being assimilated into a hegemonic French visual culture, be that either traditional or modernist. Nonetheless, the English landscape tradition was, as has been said, tenacious. It survived in Canada, even if in a somewhat hybrid form, both in academic landscape productions and within the realm of commercial art and popular illustrations, such as the ever popular picturesque travelogues, which were far more widely disseminated than the works of artists experimenting with new conventions. Still, it is often claimed that, following the turn of the century, the Group of Seven turned against the picturesque, or at least against colonial and European influences which sometimes went unspecified, and developed a new, national, modern and native vision of the landscape.

This generally accepted narrative construction posits that a profound rupture occurred at this point in which all colonial and most direct foreign influences were abandoned. As Reid succinctly put it, “[t]he artists who exhibited together in Toronto as the Group of Seven in May 1920 had by that time developed a doctrine and a style of painting based on the idea that Canadian art could find sufficient sustenance in Canada alone.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently any connections between British landscape traditions and the production of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson have been studiously ignored and dropped from discussion, or pointedly denied or disguised in the recitations of the historical narratives which their work has generated. When the subject did emerge, the presence of the picturesque became a focus for dissension and denial.

The issue was made explicit in an important essay by Northrop Frye. The influential Canadian critic was interested in discerning colonial presences and national differences in Canada, especially in relationship to nature and its representations. He declared that the work of Tom

¹⁰⁶Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 135.

Thomson was explicitly not picturesque, a term he equated with the colonial. Frye repeated the claim that Thomson drew his inspiration from a direct confrontation with the uninhabited land. On the other hand, Horatio Walker, with whom Frye compared Thomson, “looked around wildly for some spot in Canada that had been thoroughly lived in, that had no ugly riddles and plenty of picturesque clichés”. A few lines later Frye concluded:

And for all Canadians and Americans under the bedclothes who wanted, not the new problems of form and outlines, but the predigested picturesque, who preferred dreamy association-responses to detached efforts of organized vision, and who found in a queasy and maudlin nostalgia the deepest appeal of art, Horatio Walker was just the thing.¹⁰⁷

This was a damning assessment of one of Canada’s most recognized artists, and his audiences, but one Frye felt necessary to make in order to rescue Thomson from any association with colonial affinities.¹⁰⁸

More recently, Ann Whitelaw has indicated that this denial of the picturesque continues today in the current display of Canadian art at the National Gallery.

Although the gallery’s exhibition of Canadian art is organized as a chronicle of artistic development in Canada, it is motivated by a quest for a specifically Canadian aesthetic vocabulary; an artistic language that would reflect Canada’s distinct identity and signal its separateness from the former colonial power. For many historians, this distinct Canadian aesthetic took shape in the work of the Group of Seven . . . who foregrounded a new style in painting that broke with the European picturesque style of their predecessors and set the agenda for the development of Canadian art.¹⁰⁹

She notes that this view is also rehearsed in the “art historical survey texts on Canadian art”.¹¹⁰ Thus the narrative of Canadian art, and consequently Canadian identity, has been and still is

¹⁰⁷ Northrop Frye, “Canadian and Colonial Painting”, in Douglas Fetherling, **Documents in Canadian Art**, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1987, pp. 91 - 92. Originally published in **Canadian Forum**, 1940.

¹⁰⁸ Since Frye’s formulations, and Margaret Atwood’s development of them, the discussion of the influence of the picturesque and the sublime has achieved more breadth and depth in the field of literature than in the visual arts in Canada. See, for example, Susan Glickman, **The Picturesque and the Sublime: a Poetics of Canadian Landscape**, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Whitelaw, p. 123.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134, n. 4.

generally written and displayed *against* the picturesque. Whitelaw, however, has been absorbed by the narrative constructions that she analyzes, and follows rather than questions this model, stating repeatedly that the Group became Canadian to the degree that they abandoned the picturesque. Insofar as the picturesque has become, at least since Frye's formulations, a point of contention, it will form the main focus of my discussion here.

Discerning the picturesque, and other aspects of English landscape practice, in the works of Thomson and the Group of Seven is not a difficult chore. Indeed, prior to Frye, the term was frequently found in the writings on the Group. Even Housser identified them as picturesque. Speaking of Thomson's discovery of the "northland", he stated:

This was a more important discovery than it now seems. Just as Kreighoff, the German, nearly fifty years before had come to Quebec and seen in the French habitant new and picturesque art material, so in Northern Ontario these painters found [a] new and picturesque landscape, typically expressive of the Canadian spirit. The discovery was to give direction to Canadian art.¹¹¹

From our present perspective it is difficult to see how the picturesque could have been perceived as "new", a "discovery" and "expressive of the Canadian spirit", when in fact it was exhausted, old and redolent of England. Yet so completely had Housser naturalized, universalized and internalized the picturesque as the proper and only way to view nature for artistic purposes that he was completely unaware that his deployment of the term implied a colonial rather than national vision.

British critics were also sensitive to the links between members of the Group and an English sensibility towards nature derived from the picturesque. An anonymous reviewer, writing for **Studio** prior to the Wembley exhibitions, noted that the Group included "three North-country Englishmen", who had trained and/or worked in England. He stated of one of these, J. E. H. MacDonald, that "[h]is sketches are full of interest, though unequal. They show an elaborate

¹¹¹Housser, p. 61. See also Robert Stacey, "The Myth - and Truth - of the True North", in Michael Tooby, editor, **The True North: Canadian Landscape Painting 1896-1939**, London: Lund Humphries, 1991, pp. 45 - 46 for further suggestions that the "northland" constituted and was perceived as the Canadian equivalent to the English Lake District which was the site of picturesque pursuits.

sense of design spontaneously at work side by side with a Wordsworthian submissiveness to Nature. The two often conflict as they do in his recent canvases."¹¹² Wordworth's poetry, of course, precisely paralleled the pursuit of the picturesque. I would like to suggest here that this recognition played an important role in the responses of the British critics to the Canadian landscapes shown at Wembley.

In searching for further traces of the presence of the picturesque, as well as other aspects of British landscape conventions, I would like first to examine the sequence of four major Canadian landscape paintings from the 1924 Wembley exhibition. Tom Thomson's **Jack Pine, Northern River**, and **The North Wind** and Lawren Harris' **Pines, Kempenfelt Bay** commanded the main wall and dominated the installation.¹¹³ These large paintings demonstrate how conventions drawn from the picturesque were employed, adapted and transformed into what are considered to be among the most essentially Canadian and hence the least colonial of the works by the Group and Thomson. In each, their basic compositions echo Gilpin's delineations of the necessary elements, conventions, vocabulary and devices used to assemble a picturesque landscape.

This is not to say that the Group had direct access to Gilpin's theories. Although this might have been the case, I agree with Mitchell that these tenacious formulations survived as independent pictorial codes long after Gilpin had ceased to be read. Nor do I claim that variations within the picturesque were limited to Gilpin's prescriptions, they were not. There were, particularly in its inception, several different and contested interpretations of both its pictorial practice and its meanings.¹¹⁴ The point here, then, is not to situate the Group within any of these, since all of them had been more or less conflated into a common, non-differentiated set of British conventions by the time they reached Canada, where specific colonial conditions modified them

¹¹²"Toronto", *Studio*, Vol. 86 (1923), p. 58.

¹¹³See illustrations 8, 9, 10 and 15.

¹¹⁴For a detailed discussion of a number of disputes concerning the political meanings of the picturesque and the manner in which it was to be represented, see Ann Bermingham, "English Landscape Drawing around 1795", in Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, pp. 77 - 101.

further. Moreover, they become increasingly hybrid within the Dominion under German and American influences. By the turn of the twentieth century, there was anything but a pure picturesque practice in Canada. The term itself had been generalized to the point where it could accommodate a host of diverse modifications. Nonetheless, I do claim that core elements persisted within the British/Canadian colonial practice which can be traced back to the very roots of the British tradition, that these were handed on to and incorporated within the work of the Group, and that identifying and isolating them is the most clear method for establishing these colonial connections.

Gilpin insisted, and English and colonial followers of the picturesque, no matter how far removed from him as a direct source, concurred that the spatial recession in a landscape must be tripartite, that is, it must be composed of a depth of field that is clearly divided into three grounds. The foreground is generally dark, irregular and rocky, with little detail of interest, although this could vary. In any picturesque work, this area should also feature a framework of trees, which contain and screen the scene, as Malcolm Andrews says, “to prevent one’s eye from straying outside the canvas”. “The dark foreground frame. . . might extend round the top to an overarching bough.”¹¹⁵ Mitchell summarizes this very nicely. “The standard picturesque landscape is especially pleasing. . . because it typically places the observer in a protected, shaded spot (a ‘refuge’), with screens on either side to dart behind or to entice curiosity, and an opening to provide deep access at the centre.”¹¹⁶ Andrews also notes that “[t]he incisive angularity of withered trees was preferred”, as were pines.¹¹⁷ The composition may, as a variation, have the tree(s) placed centrally, so long as it is not symmetrical. The foreground must be distinguished from the mid-ground, which usually features water, that is a lake or winding river, with reflecting light playing on its surface. The background should recede to harmoniously arranged but asymmetrical hills or distant mountains seen in aerial perspective. These fundamental

¹¹⁵ Andrews, *The Search*, p. 29.

¹¹⁶ Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape”, p. 16.

¹¹⁷ Andrews, *The Search*, p. 29.

compositional elements of rocks, trees, screens, frames, shades, refuges, water, hills and spaces, that is the entire apparatus of the picturesque as it was formulated by Gilpin and as it was still practiced over a century later in its generalized form, are not only all present in the Thomson and Harris works, but are taken almost to the point of exaggeration and even caricature. For example, in **Northern River** Thomson's withered spruces have proliferated from the edge almost to the centre, creating the "screen" of foliage which has often been spoken of as a unique feature of the Group. Through this interlace of branches, which has usually been traced to either Scandinavian or Art Nouveau rather than British influences, one views the winding river which recedes to the distant hills.

The problem lies, however, not only in finding aspects of these pictorial elements in the works, but in demonstrating, at least provisionally, that the Canadian artists had acquired competency in these conventions and had internalized and naturalized them as the codes of artistic production. While such a prospect might go without saying for those who were trained or had spent time in England, Thomson was largely self taught and thus could, in theory, have avoided such exposure. Conversely, it should be kept in mind that he worked for a time under the direction of MacDonald, who was one of his mentors and himself influenced by Constable. This is noted by Joan Murray in a recent publication which isolates his paintings of trees, that most picturesque of subjects.¹¹⁸ Her compilation of illustrations outlines in some detail the transformation and continuation of the picturesque into the invented Canadian tradition in his work, although this is not her intent.¹¹⁹ The earliest drawing she presents is **On the Don River** from 1908, done while Thomson was working under MacDonald.¹²⁰ It is, beyond any doubt, a perfectly composed and

¹¹⁸Joan Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur & Co., 1999, p. 7.

¹¹⁹Despite the illustrations, Murray never mentions the picturesque. She attributes Thomson's interest in trees to an extension of an early encounter with the natural sciences. This is then one more point at which the relationship is made explicit pictorially and then denied textually.

¹²⁰Murray, p. 9. See illustration 11. See also, for example, Tom Thomson, **The Old William McKeen House**, n.d., **The Banks of the River**, 1908, and **Young Fisherman**, n.d., all in Joan Murray, **The Art of Tom Thomson**, Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1971, pp. 13 and 16. See also **Stream Bank and Tree** illustrated in Harold Town and David Silcox, **Tom Thomson: the Silence and the Storm**, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977, p. 34. See also Jackson's early **Landscape with Willows**, 1903, National Gallery of Canada, for an example

competent picturesque pastoral complete with all the prescribed elements arranged in proper order: rocky foreground, a small herd of sheep, a central, yet asymmetrical deciduous tree and groups of irregular foliage in the background. The three sequential spaces are neatly divided with a pool occupying the mid-ground. It is, in fact, a saccharine cliché of the picturesque and could easily have served as a model of precisely that type of work that the Group supposedly never indulged in and continuously resisted. A few pages later Murray reproduces a second contemporaneous leafy tree study in watercolour, that most picturesque of media, done with all of the attention to washes and tones in neutral tones that Gilpin would have prescribed.¹²¹

By flipping forward through Murray's study, which is more or less chronological, extending from 1908 to Thomson's death nine years later, it becomes apparent that the central, emblematic pines in his two key iconic images are direct scions of the single or central trees of his early formulaic picturesque works. It also becomes evident to what degree he repeated this standard compositional format throughout his career, always operating within a set of variations that could be readily accommodated.¹²² Insofar as **The Jack Pine, The North Wind and Northern River** are seen as emblematic of the discovery of a new and essential Canadian identity, then the discovery of "Canada" in the "wilderness" also contained the revelation that both were, as Housser indicated, always/already British.

But given that the English audiences at Wembley would have been unaware of this background to Thomson's work, how could this connection have been effected, yet remain unstated? Or, to phrase this another way, how could difference and similarity be proclaimed at the same time within the exhibition and by these key few works which lay at its heart? The pivotal point at which the transition occurred did not so much happen in Thomson as in one of the pictures by

of his competent assimilation and expression of picturesque conventions. See illustration 12.

¹²¹See illustration 13.

¹²²Hubbard points out that these conventions continued and were repeated in the Group's works. Speaking of their first exhibition he states: 'Most of these canvases had the same simple compositional formula of tree against sky and water, and the same bold colour schemes that expressed the austere northern landscape.' He does not seem aware that the roots of this formula lay in the picturesque. Hubbard, **An Anthology**, p. 25.

Lawren Harris chosen by Brown and the jury. **Pines, Kempenfelt Bay** hung just two works away on the same wall from the Thomson grouping. It is clear that **Pines** appealed to the English audiences. It was singled out, illustrated, and received positive critical attention in a review of the first Wembley exhibition that appeared in **Studio**.¹²³ Although the reviewer expressed some ambivalence about the Group, which he referred to “as an enterprising little band of painters who have made a profound impression on the national standard of Canadian art”, he gave **Pines** higher praise than any other work, noted that it was “the antithesis of the Pre-Raphaelite movement in art”, and compared it to Millais’ **Ophelia**. “Lawren Harris has had the greater problem to handle - the cutting away of nearly everything that is visible to the ordinary eye in nature, so as to reveal that form of architectural growth that underlies the outer clothing of natural forms.” The same reviewer noted of Thomson’s **Jack Pine** only that it was “a large two-dimensional design, rich in colour” and that he “was the original founder of the Group of Seven”. The appeal of **Pines** to a cultivated British critical taste is of significance.¹²⁴ If Bourdieu is to be believed, there must have been some previous familiarity and competence in the codes by which the picture was constructed. Where, then, did this lie?

Although a mature work by Harris, **Pines, Kempenfelt Bay** is anything but a wilderness landscape. It owes its domestic and cultivated appearance to the fact that it was one of a series that recorded the picturesque garden and the vista from the Harris family’s country property on Lake Simcoe.¹²⁵ It thus readily fits into the British convention of using landscapes to portray and proclaim entitlement to one’s own estate. English viewers would not necessarily have been aware of the personal connection of the artist to the estate but they would have readily recognized the signs of domesticity discernable in the lawn and fence. Compositionally, however, **Pines**

¹²³Leonard Richmond, “Canadian Art at Wembley”, **Studio**, 89 (1925), pp. 16 - 23. The other works illustrated were F. N. Loveroff, **Snow on the Hillside**; Albert H. Robinson, **Melting Snows, Laurentians**; Alexander Y. Jackson, **Winter, Georgian Bay**; Tom Thomson, **The Jack Pine**; Randolph S. Hewton, **Miss Audrey Buller**; and Francis [sic] H. Johnston, **A Northern Night**. The **Studio** review did not appear in the National Gallery of Canada’s compilations. See illustration 15.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 19.

¹²⁵Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 318.

corresponds more to the picturesque, and thus conflates the two English landscape genres. The extremely abbreviated foreground consists of a neat, grassed area with small, evergreen shrubs, the nearest of which shares a sheltered area of deep shadow with the viewer. The three tall conifers of the title, with their stylized clumps of foliage, abstracted curving limbs and contrasting tall vertical straight trunks, serve both as framing devices for the view across the lake and as a screen extending from top to bottom of the canvas which locks the composition to the surface. They are assisted in this function by the quaint rail fence running beneath them, which is also constructed of contrasting straight and curved lines. In addition, the fence serves as another nostalgic remnant of an English colonial pioneering past, a sign of the boundary of the property and the means of visual access beyond it, which it claims for a British vision. The panoramic space clearly, and even excessively, continues the tripartite demarcation with an abrupt transition to water in the mid-ground and then another to a background of distant irregular hills whose curving horizon slopes downward to the right in contrast to the straight horizontal waterline. All are set in brilliant, even harsh, summer light under a cloud-streaked sky. The image speaks of leisure and bucolic harmony in a civilized setting, in which civilization is defined by British models, and in which ownership, through viewing, extends beyond the fence into the whole of the picturesque landscape. With so many clear signals of the English derivation in the work, is it any wonder that the English critic compared the image to an English painting and placed it within an English canon and history? Indeed, Harris' painting facilitates an easy transition from an English to a Canadian view, and in fact, conflates the two.

But if the distance from Harris' home to Britain is not so far, then neither is it from **Pines** to Thomson's wilderness canvases. In case the **Studio's** audience should have missed their proximity in the exhibition, **The Jack Pine** was illustrated on the page following that of the **Pines** in the review. This conjunction serves to bring out the fact that each relies on the same subjects, compositional devices, minus, of course, the fence and the mowed lawns of the Harris in the Thomson. The painting by Harris thus supplied the transition from sameness to difference with the English tradition that was lacking due to the absence of the early drawings of Thomson. I would contend, however, that **Pines** came too close to making the connection to the British

tradition of picturesque landscapes and portraits of property completely transparent. While this close relationship may have accounted for its initial inclusion and the positive critical reception, which the Group solicited, it was not the connection that either the Group or Brown wished to make explicit. Precisely the opposite. They wanted the Group work to be seen collectively as distinctly Canadian, rather than as part of a British tradition. It became necessary, then, despite or rather because of its critical recognition, to remove it and replace it with a similar work which could also effect the smooth transition to the myth of the wilderness. An Algoma work, **First Snow, North Shore of Lake Superior**, was chosen as its substitute for the 1925 version of the exhibition.¹²⁶

Superficially, **First Snow, North Shore of Lake Superior** is the opposite of **Pines**. The contrasts between cold and heat, tame and wild, summer and late autumn, barren and luxuriant foliage are all too obvious. Yet, these differences do not fully disguise the fact that the two are at the same time variants on the same underlying compositional structure.¹²⁷ With the central tree radically diminished and the fence eliminated, the remaining trees are placed precisely and decorously at the edges and again direct our attention to the three receding distances with the water in the mid-ground. The clear relationship between the two Harris paintings demonstrates how even the park-like images of a tamed and owned landscape such as might be found in the English picturesque or even earlier in portraits of estates, which here reappeared in the neatly fenced foreground of the family home in **Pines**, could then be adapted to the Canadian national wilderness in an almost seamless transition. Such compositions became the stock and trade of Thomson and the Group and were endlessly repeated and varied within the set of limitations as were picturesque images. In short, when Group members chose a scene to represent and

¹²⁶See illustration 16.

¹²⁷Hill indicates that Harris painted at least three works of the area featuring “trees in front of the bay . . . in which he defines the foreground with vertical tree trunks through which one has a panoramic view to the far distance.” Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 318. Although he does not note the link to the picturesque in his precise description of Harris’ adaptation of these conventions, he does link their compositions to **Beaver Swamp, Algoma, Algoma Country** and **Above Lake Superior**, and to a study by A. Y. Jackson, although not to **First Snow**. This version of **Pines**, one of two so titled, was acquired by the National Gallery in 1924 but seems to have suffered further rejection and is now in the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

composed it on their canvas they, in many ways, returned to the picturesque conventions which they would have assimilated through training, constant exposure and unconscious naturalization.

This catalogue of corresponding conventions does not, of course, preclude the presence of non-picturesque elements. Indeed, the Group's works are not simple recapitulations, but are complex and entangled hybrids, cobbled together from a variety of sources, including Art Nouveau graphic design, the much documented, if not overly emphasized Scandinavian influences, and French post-impressionist conventions. I do not wish to dispute these other sources. They are all present and accounted for. The problem historically and with the literature as it stands is that while these have legitimately been pointed out, their roles have become exaggerated, overvalued and distorted in the absence of the other essential component.

With that said, it is apparent that many of the Group's characteristics, such as they can be generalized, come from outside the picturesque and, in fact, are resistant to it. Colour is a major point. Gilpin, and by and large the picturesque practitioners in general, categorically resisted brilliant colour and favoured sepia tones which would give a sense of aerial perspective. The Group's hues are, conversely, sharp and clear. Intense colour could be used to assert that the Group drew their inspiration directly from the unmediated response to the brilliant autumn hues of the Canadian wilds.¹²⁸ Or, conversely, it could be claimed that this colour demonstrated their modernity and awareness of post-impressionist chromatic theories. In any case, it provides two possible sources to point to which, through their oscillation, could obscure the underlying adherence to old British (i.e. colonial) sources and reinforce claims to being modern, autochthonic and independent.

In addition, practitioners of the picturesque favoured watercolour over oil, and light washes over impasto and facture. The facture here, especially in the Thomson, is categorically not

¹²⁸See, again, for example, Frye, p. 90. "What is essential in Thomson is the imaginative instability, the emotional unrest and dissatisfaction one feels about a country which has not been lived in: the tension between the mind and a surrounding not integrated with it. This is the key to both his colour and his design."

picturesque. Yet it must be kept in mind that the Group added a watercolourist to their ranks when they brought in Frank Carmichael. We also should note that the richest surfaces occur in the small sketches, and sketching was of course part and parcel of the picturesque. Twelve sketches by Thomson accompanied his larger works at Wembley. But if excessive facture was a point of difference so was excessive smoothness. Gilpin declared the smooth anathema. The surface of the Harris painting and his polished, sculptural forms look much like how Gilpin would prescribe not to do a picture, even though the composition of framing trees, spatial recession, mid-ground lake and distant hills all are picturesque.¹²⁹ There are two points here. The first indicates that even while resisting the picturesque, Harris adhered to that which it defined itself as not being, rather than moving on to something else entirely. In this sense he paradoxically stayed within its limits. But then we must also recognize that Harris's surfaces and forms were unique within the Group. Indeed, of the Seven, his interests and training were the most German, a sympathy which caused him many problems in the war and after.

Finally, Gilpin stocked his landscapes with other than natural elements, which had to be rearranged or invented to suit pictorial requirements. Recommended additions included peasants, although it was essential to show these as being idle, i.e. not engaged in work which would have disrupted the picturesque pleasantness. These figures of local colour could add interest but must never be prominent. In the works examined here, they are nowhere to be found. Group compositions were constructed as largely unfigured "empty landscapes", devoid of human occupation. Secondly, Gilpin recommended ruins which could add a note of melancholy and were also suitably "irregular" and "rough" in appearance. They too have no place in these pictures. But while not present here, both conventions occur elsewhere and will be examined in

¹²⁹Not all smoothness had to be avoided. Smoothness in water, a common feature in Harris, was acceptable and even preferable. "As picturesque beauty therefore so greatly depends on *rough* objects, are we to exclude every idea of smoothness from mixing with it? Are we struck with no pleasing image, when the lake is spread upon the canvas, the *mar mareum aequor*, pure, limpid, smooth, as the polished mirror? We acknowledge it to be picturesque; but we must at the same time recollect, that in fact the smoothness of the lake is more in *reality* than in *appearance*. Were it spread upon the canvas in one simple hue, it would certainly be a dull, fatiguing object. But to the eye it appears broken by shades of various kinds, by the undulations of the water, or by reflections from all the rough objects in it's [sic] neighborhood." Gilpin, p. 22. His emphasis. For a further discussion on "roughness" as a point of contention within the political meanings of the picturesque, especially between Brown, Price and Knight in the late 1700s and early 1800s, see Bermingham, "English Landscape Drawing", pp. 79 - 83.

due course.

We must recognize these differences. Indeed there are enough and of sufficient variety that we could concentrate exclusively on them, but we should not allow them to blind us to the similarities. A multiple rather than singular vision is essential here in order to discern these and other picturesque elements, which extend well beyond mere compositional recipes within these hybrid works. Indeed, if the discussion of references to the picturesque and its conventions remained here, it would be insubstantial and superficial. But the presence of English landscape conventions and claims is far more comprehensive than similarities and differences in compositional and surface treatments, and goes to the very heart and structure of the mythology of the Group.

For example, on the topic of texture, we know that Gilpin liked it “rough”.¹³⁰ He advised the tourist/artist to seek out those areas that were unbeautiful and irregular. And it is here that Thomson’s, Harris’ and the Group’s reliance on picturesque practices goes beyond formulaic formal conventions to the very manner of production. The ritualistic and redemptive trek into the “unbeautiful” woods and sites of tourism in Ontario to make sketches also traces the path of the picturesque.¹³¹ Thomson’s trips to Algonquin Park and Harris’ and the others’ boxcar treks to Algoma parallel precisely the romantic rustic walking tours into the Lake District in England which formed part and parcel of the production of the picturesque. A recent investigation into the colonial picturesque in India notes that “[f]rom the start, travel was an important element . . . the Picturesque encouraged the aesthete to travel in search of landscapes to admire. . . [this] led to the wilder parts of the British Isles, including the Lake District.”¹³² This area in Britain was an

¹³⁰“In eighteenth-century Britain, where the cult of the picturesque had been established in the sphere of landscape painting, the word ‘picturesque’ implied the avoidance of anything precise, trim, or tame; its keynote was the presence of ruggedness, of wild or unkempt beauty. In his famous essay on the picturesque, William Gilpin specified that “ideas of neat and smooth . . . strip the object . . . of picturesque beauty.” Pal and Dehejia, p. 97.

¹³¹On the primacy of the sketch in the picturesque see Birmingham, **Landscape and Ideology**, p. 64,

¹³²G. H. R. Tillotson, “The Indian Picturesque: Images of India in British Landscape Painting, 1780 - 1880”, p. 142.

intermediate terrain, wild, yet park-like. Not coincidentally, the area between the wild and civilized was also the preferred location for the Group of Seven, despite the claim that they were wilderness artists. Algonquin Park, was, after all, as its name implied, a vacation playground north of Toronto but south of the 49th parallel and easily accessible by train, supplied with hotels and, no doubt, canoe rental facilities for the picturesque artist and tourist alike. As Paul Walton has pointed out, having already been logged over, it was anything but untouched, virginal nature. Group members also went to the cottage country around Georgian Bay, another logged over tourist area, which became a “well-appointed holiday resort created by private enterprise” precisely because here Ontario nature closely duplicated the British conventions of the picturesque landscape accessible by the early twentieth century picturesque tourist. It “was hardly a wilderness area”. Indeed,

Dr. MacCallum’s cottage provided a comfortable base from which his artist friends could explore the region’s picturesque possibilities. . . . Eventually, of course, the scenery came to be viewed with reference to an orderly set of expectations as visitors learned what to look for with the aid of the Group of Seven and their followers. Their works evoked romantic communion with the “wilderness” by means of a set of traditional conventions, sublime panoramas, beautiful valleys, and picturesque details, but they were cast in a modernist, “poster-esque” style.¹³³

Allan Fletcher has also pointed out that the Algoma region, on the north edge of Lake Superior, which Harris’ image depicted, was far from being a wilderness and was at that time being rehabilitated from its industrial state, after it had been logged and mined, as a site of picturesque tourism to revitalize the local economy.¹³⁴ In short, the very sites which these paintings represented and the ritualistic treks which preceded them, as well as the sketches which were

¹³³Paul H. Walton, “The Group of Seven and Northern Development”, *RACAR*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1990), p. 173. Walton, does not follow up on what the implications of recapitulating the picturesque meant in terms of forging a national identity. The persistence of the notion that Algonquin Park was a wilderness experience distinct to Canada and separated from anything British can still be found in Cole, “Artists, Patrons and Public”, p. 71. “Amid the untrammelled beauty of Algonquin Park, the wilderness could work its magic.” This is not the only instance in which he claims the park as an untouched wilderness or that he resorts to “magic” to explain the attraction.

¹³⁴Allan Fletcher, “Industrial Algoma and the Myth of Wilderness: Algoma Landscapes and the Emergence of the Group of Seven 1918 - 1920”, MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989.

produced, followed and fostered the paths of picturesque tourism. Thus the mythic claim that the Group's works came from an unmediated and uninfluenced response to a raw and untouched nature become modified by the mediation of colonial practices and the sites they actually chose.

We should also keep in mind, however, that "soon, mass travel to such accessible places [as the Lake District] jaded the appetite, and the field of discovery was broadened to include continental Europe, especially such dramatic regions as the Alps".¹³⁵ The Group again recapitulated this expansion in Canada in the late 1920s, and traveled on the railway lines away from Ontario to the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia as part of a Grand Tour to the tourist areas of Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper, and the Upper Skeena Valley. Harris' picturesque view of Maligne Lake, near Jasper, was included in both the second Wembley and the Jeu de Paume exhibitions. The images by Jackson and Holgate of the Gitksan Native villages of the Skeena River Valley in British Columbia, judged as a picturesque locale and subject, occurred too late to be seen in England or France.¹³⁶

Beyond the pictorial conventions, and the sites and processes of production, however, lies the claim that the work of the Group of Seven was a direct, non-academic, response to nature and consequently was uniquely Canadian. Paradoxically, the very foundation of this claim that a non-mediated response to the land could be the basis for a national identity, is not uniquely Canadian, but rather British, and originated with the birth of landscape painting as an independent genre in England. Over one hundred years before the Group and their companions made these claims, Reynolds saw "Gainsborough's work as a direct response to nature" which was "not indebted to the Flemish School, nor indeed to any school, for his grace was not

¹³⁵Tillotson, p. 142.

¹³⁶These trips to western Canada recapitulated the picturesque excursions of the artists who were sent on a grand tour across Canada after the opening of the railway the late 1880s. For an examination of the latter's role in asserting a national identity at that time see Jessup, "Canadian Artists." Jessup avoids, however, drawing any links between these early picturesque excursions and those of the Group, which she also examines. Indeed, in a manoeuver designed to ensure that no such connection emerges within her text and that one is not seen as an extension of the other, she reverses chronological order and discusses the paintings of the Group before she approaches the work of the earlier railway artists.

academical, or antique, but selected by himself from the great school of Nature".¹³⁷ The much later jargon and rhetoric surrounding the Group precisely echoed this claim. Bermingham has observed: "Writers on the picturesque derived Gainsborough's landscapes not from [foreign] schools of landscape painting but from the English countryside itself."¹³⁸ That it would be as easy to substitute Thomson or Harris for Gainsborough, and Canada for England, into these claims as it would into the statement that "nature was his teacher and the woods of Suffolk his academy" clearly indicates that even in its claim to being distinctly Canadian and post-colonial, the Group's landscapes proclaim their colonial dependency and solidarity with English precedents.¹³⁹ Indeed, the very claim that a picturesque landscape can be freighted with a national identity is English. As would later occur in Canada, the first claims for a specifically national English school of painting in the mid-1700s were founded on landscape painting. "In painting as in poetry, the appeal to swelling nationalism was strong pressure behind the emergence of an English school of landscape."¹⁴⁰ Once again, Canadian national identity was based on the familiar claims of English national identity.

If we can accept a lingering British imperial influence within the work of the Group of Seven and give it a place equal to the other sources from which their work was assembled, then a contradiction in the discourse of Canadian art becomes apparent. But, again, even this paradox echoes the previous British situation. Currently scholars of British art are unraveling these English claims to reveal their inherent, but continuously overlooked, contradictions. Contrary to the claims that British landscape sprang from the land, "[i]t is an irony often noted that the rapid growth of interest in views of British scenery was largely prompted by a foreign initiative" that is, by Italian and Dutch painting with which English landscape painters became increasingly

¹³⁷Reynolds cited in Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology**, p. 58. Compare with Housser's claim for Thomson: "His master was nature." p. 118.

¹³⁸Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology**, p. 59.

¹³⁹William Bate-Budley cited in Bermingham, **Landscape and Ideology**, p. 60

¹⁴⁰Andrews, **The Search**, p. 24.

aware through various means in the 1700s.¹⁴¹ It is then doubly ironic that the rapid growth of interest in nationalistic views of Canadian scenery in the 20th century should be largely prompted by an English initiative. English commentators had been adept in the 17th and 18th centuries at not seeing outside influences on their own landscape traditions. It could be said that they were also adept in the twentieth century at not seeing their own foreign influence on Canadian art. It appears that this ability, this willful blindness to outside influences, was as much part of Canada's colonial heritage as was the claim that the nation's landscapes sprang directly from a unmediated, non-academic response to the land.

This ambivalence between the colonial and its denial was not without function. The English audiences could be reassured of a colonial allegiance, even in the face of a declaration of cultural and artistic independence, by witnessing the renovation of their own defunct landscape traditions, but at the same time overlooking this to see the Canadian work as new, unique and different. British critics, familiar with their own country's art and its claims, practices and conventions, to the degree that they had been "naturalized", could immediately "read" the meaning of the Canadian work, and recognize through their own history the validity of its claims to nationalism. At the same time they could concentrate on its unique qualities and see it as so different and independent that no point of overlap was discernible. I would also argue that this relationship and dependency had to be disguised by both parties, and is, down to the present, privately understood and accepted, but publically ignored and denied in a complex paradox of identification and differentiation. Even Hill's carefully researched study makes no reference to the picturesque or to any British influences, although he carefully enumerates the other sources.

There were other reasons why Wembley was the perfect place to stage such an exhibition and garner recognition for Canada's claims to a distinct post-colonial visual identity and paradoxically declare a solidarity with an Empire that was going through an anxious period of transition, precisely because of claims such as these. The work from the other areas of the Empire was still perceived by the British critics as openly colonial, clearly picturesque and

¹⁴¹ Andrews, *The Search*, p. 35.

without the overlay of the other more modern influences. The perception of derivative qualities within the work from Australia and elsewhere would have thrown the differences in the Canadian art into even greater relief, thus helping to disguise its basis in picturesque formulae, conventions and practices.

This also goes a long way to explain why Scandinavia could be overvalued as a source for the Group of Seven, despite the fact that only two of the members made the famous pilgrimage to the traveling exhibition at the Albright Knox Museum in Buffalo that has now been enshrined in the history of Canadian art. The other possible source remains a few black and white, and one or two colour illustrations published in **Studio** magazine. By all historical standards, this is scant evidence on which to base a major influence, particularly to the exclusion of the picturesque and other imperial conventions. But an important distinction separated Scandinavian landscapes from those of England. The former was not a colonial parent. To point to it as a source would be to identify a parallel development, not a colonial derivation. Indeed, it could be used to disguise the latter. The myth of a cultural post-colonial autonomy could still be maintained through recourse to a broader myth of the North.

But, as with so many of the elements from which the Group cobbled together their style and myth, this too could prove problematic. It appears now that the Canadian painters were, of necessity, highly selective in what they saw and recognized in the Buffalo exhibition and subsequent publications as useful to their aims.¹⁴² They focused exclusively on landscapes. These corresponded to their own experience and the British traditions behind them. It was the genre in which they were competent. What they ignored, and what has not been reported in this context thus far, is that Scandinavian nationalist art was only in part a landscape art. In fact, it

¹⁴²The monumental monograph by Carl Laurin, Emil Hannover and Jens Thiis, **Scandinavian Art**, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968, was originally published in 1922. In many ways it corresponded to the 1912 - 1913 exhibition. The section on modern Norwegian art shows only a small percentage of pure landscapes, as with the other countries. For a more recent sampling, see Kirk Varnedoe, **Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. Again, landscape painting is in the minority. Roald Nasgaard, **Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America**, Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1984, isolates only landscapes and thus reaffirms the connection with the Group of Seven.

was in many areas primarily narrative and figurative. Nationalism in Scandinavia, as it was produced in the late nineteenth century, was also based on a recourse to a mythic past and an ancient *volk* with a deep history within a particular geographic area to which they had a longstanding claim. All of these figured in the painting, as for example in the work of the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela, who is cited as one of the influences on Harris's treatment of snow.¹⁴³ Gallen-Kallela was an important figure in the drive to Finnish nationalism in the late 1800s. But as Varnedoe points out, this nationalism was invested in more than just his landscapes.

During the 1890s, Gallen-Kallela became increasingly interested in heightening public consciousness of a separate Finnish national identity. With this purpose, he began to execute paintings illustrating episodes from the Kalevale, a collection of legends gathered by the philologist Elias Lonrot earlier in the nineteenth century. Lonrot visited Karelia and recorded these stories which had passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. They comprise a mythic history of the Finnish people from the Creation until the birth of Christ.¹⁴⁴

It was, then, these figurative paintings of mythic narratives that were freighted with his nationalist message. But these did not act alone. It was not just the painting, but the sum total of all these parts, that is the oral myths, the ancient *volk*, the deep history and claims to the land, as well as an indigenous architecture, literature, sculpture, costumes and decorative style which were necessary to give credence to claims for a Finnish national identity. All of these were configured together in the complex decor of Finland's pavilion at the Paris Exposition in 1900 and were recognized by the French critics as valid proof of a unique national culture.¹⁴⁵

No mention of these broader fundamental aspects is ever given in either the recitals by the Group

¹⁴³See Nasgaard, p. 170 and Varnedoe, p. 93. See illustrations 17 and 18 for the two sides of Gallen-Kallela's work.

¹⁴⁴Varnedoe, p. 90.

¹⁴⁵“C'est bien en présence d'un art national propre que nous nous trouvons”, Gustav Soulier, “La Pavillion de finlande à l'Exposition Universelle”, *Art et Decoration*, juillet/décembre, 1900, t. viii, p. 1, 11, cited in Marie-Pierre Salé, “Entre mythes et histoires: la renouveau de la pienture nationaliste”, in **1900**, Paris: Galleries nationales du grand Palais, Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux et Le musée d'Orsay, 2000, pp. 202 - 212. Salé states that, “Le message était limpide: les articles parus en France insistent sur le caractère national de cet art, son autonomie et sa nouveauté.” p. 205.

or their commentators, who focus exclusively on only one component of the total construction. This omission occurs for good reason. To bring the rest forward would point out that Anglo-Canada lacked such a deep, mythic past, an ancient claim to the land and a primitive *volk* along with their accompanying folkloric traditions. Such a comprehensive comparison between, say, Finnish painting and that of Canada could make the latter's claims to a national identity seem deficient, if not spurious. Better, then, to focus only on and universalize the landscape/nationalistic equation, and ignore the rest. But even here a paradox exists. If the impulse to landscape is universal, how then is it specifically nationalistic, aside from the specifics of local topography? Such problems did not, however, arise at the time. Much the opposite. Wembley confirmed the recognition of a distinct Canadian national image, but at a certain cost which made the claim precarious. The one recourse to a deep mythic past and an ancient *volk* that Canada possessed, that is the indigenous population, had, for reasons which will be explored in subsequent chapters, to be erased. Nonetheless, through a carefully disguised, but artfully continued, identification with established British vocabularies of national identity and imperial power, with an audience willing and needing to overlook these omissions and to focus only on the differences in Canada's landscape art, and by excluding the Indian from the site, the fragile, ambiguous and equivocal claims to a unique, homogeneous identity represented in the visual arts in Canada could be secured at the imperial centre.

The measure of the success in the project to propagate a singular vision of Canadian national identity based on the landscapes of the Group of Seven to British audiences at Wembley can be seen from the place the event has taken in the histories of Canadian art. It has played a prominent role in the narratives as the crowning moment of triumph of the Group over the oppositions that had occurred to that point. This has not, however, been the fate of the followup exhibition where these same institutions and artists solicited validation of their artistic and nationalist enterprise from the county's other major colonial parent, France.

Chapter II

Paris: A Play of Mistaken Identities at the Jeu de Paume

Even before the final Wembley exhibition came down, negotiations were underway for a followup show in France or elsewhere. Through such a move, the administrators of Canadian art sought out the judgement of Paris to further validate the Dominion's claim to a singular, post-colonial national identity and to an art which could take its place among other modernist movements beyond the confines of the Empire.¹ As in the Greek myth, however, discord followed. Canadian art's French debut took place in 1927, Canada's sixtieth or diamond jubilee year, at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, which, although adjacent to the Louvre, was under the administration of the Musée de Luxembourg. The prestigious location at the centre of the art world confirmed the signal importance of the landmark event for Canada. For its part, France hosted the "Exposition d'art Canadien" as part of a series initiated after the War showcasing foreign works.

The Paris exhibition was a further refinement of the second Wembley show, but with many additions and deletions to clarify its message.² But while intimately related, there were several

¹It is often asserted that the this exhibition occurred at the invitation and solicitation of the French government, thus giving credence to the belief that the quality of Canadian art displayed at Wembley had been recognized at the centre of modernism, and was being sought out. The National Gallery of Canada was certainly anxious at the time that it be so perceived. "As a direct result of the unusual interest aroused in European art circles by the Canadian Section of Fine Art at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924 and 1925, the French Ministry of Fine Arts invited the National Gallery to form an exhibition of Canadian art in Paris." National Gallery of Canada, **Annual Report of the Board of Trustees for the Fiscal Year 1926 - 1927**, Ottawa, 1927, p. 12. This is, however, not the case. The project was requested and negotiated at the behest of Canadian institutions and carried out in competition with other countries. See Minister to McCurry, Oct. 25, 1925, NGC Archives, acknowledging the request. See also Paul Leon, Le Directeur des Beaux-Arts to Eric Brown, 15 May, 1926, Louvre Archives. In confirming the exhibition, Leon states: "I have the honour of informing you that after having examined requests coming from other nations, the Jeu de Paume will be put at your disposal from 10 April to 10 May, 1927." (My translation.) Only later, after the terms had been worked out, did the solicitation from Canada turn into an "invitation" from France. McCurry to Brown, July 12, 1926, NGC Archives. See also Brown to Masson, 15 July, 1926, Louvre Archives.

Paris was not the only possibility mooted at the time. "I think a very well selected show of modern Canadian work in Paris or a Canadian section in the Venitian International would do a lot for us." Pere Raquette [A. Y. Jackson] to Clarence Gagnon, April 20, 1926. McCord Museum Archives, henceforth MMA Archives.

²See illustration 19.

crucial differences which separated the two venues. Of particular importance was the inclusion of two retrospectives, James Wilson Morrice and Tom Thomson. This conjunction set up certain problems, especially in the Group's claims to a mastery of modernism. The most important issues, however, emerged around the representation of the Indian. Unlike the complete exclusion of Native material at Wembley the Paris venue included a small group of carvings from the Northwest Coast. These few modest objects, mostly Haida, and mostly miniatures, only a few inches high, made for a non-Native market, were not initially conceived as part of the exhibition, and appeared only belatedly, under obscure circumstances. Archival photographs show them set apart in a dark, draped alcove. The masks and model poles are separate from, yet framed and dominated by the much larger context of paintings, which extend beyond the frame of the photograph.³ Aside from this statement of relative importance based on their numbers and size, and their separateness, no direct relationships are visible from the installation photographs. No text panels point out links, affinities or influences between the paintings and sculptures. No dialogical relationships are underscored by contiguities of any type. One questions why they are there, looking as they do, out of place. It would in fact be easy to dismiss them as an irrelevant aside, almost as if this is what the exhibitors had in mind. Nonetheless, this seemingly inconsequential, and somewhat ambiguous, interruption within the larger exhibition profoundly affected the reading of the Parisian exhibition, and diverted its intended statement.

Indeed, although the **Exposition d'art canadienne** was (and still is) deemed the better show through both deletions and additions primarily designed to simplify and clarify its singular statement, it paradoxically did not meet the objectives of the organizers nor did it manage to

³A substantial literature has accumulated in the last decade outlining the way displays affect the reading of exhibitions in museums and galleries, especially of ethnographic material. A brief selection would include: Robert Lumley, ed., **The Museum Time Machine: Putting Cultures on Display**, London: Routledge, 1988; Peter Vergo, ed., **The New Museology**, London: Reaktion Books, 1989; Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., **Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Museum Display**, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991; Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., **Museum/Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles**, London: Routledge, 1994; Carol Duncan, **Civilizing Ritual: Inside Public Art Museums**, London: Routledge, 1995; Nicholas Serota, **Experience or Interpretation: the Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art**, London: Thames and Hudson, 1996; and Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., **Thinking About Exhibitions**, London: Routledge, 1996. The last contains an excellent extended bibliography.

communicate even the basics of its intended overall message or that of the individual works.⁴ Contrary to all expectations, the critical reception to the Paris exhibition, although not entirely negative and in many ways a qualified success, if not in the manner intended, was nonetheless experienced as a traumatic and embarrassing failure which threatened to destabilize if not rupture the precarious constructions of Canadian national identity. Thus, unlike Wembley, which is mentioned everywhere as signifying the validation of the Group of Seven and its nationalist message on the international stage, the Paris exhibition, despite the importance given to it at the time, has been largely expunged from the record of the “narration of the nation”.⁵

The questions arise: How do we explain two different responses to essentially the same works? What are we to make of them? Such questions of interpretation are important for there is far more at stake here than simply documenting two conflicting readings of the same images, measuring the relative success or failure of each in conveying their intended message, or their respective roles in the history of Canadian art. To focus solely on these would be to succumb to a fictitious duality and to miss the main point of the comparison. What is ultimately at stake is both the construction of a Canadian identity in the visual arts and the representation of the Native

⁴Hill, **The Group of Seven**, pp. 215 - 217.

⁵Graham McInnes, in his study **Canadian Art**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1950, p. 60, stated: “The zenith of the Group’s achievement occurred during the years 1924 - 1927, and is underlined by the immediate and stimulating success of the Canadian art exhibitions at London in 1924 - 1925 and at Paris in 1927. Here their dash, brilliant colour and decorative ability found a ready response among critics and public alike.” Although he cited the Wembley responses, he gave none of the Parisian reviews which would have disproved his claims. J. Russell Harper, in **Painting in Canada: a History**, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1966, p. 304 ended his chapter on the Group with the Wembley triumphs. “Undoubtedly the high point in interest, and the assurance of their final acceptance and triumph in Canada, was inspired from abroad as a result of London’s Wembley Exhibition in 1924 and 1925.” He too cited the British responses, referring to them as “more objective” than presumably the negative Canadian criticism although he may have been referring to the Parisian critics. He did not mention the Jeu de Paume exhibition in any context. Dennis Reid in his catalogue, **Le Groupe des Sept/ The Group of Seven**: Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 1970, p. 201, reduced the Jeu de Paume to an aside in the last rounds of the battle between Brown and the Group versus the Academy. “Clever politics on the part of Brown and his supporters and the continuing success of his international programme, with the opening of the Canadian exhibition in Paris in 1927 again drew public support and forestalled a direct confrontation [with the Academy].” He gave nothing in support of his claim of continuing success. Dennis Reid, in **A Concise History of Canadian Painting**, Toronto: Oxford, 1973, p. 151, also finished his chapter on the Group with the Wembley exhibition, and omitted any reference to Paris. The one place where it did appear in recent times was in F. Maud Brown, **Breaking Barriers: Eric Brown and the National Gallery**, s.l.: Society for Art Publications, 1964. Her brief account, while flattering to her husband, is less than impartial.

within that structure.

Staging the Exhibition

Wembley and the Jeu de Paume exhibitions were similar in that in each Canada's assertion of cultural autonomy was countered by a deference to colonial authority in the personages chosen to grace the opening ceremonies. Brown's first choice was no one less than the Prince of Wales, although the organizers had to settle for the British ambassador to France, the Marquis of Crewe, and the French President, F. Bouisson, as the main dignitaries.⁶ In acknowledgment of Canada's relationship to Britain, English presence was given privilege of place at this distinctly Canadian event. Some consideration was also given to placing a token French-Canadian on the honor list, but various candidates were rejected for their association with the Royal Canadian Academy. After some discussion on who would be the most suitable choice, this finally fell to Senator Raoul Dandurand.⁷ Most of those from Canada who attended the elaborate opening ceremonies were, then, Anglo-Canadians.

Given its symbolic significance, and a dramatic shift in the audiences and publics it was to address, the exhibition was staged with scrupulous care. By the opening day of April 11, stealing a march on the Parisian spring salons of the following month, the cast had been rigorously selected and the program had been well rehearsed. Pushing the theatrical metaphor, one could say that the scenery had been freshly painted. It was however to be a brief run, lasting only one month, until 11 May.

⁶Eric Brown to His Excellency, Governor General of Canada, Feb 23, 1927, NGC Archives.

⁷Brown to Dr. Sheperd, Feb. 23, 1927, NGC Archives. In the same letter he noted that French names are "seriously lacking" on the "Canadian Committee for the French Exhibition". He also stated that he was "very doubtful about the advisability of asking the President of the Royal Canadian Academy who, if he accepted without his Council's permission, might get into trouble and if he asks its permission it may result in a recrudescence of the Wembley difficulty".

The Jeu de Paume exhibition was based on the last show at Wembley, but placed solely under the direction of Eric Brown, who negotiated to work independently, without a jury. He operated in conjunction with the artist Clarence Gagnon, his politically astute and well connected point man who was then resident in Paris, and André Dezarrois, curator of the Jeu de Paume, who was using the venue to host a series of international exhibitions.⁸ The exhibition, which had been discussed since late 1925, was confirmed in May, 1926.⁹ Competition was stiff, and jockeying with Holland, Greece and Argentina, as well as delays from touring the Wembley exhibition within Britain, had postponed Canada's debut from 1925.¹⁰ The additional time was put to good use to reshape the latest Wembley show, which Brown felt had been compromised by the jury selection process, and had led to the inclusion of inferior work. Acting alone, and unencumbered, he edited out many pieces, and added retrospectives of James Wilson Morrice and Tom Thomson, both deceased within the last decade.¹¹

Morrice was the Canadian artist most associated with the French avant garde. Living primarily

⁸Hill, *The Group of Seven*, pp. 215 - 217. Dezzarois' full title was Conservateur-adjoint du Musée national du Luxembourg, chargé de la Section des Écoles Étrangères et du Musée du Jeu de Paume.

Gagnon, who had trained in Paris and returned to Canada, went back to France in December, 1924, ostensibly because failure to do so would result in the loss of a studio which he had leased. Gagnon to Duncan Campbell Scott, December 10, 1924. Gagnon had also assisted Brown in hanging the second Wembley exhibition. He apparently enjoyed special privileges such as having his work, done in Paris, bypass the jury. See Gagnon to Duncan Campbell Scott, May 4, 1925, both MMA Archives.

⁹Le Directeur des Beaux Arts to the Director of the National Gallery, 2 May, 1926, NGC Archives.

¹⁰Clarence Gagnon to Eric Brown, March 3, 1926, NGC Archives.

¹¹If the Academy thought that the National Gallery was working against its best interests, they were not mistaken. Brown was adamant that their numbers be reduced. In writing to Gagnon, he stated that a letter from the French Ministry which he would write and which they would then sign and return "will enable us to take only the best of the Wembley pictures and to keep out work which has no place in such an important foreign exhibition." Brown to Gagnon, December, 1926. (This and letters cited below in NGC Archives.) Earlier he expressed his desire to bypass the jury. "This I am sure would mean a different and inferior jury and a flood of inferior work. I hope I make my point clear." Brown to Gagnon, 22 July, 1925. Gagnon was far less circumspect in his letters to Brown and named the R.C.A. as the enemy who had to be excluded. Gagnon to Brown, November 28, 1926. On the other hand, Gagnon was no flag waver for the Group either, since he realized his position outside their ranks. "They appear as wanting outside artists to fight for them but don't want these in their group. In fighting the R.C.A., they forget that the very thing they are fighting against is existent in their Group." Gagnon was also fully aware of the behind the scenes maneuvering by the Group against the R.C.A. He mentioned specifically Jackson's "tricks" in getting Grier elected by nominating another weak Montreal candidate. Gagnon to Brown, November 10, 1926.

in Paris, he had achieved an international reputation and had painted side by side with Henri Matisse in Tangiers. Indeed, he had established Canada's claims to modernity in France. It could have been foreseen that the choice to highlight him would set up a comparison with Thomson, the purported "discoverer" of the modern Canadian landscape, that threatened to undermine the integrity of the venture. On the other hand, any attempt to exclude or downplay Morrice would have been foolhardy and smack of willful provincialism. He was on everyone's mind at the time. Following his death, he had been celebrated in two posthumous exhibitions. Armand Dayot, who would be instrumental in the Jeu de Paume exhibition, and who published the journal **L'Art et les Artistes**, had written a catalogue essay for the memorial exhibition at the Galeries Simonson held in January 1926.¹² This had been accompanied by a note by Matisse himself. Although it was possible limit his presence Wembley, Morrice's position in Paris was a matter that had to be dealt with more expeditiously.

Brown met this challenge head on and perhaps even overreacted. In stark contrast to the two paintings by Morrice at the first and second Wembley shows, he gave Morrice more works than any other artist: forty-eight oils. There was some advantage to this generosity. By more than tripling the number from the original estimate of fifteen, they could be hung apart from the other Canadian work in a separate room. There were no drawings listed in the catalogue as there were for many of the other artists. Most of the works came from private collections. Only one, **Au Cirque**, came from the National Gallery, one from the Art Association of Montreal and one from the Luxembourg Museum in Paris.¹³ This indicates a high regard for his work among collectors in Europe and Canada and does something to dispel the myth that Canadian collectors were by and large a conservative and timid bunch still addicted to Hague School daubs, as was constantly repeated in the jargon of the Group. On the other hand it says little for the modernist collecting

¹²John O'Brian, "Morrice's Pleasures (1900-1914)", p. 94, in Nicole Cloutier, **James Wilson Morrice 1865 - 1924**, Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1986. Dayot was, as Inspecteur Général Honoraire des Beaux-Arts, involved in the Jeu de Paume exhibition. Dayot had been in communication with Gagnon since at least 1920. See Gagnon - Dayot correspondence, MMA Archives.

¹³**Canadian Selection of Fine Arts, Catalogue**, British Empire Exhibition: London, 1925, p. 17.

policies of the National Gallery at the time.¹⁴

Despite the number of Morrice's works, Brown had another vision of the exhibition and its priorities. In writing to Dr. MacCallum asking for the loan of work by Thomson, Brown stated that "I want to make the Thomson group as important as possible," i.e. privileged over Morrice, his retrospective partner.¹⁵ This would not be so easy, as Thomson's career had been far shorter, his output less, and MacCallum declined to lend an important piece, although he was accommodating with others. In the end, Brown was able to assemble thirteen works of which four came from the National Gallery, and four from MacCallum. These included a repeat of the major works from Wembley such as **The West Wind**, **The Jack Pine** and **Northern River**. Brown seems to have assumed that these, with the Group work, would carry the day, especially since there would be no work shown which would indicate the presence of a following for Morrice. In this approach, however, there was the danger of splitting the exhibition's message and undermining its attempts to proclaim a homogenous national image and identity.¹⁶ There were also additional pieces to compensate for some odd omissions earlier in England, such as Maurice Cullen, but the additional loans from both private and public sources were largely to

¹⁴Morrice appears to have been something of an embarrassment to Brown and the National Gallery. Until 1925, his works were sparsely collected. According to Hubbard, only three pieces had been acquired at that time. Two were minor, as can be seen by the fact that they were not sent to Paris. One was only acquired the previous year. By comparison, the National Gallery owned seven paintings by A. Y. Jackson, eight by MacDonald, at least as many by Gagnon, and so on. The institution did acquire a number of Morrice works in 1925, possibly from a bequest. These were, however, largely small pochades. The annual report uncharacteristically listed the smaller works collectively as "Twelve panels" and "Nine sketches" rather than giving them separate titles. National Gallery of Canada, **Annual Report of the Board of Trustees for the Fiscal Year 1925 - 1926**, Ottawa: 1926, p. 15.

¹⁵Eric Brown to Dr. MacCallum, Feb 3, 1927, NGC Archives.

¹⁶This becomes particularly so in considering the diametrically opposed images of the two artists: the one a urbane, cosmopolitan, witty *flâneur*, dressed impeccably for strolling the boulevards and carrying nothing heavier than an umbrella and sipping absinthe, versus the virile, self-trained, plain speaking woodsman dressed in plaid, denim and boots, with a canoe under one arm and a paintbox under the other while hiking through the woods drinking cowboy coffee. That these images were not were not a simple binary but rather flip sides of the same coin was not evident at the time.

buttress Group representation.¹⁷ Brown firmly believed that the renovated exhibition was far stronger and more capable of carrying its intended message.

In all, the proportion of Group work at the Jeu de Paume exceeded that at either Wembley show. There were now only 64 artists listed by name in the catalogue while there were 268 works, a far larger total than in England, but far fewer artists.¹⁸ Of the 59 painters, 10 were associated with the Group, including all seven as it stood, plus Thomson, Holgate and Johnston, the latter two who either had been or would be members. They were collectively given more space and more works each than anyone else, save Morrice for the reasons given above, Gagnon, who negotiated the exhibition from Paris and had an unnumbered selection of his **Grand Silence Blanc** illustrations included, and, oddly, the woodcut and watercolour artist W. J. Phillips who attracted little critical attention. Thus Jackson was given eight entries, including three drawings, Holgate eight, including four woodcuts, Harris seven of which three were drawings, Lismer six, of which two were drawings, MacDonald five, including one drawing, Varley five including **Stormy Weather, Georgian Bay**, and one drawing, Carmichael four, one of which was a watercolour, Casson three and Johnston two including a tempera: 47 works in all. Although this was one less than Morrice's total, with Thomson the number rose to 60, i.e., about a quarter of the paintings, drawings and prints in the exhibition, again far greater than in England. With Morrice, the total came to almost half of the works, leaving the other half for everyone else.

In contrast, beginning alphabetically, Paul Alfred had four; Dorothy Stevens Austen had two, both prints; Harold Beament four, of which two were drawings; J. W. Beatty, two; Franklin Brownell, two; William Brymner, two; F. S. Challener four, three of which were drawings; W. F. G. Godfrey, one; Thomas Garland Greene, one; Edmund Geoffrey Grier, one; Fred S. Haines, one print, and so on. All of the others appeared as isolated artists working more or less alone,

¹⁷Four works from Group members were borrowed from the Art Gallery of Toronto, Brown to H.O. McCurry; Harris' **Northern Lake** came from Mrs. Massey, Brown to Mrs. Massey, Feb 18, 1927. Both NGC Archives.

¹⁸**Exposition d'art Canadien . . . au Musée du Jeu de Paume, à Paris**, 11 Avril à 11 Mai, 1927, [Paris]: s.n. 1927.

including Morrice. Only the Group had an overall agenda, which would give strength to their message through constant repetition. The genealogy of the Group, and thus modern Canadian art, was established through the retrospective of Tom Thomson's work.

This unequal balancing of the exhibition allows us to assume that the protesters had a case. They claimed that in selecting works for international exhibitions, Brown was less than impartial and was promoting the Group to the exclusion of the majority of other artists in the country. The proportions of works within the exhibition would appear to indicate that Brown consciously weighted the exhibition in favour of the Group to insure their separation and recognition, and to clearly establish the difference and uniqueness of this Canadian national art. Indeed, it appears that Brown wished to maintain control of the exhibition and that he went as far as he dared to insure that the Group received star billing.¹⁹ In this respect, institutional support was never a problem for the Group.

Given the clear focus of the exhibition, expectations were high and a repeat of the Wembley triumphs was anticipated. Much was at stake here. Jackson, for example, conceived of the exhibition as a contest between the Group and Gallery which were on the side of a truly "Canadian" painting, versus the Academy. He firmly believed that success was guaranteed, but noted the problems Brown was facing.

Brown is having a rough time: the Academy gentlemen will be filled with anguish if the exhibition is a big success and they will do anything to reduce it to mediocrity. . . The show in Paris should be the very boldest work we can get together. It will not shock even the most conventional bourgeoisie over there. While our academic stuff will be sniffed at by their academic painters.²⁰

¹⁹For his desire from the start to insure that there would be no jury which would result in a "flood of inferior work" and that it be an "official Canadian exhibition" see Brown to Gagnon, 22 July 1925, NGC Archives.

²⁰Jackson to Holgate, Feb 9, [1927], Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) Archives.

The Native Presence in the International Theatre

But problems were to arise which would result in much disappointment on this issue. This was due to the fact that the *Jeu de Paume* exhibition also staged the modest debut of the art of the indigenous peoples of the Canadian Northwest Coast on the international arena as “art” rather than artifact. This would be the first time such work was recognized institutionally at such a level and would signal a change in its status in the forthcoming decades. The small group of eleven objects included three masks, two listed as “Tsimshyan”, one as Haida, three miniature wooden totem poles and five Haida argillite carvings. The latter, which included both miniature poles, figures of chiefs, a group of shamans, and an image of a non-native were by Charles Edenshaw and other, unidentified, artists.

The precise reasons for the inclusion of the modest sampling of Haida and Nass material remain obscure. According to a letter in the Archives of the National Gallery, they were included at the request of the French government and Clarence Gagnon.²¹ This letter deserves a close critical reading. In January of 1927 Gagnon wrote to Eric Brown,

By the way, Dayot suggested that we add to the sculpture some of those Pacific Coast carvings in black slate, miniature totem poles or wood-carvings of the same nature. Duncan Scott has some very interesting ones. I was told if I am not mistaken that there are still some Indian craftsmen doing these things. If so we should see that their names are included in the catalogue with those exhibits. You might find something among these carvings that could be included in our exhibition. They certainly would add interest to our show.

Gagnon’s offhand and somewhat late suggestion, made conspicuously casual by his rhetorical “by the way”, however, strains our credulity as it must have Brown’s. For example, how would Dayot have been aware of argillite carvings? Although Marius Barbeau, the folklorist and ethnologist who had joined the Victoria Memorial Museum (later the National Museum) in

²¹Gagnon to Brown, Jan 7, 1927, NGC Archives. See also Gagnon to Duncan Campbell Scott, Feb. 11. 1927, MMA Archives. Gagnon and Scott were closely associated. Scott served as a dealer for Gagnon throughout the 1920s.

Ottawa in 1910, specialized in Northwest Coast cultures, and was raising interest in them in Canada, they were hardly of such international renown at the time that they required special ministerial interventions from the French government to insure they were not overlooked, as flattering as this view would be. This also raises the question of why someone in Dayot's position would feel it necessary to intervene in the selection of the exhibition at all, let alone on this particular minor point. This would assume that the series of international exhibitions, of which Canada's was part, were subject to French control, hardly a tactful diplomatic situation. Gagnon's equally offhand suggestion for a source in the offices of Duncan Campbell Scott is also too pat. It passes over the fact that the Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs had in his personal possession Kwakwaka'wakw material confiscated from the Cranmer potlatch in 1922 that went well beyond argillite miniatures. Pointing to this material suggests that those behind the letter had intended a much broader and more prominent display than actually occurred, but this hint was not taken up. Finally Gagnon's remark that the work is needed to "add interest" blithely diminishes the importance and significance of the other work and offers no credible justification. In short, everything about the letter indicates prevarication or evasion.

Perhaps the most pertinent clue here lies in Gagnon's insistence that he has been told that carvers still exist and that they could and should be named. Again, why would Dayot have insisted on this minor point? Even if he had been made aware of argillite carving, and even if he did feel the need to intervene in the selection process, are we to assume that he was such a connoisseur that he would have known even this intimate detail? Clearly he would not. Another voice must be present here to have "told" Gagnon such a tale, a voice of such authority that it could be transposed as Dayot's, but who remained unnamed. Such recognition of individual styles became the personal aim of Barbeau, as was the belief that Northwest Coast Native art should be recognized as art and included as part of Canada's past cultural heritage, a potential subject for present Anglo-Canadian painters and sculptors, a point I will discuss later in much greater detail. Argillite was one of Barbeau's specialities. Gagnon's casual phrase indicates that the directive may well have come from this source, through roundabout channels. It would have been very

much in Barbeau's interest in promoting his ideas to insure this inclusion and easy for him to do. Barbeau and Gagnon were after all personal friends, in frequent communication, and each was skilled at backroom politics. Gagnon was equally interested in Native material and had a personal stake in this as well, in that he had just published the illustrations for the novel **Grand Silence Blanc** which were included in the show.²² The Native work would have complemented it. Indeed, in such a context it could have made perfect sense to have included the Northwest pieces to demonstrate the affinity with Gagnon's work, which included some variations on Native designs, but these issues were not broached. In any case, such a straightforward approach would probably not have met with success. Both were aware that direct intervention in Brown's hard won personal choices would be considered a breach of his prerogatives as sole organizer of the exhibition, which he would resent and resist, considering he was putting his career on the line. Each also knew that Brown wanted to highlight the Group, not Gagnon, who was aware of his outsider status. But each would have recognized that if the suggestion was seen to come from the French ministerial level, Brown would have no option but to comply or run the risk of either challenging Gagnon, on whom he depended to ensure everything went well, or refusing, which would have led to the possibility of an official complaint and a diplomatic reprimand. Given that his position was already precarious in light of the protests back home, he would have had no choice but to opt for the route of greatest discretion, that is, inclusion, but of a small number of miniature pieces.²³

Although some of this remains speculation, confirmation of Barbeau's intervention and involvement in the exhibition came almost immediately. The organizers gave him and Brown the duty of choosing the selections, which came from the collection of the National Museum

²²Gagnon referred to this as his "totem pole" style. Gagnon to Duncan Campbell Scott, March 25, 1926, MAA.

²³Brown appears to have bought into the message as it stood. In a letter to Dr. Collins, Director of the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, February 23, 1927, he stated: "The French Ministry of Fine Arts particularly requests that a small group of Canadian West Coast Indian sculpture be included in this exhibition and the Trustees of the National Gallery request your permission to allow Mr. Barbeau and myself to make a selection from the material possessed by the Museum. From six to eight pieces are desired." NGC Archives. One wonders who "desired" this small number, since no mention of quantities occurred in Gagnon's initial letter, and what it took to persuade Brown to double it in the interim.

rather than Scott's office. Barbeau was also engaged to write a separate section on them for the catalogue of the exhibition. This text, a third of the catalogue, ranked them as equal with the other material, a role Brown could not have anticipated when first assembling the exhibition. Brown would, however, have recognized the other difficulties such an inclusion incurred. He was well aware, as we will see in later chapters, that he and Barbeau, a French-Canadian, differed in their ideas on what constituted the legitimate representations of Canadian culture and the formation of a cohesive national identity. Barbeau, who had complex interests and ambitions, was taking a deep interest in this construction, and was doing much to modify Brown's primarily monocultural view. Barbeau was insistent that traditional French-Canadian culture be given its own unique place within any official Canadian identity. He worked hard at this project, using his offices and personal powers at every opportunity. As a folklorist specializing in French-Canadian culture, he did all he could to promote and preserve it and to bring it to the attention of the largest possible public. For him, inclusion of vital images of French Canada within the context of the Group, insofar as they represented Canadian culture both at home and abroad, was crucial.

Some competition between them also existed in directing the vision and activities of the Group. By 1920, Barbeau had befriended key Group members, especially Jackson and Lismer, and directed their attention to specific sites in Quebec. Their depictions of these locales varied from their standard "empty wilderness landscapes" in that they included signs of civilization and historic occupation. Such images established and validated a French-Canadian presence through a historic claim to the land and an active, vital place within Canadian culture which, as we have seen, threatened under Brown's encouragements to be biased in an exclusively English direction.²⁴ In his writings, he consistently referred to French-Canadians as *Canadiens*, thus both including them within the framework of Canadian identity and giving them a prior claim to that nationalism.²⁵ On the other hand, this presence was reconciled with Brown's agenda by being

²⁴The images could be interpreted as evidence of the presence and persistence of a French-Canadian *volk* which would legitimate a claim to an active role in a Canadian culture and national identity.

²⁵See Barbeau File 3, Box 277 F3, CMC Archives.

represented in an English mode. Buildings, such as Jackson's series of paintings of Quebec barns, one of which was included in the exhibition, could easily be fit within the picturesque conventions as the French-Canadian equivalent of English peasant huts and rustic shelters which Gilpin prescribed as adding visual interest, so long as they did not show actual labour. Indeed, this brought the borders of Group art very close to the work of Gagnon, who painted scenes of inhabited, rural villages, which were frequently described by English speaking critics as picturesque. Barbeau then, not only co-opted the members of the Group, but also arranged that their images would set up a close link with current French-Canadian production, thus easing the insertion of the latter in the realm of Canadian national identity and culture. Moreover, the inhabited Quebec countryside gave a variation to the Group repertoire of empty "wilderness" landscapes, but one that produced some inconsistency and even contradiction. The conflict between these visions will be of great importance both here and elsewhere. At this point, it indicates the growing complexity and instability of the discourse of identity as it was formulated by various parties with various agendas and interests. Not all shared a common vision; many were in conflict or competition with each other just below the surface, despite keeping up the appearance of a unified public front.

Barbeau's insistence that Native art also be included within the construction of a national visual identity in Canada, while out of step with Brown's concept, is not difficult to account for. His educational experience would have been instrumental in this regard. Barbeau became a Rhodes scholar at Oxford in 1907, where, along with Diamond Jenness, he studied the new science of anthropology. Barbeau worked with Raynold Marrett, a proponent of evolutionist theory which ranked cultures hierarchically with European civilization at the apex. Coombes has outlined some of the other issues that were circulating within the practice at this time. Of special importance is the new discipline's anxiety over proving its worth to the state by demonstrating its value in affirming a unified British national identity.²⁶ Barbeau would, then, have been already primed for such developments in Canada after he returned in 1910 and joined the National

²⁶See Annie Coombes, "Ethnography and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities", in Susan Hiller, ed., **The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art**, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 189 - 214.

Museum the following year.²⁷ In addition, in the summers Barbeau studied in Paris. There he may have encountered the proposition that the so-called “primitive” arts could be viewed as art and linked to modernist developments. While his experience there would not have been of sufficient duration for him to become fully aware of the complex discursive framework which would surround the relationship between the primitive and the modern, by 1927 such ideas would have been reinforced by his awareness of various movements in the United States occurring at that time. He probably also realized that the failure of Canada to recognize the value of its own Native art would result in a serious loss of prestige, while its inclusion within Canadian identity would raise his own, since he would become the reigning expert in the area. But above all, he would have realized that he could use Native art to open a gap in the construction and representation of Canadian national identity which could in turn be used to insinuate French-Canadian culture which was in danger of being excluded by a monocultural bias. In any case, the concept of Native American art as art was circulating within the National Museum by the early 1920s. Edward Sapir noted the trend of European “progressive” art to utilize Japanese and primitive art forms and themes and stated in 1923, in a preface to Harlan Smith’s “Album of Prehistoric Canadian Art”, that “primitive art is art as well as ethnographic material”.²⁸

But, while Barbeau was adamant that Native art be included within the structure of Canadian identity, he saw it having a completely different role than that of French Canada. Here he would have been more in agreement with Brown. As will be investigated in greater depth later, both would concur that Native culture, unlike that of Quebec, was no longer vibrant and had either

²⁷Richard Preston, “C. Marius Barbeau and the History of Canadian Anthropology”, in **Canadian Ethnology Society Proceedings**, No. 3, 1976, pp. 122 - 136. Although a study now exists linking Jenness, and the practice of ethnography in Canada, to the policies of the state, particularly to the programmatic exclusion of the Indian from Canadian identity, no such work on Barbeau has yet appeared. See Peter Kulchyski, “Anthropology in the Service of the State: Diamond Jenness and Canadian Indian Policy”, **Journal of Canadian Studies**, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 21 - 50. Kulchyski notes a reluctance in Canada to engage in a self-critical practice such as emerged in the United States under James Clifford and others.

²⁸Harlan Smith, **An Album of Prehistoric Canadian Art**, Bulletin No. 37, Anthropological Series No. 8, Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1923, p. iii.

disappeared or was bordering on extinction.²⁹ In either case, the Indian was absent, and no longer qualified as the ancient *volk* occupying the land. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Native art, in whatever quantity, from whatever groups, and under whatever circumstances, within the project of forging and securing recognition of a unique Canadian identity and culture on the national and international scene had far reaching implications that were not initially anticipated by the organizers of the exhibition.

Cueing the Audience

Recognition that the various audiences in Paris would be unfamiliar with these complex, conflicted discourses of national identity and racial disappearance as they existed in Canada, as well as with the conventions of the British picturesque, led the Canadian organizers to make a concerted effort to inform the French critics and publics of the exhibition on the issues of Canadian art. This effort was hampered, however, by various contingencies and internal conflicts. In initiating the educational process, Brown published a lead up article in **L'Art et Les Artistes**, featuring many illustrations, to insure that the French critics were educated in and able to re-articulate the claims and codes of the work.³⁰ Initially, he had not wanted to sign the essay. Under the circumstances, this rather odd move would have been a wise, if calculated, tactic. A mask of anonymity would have allowed him to pose as an authoritative, but anonymous, speaker, who could have singled out the Group without being identified. He could thus have avoided further problems that such a position would surely have caused him back home, and at the same time created the illusion of foreign appreciation and recognition. But the French officials,

²⁹On the history of the premise of the extinction of the Indian within the practice of ethnography prior to the advent of Barbeau see Douglas Cole, "The Origins of Canadian Anthropology", **Journal of Canadian Studies**, Vol. 8, No.1 (February 1973), pp. 33 - 45. Cole's study stops with the appearance of Barbeau. For the persistence of the concept within the practice of the latter, see the following chapters.

³⁰Eric Brown, "La jeune peinture canadienne", **L'Art et les Artistes**, Vol. 75 (March 1927), pp. 181 - 195. See also: "A special section of the revue "L'Art et les Artistes" on Canadian Art with twenty illustration is coming out just before the exhibition. The magazine is published under the supervision of Armand Dayot, which [sic] I know very well." Gagnon to Duncan Campbell Scott, Feb. 11, 1927, MMA Archives. In his letter, Gagnon discreetly made no reference to the fact that it had been authored by Brown.

especially Dayot and Dezarrois, who had been stung by a similar internal national dispute with the earlier Dutch exhibition, which had been criticized for focusing on a small group that was not representative of the nation's art, insisted that Brown declare himself the author.³¹

Brown's fifteen page article laid out a canonic history of Canadian art. His construction was, however, not without exclusions and ambiguities. By initially passing over the French colonial period, he claimed that the real issues in Canadian art arose with the arrival of the British topographical artists. For these he had high praise: although the lesser were disparaged, "the best had produced works which recalled that school of watercolourists from the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth which have always been considered as one of the glorious marks of British art."³² This gave a distinctly monocultural cast to his narrative. But, having given priority to links to Britain, he added that other, older histories were also now being studied, specifically the work of the Natives of the West Coast of British Columbia. These traditions gave a deeper history to Canada, but he implied that continuity had been broken when he stated that hardly any of the gifted artists remained. He reported that the government was engaged in saving and restoring as many of the totem poles as possible and suggested that these forms could be a source in the present for modern, non-Native industrial designs.³³ Brown also noted that Marius Barbeau was looking into the possibility of a vital current of French carving dating back to the colonial period, but of this he gave little account. The remainder was a schematic, but reasonably balanced, outline of the development of art in Canada until the twentieth century. His main problem seems to have been accounting for Morrice. In contrast to the number of his works in the exhibition, Brown gave him only one sentence, and placed him within the colonial period. This may not have played well with his French audience but it was one of the risks Brown had to take to ensure the fundamentals of his narrative structure. This was based on the premise that until the turn of the century "the temperament of the country was

³¹Gagnon to Brown, Nov 28, 1926, NGC Archives.

³²Brown, "La jeune peinture canadienne", p. 181. My translation.

³³Ibid., p. 182 - 183.

still very colonial and imitative, but big changes were not long in coming” in which “the colonial spirit ceded its place to a national spirit”.³⁴ This of course began with Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven on whom he expounded at length. In contrast to his reticence on Morrice, Brown gave a brief biography of Thomson, named all the Group, gave them a genealogy, a collective program and cited their separate characteristics. He included almost all the elements of the established story and provided the critics with a lesson in the necessary jargon, including the lack of critical support at home. He explained how Thomson and the Group had, as “pioneers”, encountered the “primitive wilderness” armed with “canoes and tents” and drew their inspiration directly from the land. This assertion allowed them to get around any indebtedness to French post-impressionism and supported the claim that they were not influenced by outside sources but were at once “indigenous and spontaneous” as well as modern.³⁵ He also outlined their neglect by the public and especially the buying public, and the hostile critical press. He insisted on their nationalism, modernism and mastery, and claimed that this had all been proven by the triumphant responses at Wembley where their clarity of colour, hardiness of design, and the mastery with which they had captured the characteristics of the landscape were all noted. By carefully positioning the exhibition within the British responses and supplying a list of qualities to appreciate, he may have overplayed his hand and usurped the prerogatives of the French critics. On the other hand, he never mentioned any institutional neglect, since this would have been too obvious a contradiction given that he was the author of the piece. Nor did he mention the history of their subsidization. He concluded that Canada, although young, had produced a “great national art” and left it to the French critics to give it recognition.³⁶

As I will show, the main body of the French critics disagreed with most of Brown’s interpretation, and problems may already have arisen at this point. For example, the precise parameters of Brown’s narrative were made unclear by an overabundance of illustrations which

³⁴Ibid., p. 190.

³⁵Ibid., p. 192.

³⁶Ibid., p. 195.

were more than were initially requested and may have confused the issue. The illustrations seem to have been left to the French publisher or museum personnel rather than chosen by Gagnon or Brown. Gagnon complained that there were in fact, of the twenty, six more than they wanted.³⁷ This left the desired number as fourteen. Given that eleven were devoted to either Gagnon, who got the lead picture, Thomson, and the past, present or future Group members, this left only three for everyone else in the initial plans. If this limitation had been followed, a more focused image would have occurred. However, the excess of visual possibilities was only the beginning of other, greater problems in the reception of the work.

The second avenue for coaching and cueing the critics came in the catalogue of the show. Published in French, it theorized some of the relationships between the colonial and post-colonial periods, that is, France and England's initial colonizing of Canada, followed by Canada's internal colonizing of its own territories and races and the founding of its own identity and independent artistic forms.³⁸ It contained a trio of short essays, one by Eric Brown, one by the noted French critic, Thiébaud-Sisson, and one by Marius Barbeau, who, as noted previously, wrote on the art of the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast. The texts were again meant to educate Parisian audiences and give them some competence for seeing, decoding and appreciating the work. They were designed to shape the critical reception of the exhibition by insisting on certain readings while foreclosing others and thus establishing the horizons of the discourse. Instead they came up against a different, firmly entrenched, set of competencies which rendered such readings problematic.

Eric Brown's two page essay was surprisingly sketchy. Although titled "Quelques mots sur

³⁷Gagnon to Brown, February 3, 1927, NGC Archives. The date of the letter indicates that the article was decided on and probably written early in the year, and that neither Brown nor Gagnon had control over the illustrations. Perhaps distancing Brown from authorship, Gagnon calls it "Dayot's special number on Canadian art". As will be seen at the beginning of the next chapter, not all the works illustrated in the article were, in fact, in the exhibition.

³⁸**Exposition d'art Canadien.**

l'histoire de l'art canadien", it offered only the briefest outline of that important narrative.³⁹ But if he omitted much, and what he did omit or evade was significant, he was clear on one point which he had been unable to make in his lead up article. He tersely divided the history of Canadian art into two parts. He separated the early stages of colonization and cultural dependency, both French and British lumped together, from a recent school which expressed autonomy and a distinct, true, national identity isolated from outside artistic influences. He was also clear that the transition between these historic and modern periods hinged on their respective relationships with the land and its representation. In early states of colonization when the land was first being worked, there was little room for the arts according to Brown. The French period had only imitative church decorators.⁴⁰ It was with the first topographical landscape artists, who were British army officers, arriving after the 1750s, that Canadian landscape art began.

We should also mention that early topographical/picturesque artists like George Heriot and Thomas Davies saw the Native population as part of the picturesque landscape, linked to tourism, and included them within their work.⁴¹ In the meantime, however, the ideology of disappearance had appeared and had to be confirmed. It was in this sense that the image of the Native played a prominent role in Brown's otherwise terse history. Brown named only two artists in his essay who dealt with Indian subject matter: Cornelius Kreighoff and Paul Kane. Neither were in the exhibition, but they were crucial to his narrative. This is attested to by the fact that in his entire, but brief history, Morrice and Thomson were the only other two other artists named, and they had

³⁹Eric Brown, "Quelques mots sur l'histoire de l'art canadien", in *ibid.*, pp. 11 - 12.

⁴⁰Given that, following the format established at Wembley, there were only three French-speaking Quebec artists in the show it would seem that he believed that little progress had been made. Conversely, women artists, even with Carr's omission, numbered sixteen. Despite the lack of French-Canadian representation within the exhibition, Brown was aware that concessions had to be made to the French audience to underscore the colonial relationship to the host country. In a "confidential" letter to MacDonald, he outlined the requirements for the poster for the exhibition. "I think the French aspect of Canada should be stressed, perhaps the Citadel at Quebec or something which suggests an ancient city. The British arms should be replaced with French emblems I suppose. Perhaps the modern and ancient traffic on the St. Lawrence might come in." Brown to MacDonald, December 2, 1926, NGC Archives.

⁴¹See Ruth B. Phillips, **Trading Identities: the Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700 - 1900**, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998, pp. 26 - 27.

both been given retrospectives. Brown used Kane and Kreighoff to make a specific point. He generalized that artists' images were sometimes the only remaining record of a race that had disappeared. The work of these two artists were thus exemplars that reinforced a host of interlocking ideas. These included the proposition that the diverse Native populations in Canada formed a homogenous group and a single race, that they were long absent from the contemporary scene, and that they had left a vacant site to be filled by Anglo-Canadian artists and colonizers. Brown's grossly exaggerated history indicates clearly that the discourses of Native disappearance and Canadian identity were dependent on one another in the narration of the nation.

By not discussing German and American influences of the mid to late 1800s, or the Parisian Academies' role at the same time, Brown implied that the English tradition, aside from Kane and Kreighoff, persisted in and dominated art in Canada to the end of the 1800s. He was largely correct. This would change. Brown explicitly claimed that immediately after the turn of the century a dramatic shift occurred in the depiction of Canada and that any colonially dependent style had been suddenly but completely supplanted by a new national image of the land. He was insistent that this new system of representation was isolated from outside, i.e. colonial, influences. But while forceful, he was sketchy and his French audience was left to fill in the rest. From present perspectives it is clear that he could only have been referring to the Group of Seven and Thomson, but at the time he was inhibited from mentioning them by name. In Brown's view, it was Thomson and the Group who fulfilled Canada's nationalist destiny, but he could not single them out publicly without confirming precisely what was being claimed by his detractors, who had been clamoring for his head since Wembley. The resulting lacunae in this crucial text may be partly to blame for the confusion among the French critics who, if they had not read the earlier article, were left to sort out the Group and their new uninfluenced, nationalist landscape enterprise within this forest of signs without a guide.

Jackson, who had been instrumental in influencing Brown in his selection of works, was certain that the exhibition would be legible to the Parisian audience. Jackson argued in defense of Brown's preference for the Group in the heated debate that ensued in the Canadian press.

To send to Paris, where every workman on the street is familiar with the most modern types of European work, an exhibit of traditionally painted stuff would be the height of folly, Paris is not interested in seeing an antiquated, colonial exhibition. . . . It is the modern painting that will attract attention there.⁴²

Jackson was convinced that the quality of the new Canadian modernists, as opposed to the Academics, (a term he applied to any opposition to the Group enterprise), would appeal to the sensibility of the broadest of French audiences and publics, whom he believed were steeped in modernism.⁴³ In the terms of Pierre Bourdieu, Jackson assumed that the French audiences at all levels were competent in the specialized language of the work of the Canadian nationalist modernists, that they would be sure to recognize it and find it legible as Canada's cultural capital, and that they would reject anything academic as without value. Jackson, although certain in his division between the academic/colonial and the Canadian/modern, and despite the validations at Wembley, was mistaken about the conditions of artistic reception in France in the 1920s.⁴⁴ Even the elite cadre of coached critics did not always get the picture, let alone the "workmen" who he seems to have imagined attending the exhibition. Indeed, the rivalry would come from elsewhere.

The points in Brown's introduction to the catalogue were elaborated in more purple prose in the four page essay by the French critic Thiébault-Sisson who had been engaged to smooth the path between the Canadian work and the French public.⁴⁵ Indeed, between Brown and Thiébault-

⁴²Mr. A. Y. Jackson, another member of the 'Group of Seven,' stressed still further the idea that any exhibition of Canadian art to be made in Paris would in the very nature of the case be of modernist type." "Ottawa artists to protest the selection of pictures - Formal Statement of Protest is to Come Mayor Ernst Fosberry, Debate Re-Opened, Asserts that 'Group of Seven' Has Preponderance of Pictures for Paris Show", **The World**, May 8, 1927, NGC Archives.

⁴³By this time the Academy had become a straw dog for the Group. This is made clear in the cocky tone of Jackson's letter to Gagnon in which he outlines his pleasure at baiting the now down on its luck institution. "It's kind of fun skating round them [the Academy] and knocking the puck between their silly legs. In the meantime everything they touch fades away and dies." Jackson to Gagnon, Nov. 11, [1926], MMA Archives.

⁴⁴A quick glance at the illustrated weeklies from the period demonstrates clearly that despite the ascendancy of the avant garde, all forms of academic art still were immensely popular at the time with broad audiences.

⁴⁵Thiébault-Sisson, "La première exposition d'art canadien à Paris", in **Exposition d'Art Canadien**, pp. 13-16. My translation of any passages cited.

Sisson the audience was cued to sort out pictures that were nationalistic, uninfluenced, unacademic, and showed a wilderness landscape. The latter had originally published a lead up to the exhibition in **Le Temps**, in March, in which he made several devastating errors of fact and tact, indicating a limited competency in and knowledge of Canadian art and the politics involved.⁴⁶ He had Thomson killed by marauding Indians, for example, and provided further ammunition to the protestors back home by insisting that Brown and the government were in fact doing everything they could to promote the Group and limit the exhibition to these “modernist” painters. On this point he was quite explicit.

The Canadian authorities have followed with a passionate interest the formation and development of this new painting. The director of the National Gallery of Canada, M. Eric Brandt [sic], who has a penetrating and lucid intelligence, has understood the importance and the national character of the movement, and has encouraged it with all his power, and it is thanks to him that the government of Canada is determined to take charge of the cost of an exhibition limited to this modernist art, destined to be made known in Europe.⁴⁷

In the brief interim before the exhibit opened he became much more informed about the program and its protocols. One must assume he was carefully, if discreetly corrected. In his second attempt he was far more compliant, at least initially.⁴⁸

Following Brown’s lead, Thiébauld-Sisson’s catalogue essay, entitled “La première exposition d’art canadien à Paris”, was more explicit about the relationship between colonial parent and colony and the break that must occur between them in the form and formation of an autochthonic, uninfluenced, unified national art.⁴⁹ Following Jackson, he framed the break in

⁴⁶Thiébauld-Sisson, “Une exposition d’art canadien au Jeu-de-Paume”, **Le Temps**, 25 March, 1927. Hill, who cites the murder by Indians incident as an example of the French ignorance of Canadian art, does not identify that it was by Thiébauld-Sisson, Brown’s hired critical gun.

⁴⁷My translation.

⁴⁸Two days after the appearance of the article, Brown expressed hope that the writers in Paris would stop making him “personally responsible for everything done in Canada”. Brown to McCurry, 27 March, 1927, cited in Hill, “The National Gallery, A National Art, Critical Judgement and the State”, p. 79.

⁴⁹Thiébauld-Sisson, “La première exposition d’art canadien à Paris”.

terms of an antagonism between sterile imported European academic formulas - "*un academisme figé*", and an indigenous originality. While he identified only Thomson, he echoed Brown in describing a new unnamed school of artists who would pursue a direct confrontation with nature, camp like trappers in the woods and discover how to represent the land in rude forms. Again he could only have been reiterating the mythology of the Group as woodsmen having an unmediated experience with nature. But in so doing he gave them a broader legitimation.

Notwithstanding his more or less correct rendering of the ideas and jargon of the Group, Thiébauld-Sisson diverged from his earlier article and now excluded this new group from modernism. Indeed, while he saw the Canadian art as new, he no longer saw it as modern, a term he now avoided. He hinted that this quality belonged to Morrice, whom he carefully distinguished from the Group, and characterized as being entirely European rather than Canadian. He was willing to admit that Group painting was "new", "hardy" and "fresh", and possessed accents pertaining only to itself which were "*étourdissants de puissance*", but it "had nothing to do with our art which was nuanced, full of fine and delicate passages" as in the work of Flandrin, Laprade, Vuillard, Bonnard, and Camoin. Despite its newness, he could not bring himself to restate what he had written previously, before he was fully familiar with the Canadian work, that is, that it fell within the codes of modernism as discerned in France. Indeed its unique accents now separated it from the canon of French modernism which he enumerated. On the other hand, the Group work was assured of both its own identity removed from French sources and a proper genealogy, or rather lack of it - with England not being seen as the parent, the work could be seen as autochthonic. As a postscript, he noted the absence of French names in the catalogue, but diplomatically attributed this to a lack of desire for adventure and risk on the part of this group rather than as an attempt to make Canada's national identity exclusively Anglo-Canadian.

Thiébauld-Sisson concluded with an extended note on the Native material, but again he was ambivalent. He noted that it was "veritably autochthonic, but went back several centuries into the past". The use of "veritable" could cast into doubt his initial use of "*autochthone*" with the Group art. While he affirmed the Natives' disappearance he was very appreciative of their work

noting, “a rare perfection of execution, a remarkable decorative character and a stylization which had nothing of the banal”. This is even higher praise than he gave the Group work, which appeared, in his words, *rude* or rugged and unrefined. Placing the cultures of the Northwest Coast in a hierarchical scale, he also asserted that the work represented “a relatively more advanced civilization” than that of the Aztecs or African tribal art with which he compared it. While such a ranking was highly ethnocentric, and would undoubtedly have had European culture at its apex, it demonstrated his great regard for the work. He concluded: “It is curious to observe that this taste for stylization and this dominant decorative instinct is part of the essential character of the young Canadian painters. There is here, for our archeologists, a subject of passionate discussion.”⁵⁰ Once again, he breeched the protocol and forced a correction. It would be precisely this suggestion, that the Group were dependent on the precedent of Native art and that there was a possible dialogical relationship between the two, which would have to be countered almost immediately in Canada, where the ideology of absorption precluded direct influence.⁵¹

Barbeau’s essay which addressed the Northwest Coast material was isolated from the first two and buried at the back of the catalogue.⁵² Even if obscured, he made several important points. His initial list of a number of art forms not in the exhibition, such as Chilkat blankets, clearly showed up the poor sampling which arrived in Paris and promised other riches, of which the eleven pieces were only a metonym. His brief history, which recognized that the art forms existed prior to contact, postulated that they only came into their own after the adoption of European tools. But this period of greatness was now over, since it “preceded their final degeneration towards the end of the century”, that is just prior to the rise of the Group of Seven. The discourse of disappearance was again confirmed and made final. Native art and culture, if

⁵⁰One wonders what prompted such an assessment. It is known that this was Barbeau’s position which as we have seen he was pursuing in the Skeena Valley with Jackson and other artists, but it might well have arisen, as we will see, from the discourse of the primitive within the context of Paris itself.

⁵¹See Chapter Five.

⁵²Marius Barbeau, “Les arts décoratifs des tribus indigènes de la côte nord-ouest de l’Amérique du nord”, *Exposition d’Art Canadien*, pp. 37 - 38.

not the Natives themselves, were placed in the past. Their disappearance was made to coincide with the ascendancy of a new Canadian culture which replaced it. He mentioned no possibility of a revival of Native art.

Barbeau's position was nonetheless complex and ambivalent. Although he noted that most museum artifacts dated from at least fifty years previous, he did single out and identify, as proposed in Gagnon's letter, the work of the Haida carver Charles Edenshaw, who, like Thomson and Morrice, had died only recently. Barbeau also recited the now discredited story of his "Tlingit slave" and their rivalry, which although false, introduced a note of biographical life to the meager image of the Native artist. He also divided the production of the various peoples into specific styles, indicating a potential place for such distinctions which were excluded by the lack of comparative pieces. Finally, he gave a brief, but detailed summary of the meaning of each of the eleven pieces, thus making his written entries longer than either of his co-essayists and more specific in significance. Between Barbeau and Thiébaud-Sisson, the Northwest Coast work received substantial textual recognition, well beyond the few pieces included and greater than any other work, even if they were relegated to the rear.

There were then enough variations in the positions of Brown, the Anglo-Canadian curator, Thiébaud-Sisson, the French critic, and Barbeau, the French-Canadian ethnologist/folklorist, to indicate the problems within the discourse surrounding the work and to allow for numerous misunderstandings. These were in turn amplified by other French critics, most of whom seem to have in various ways read the exhibition in a manner other than that intended by those who assembled it.

The Critical Responses Arrive

After the opening, the anxious participants awaited the reviews, which were numerous. They were collected by a cutting service, undoubtedly in the hope of again publishing them for the

home audience, as had been done with those from Wembley, in order to proclaim the triumph of the Group on the international scene and in the very heart of modernism. Some eighty French reviews are now contained within two albums in the archives of the National Gallery of Canada, where they remain unpublished, except for brief excerpts, to this day.⁵³

The potential third affirmative publication of reviews and their wholesale distribution to the compliant press never appeared. And for good reason. In reading the notices, we find that, by and large, the Parisian exhibition went awry. What played well in England did not do as well in France. The story line which narrated the transition from colony to modern nation, from cultural dependency to cultural autonomy, obvious in Canada and in Britain, was not grasped by the large part of the French critical audience. Not only did many misread the plot, but the characters and their roles in the drama were frequently misunderstood or confused. The canonic list of Canadian artists who were to form the major part of the exhibition were not seen as a homogenous group working within a single enterprise for establishing a unified national identity. Nor was the quality, modernity, or even the nationality of their work confirmed. Outright praise was exceptional. Comments in general were lukewarm, often less than favourable, or even patronizing. In the meantime, back in Canada, yet another protest and the threat of further scandal loomed as those denied parts in Paris called for the director's head, thus further poisoning the chance of a triumphant return from the international stage. Moreover, the critical reception of the Native works greatly exceeded their relative proportions and must have startled Brown, the Group artists and even Barbeau, although their various assessments of the situation would have been different. In fact, this small selection came out of the margins, from behind the curtains, stole the show and upstaged the artists who were being touted as representing Canada, thus further disrupting the reading of the exhibition.

Given the Jeu de Paume exhibition's embarrassing lack of critical success in getting Brown's

⁵³All of the reviews of the exhibition which are referred to within this chapter come from the two folios deposited in the Archives of the National Gallery of Canada, unless otherwise stated. Brown did reprint excerpts from nine of these for the Annual Report of the National Gallery, but these would have received a very limited readership. National Gallery of Canada, **Annual Report for 1927-28**, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1928.

nationalist and modernist message across, and in focusing the attention of the Parisian audiences on the works and the enterprise of the Group of Seven, together with the unexpected response to the Native pieces, which reversed the expected order of things and triumphed over the paintings, it is not surprising that this exhibition has not played a great part in either the recounting of the history of Canadian art or in the critical and discursive framework in which that work gained meaning. Unlike Wembley, then, its role has been neglected, even willfully forgotten, or systematically excluded from the narration of the nation. Jackson, who must have read the responses with some dismay, does not recall the exhibition in his memoirs even though he recognized its importance at the time, was personally involved in its production, intervened in the selection process, and sat at the centre of the cast.⁵⁴ The irony here is that Jackson consistently exaggerated the negative critical responses to the Group of Seven within Canada and used it to advantage in creating the myth of the modernist, i.e. anti-academic, and hence oppositional stance of the Group. His silence, along with that of other chroniclers of the Group, on the French negative response speaks volumes.

Only recently, in the monumental catalogue of the Group of Seven by Charles Hill has the exhibition begun to take its proper place.⁵⁵ But even Hill has downplayed its importance. He distanced it from the Wembley successes by placing it out of chronological order, fragmented the narrative by situating it out of its context, and did not fully investigate its significance or offer any reasons for its failure to secure Brown's intended results.⁵⁶ Nor did he mention the critical success of the Native work.

⁵⁴Despite the importance which Jackson attached to the exhibition at the time, one searches in vain for any mention of it in his memoirs, **A Painter's Country: the Autobiography of A.Y. Jackson**, Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1958, rev. ed. 1967.

⁵⁵Hill, **The Group of Seven**.

⁵⁶More than 65 pages and a chapter heading separate the discussion of Wembley from that of the Jeu de Paume. This textual division, which disrupts Hill's narrative and chronological sequence, ensures that they are not read together or linked. He does mention the negative critical response, but dispenses with it in a few disparaging lines which explain nothing, leaving the impression of an uninformed, insensitive audience which could not overcome its stereotypes of Canada, stereotypes in which, it should be noted, the exhibition traded.

Yet the Paris exhibition and the critical responses deserve a better fate. Aside from the exhibition's own intrinsic importance, it has much to tell us about the problematic nature of Canadian art and the conflicts underlying the formation of a cohesive and homogenous Anglo-Canadian national identity in the post-colonial, post-war period, issues that still beset us as a nation. But beyond this, it also leads to an inquiry into the role of the indigenous population, their culture and art, and their representations, within that construction, as well as the institutions which served it. I would like to propose something of a framework for coming to grips with what was perceived as a failure by extending the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, already discussed in terms of the English reception, to that of the French critical responses. I have contended that English audiences at the broadest levels were already versed in the underlying picturesque codes of the Group, and were anxious to assist Canada in its claims to a national identity by overlooking, or even willfully blinding themselves to colonialist presences in the work, and seeing only the "differences". Conversely, the French critics, who had no stake in reifying this ideology, and were less "educated" and "competent" in the complex "cultural codes" of the picturesque which the British and Anglo-Canadians had naturalized, failed to "decipher" the message of the English based Canadian art and misread the message entirely.⁵⁷

On the other hand, it can not be said that the French were unfamiliar with issues of nationalism in modernist art at this time. As both Kenneth Silver and David Cottington have recently pointed out, nationalism and national identity had been issues within the avant garde both before and after the war.⁵⁸ But, at this time, signs of national identity were coded differently in France than in Canada and England, where it had been centred in variations of the picturesque landscape. In France, nationalism was embedded in urban images. Consequently, the French critics failed to

⁵⁷Bourdieu, "Outline", pp. 589 - 591. But see especially page 595.

⁵⁸Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989; David Cottington, *Cubism in the Shadow of the War: the Avant-Garde and Politics in Paris 1905-1914*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

valorize the equation, landscape = nationalism, in the Canadian work, and thus undervalued it.⁵⁹ Conversely, a complex discursive critical framework for discussing “primitive” art, such as that of the indigenous people of the Northwest Coast, already existed in Paris. It had circulated broadly at many levels and with many audiences and publics since at least the turn of the century and had supplied codes and what Bourdieu calls social structures for the consumption of such work. Familiar with this discourse, the French critics gave priority and “cultural capital” to what the organizers (or at least one of them) considered of negligible value and importance.

The anonymous writer for **Le Figaro Hebdomadaire** produced one of the most extensive responses. It deserves a close reading. He initially allowed himself to be guided by the catalogue.

Eric Brown explained how, in Canadian art, in the course of the last years, “a colonial spirit has given way to a national spirit”. For a long time, Canadian artists claimed as ancestors the cartographers from the beginning of the 19th century and the officers, surveyors, and engineers, who had progressed from coloured topographical works to represented landscapes in watercolour. These Canadian watercolourists were themselves the imitators of the English watercolours of the 18th century, of which they were the poor relatives, their pictorial style was a “refugee style”. But, during the last fifty years Canadian painters had grown in confidence. Instead of keeping their eyes on the academics, either English or French, they had taken their inspiration in the grandiose panoramas which extended before them.⁶⁰

But while the review’s recapitulation and expansion of Brown’s points correctly reflected the English landscape heritage, as well as the break with that tradition, and echoed the claim to a current unmediated response to the local landscape by woodsmen artists, at this crucial juncture the reviewer departed from Brown’s script. The rest, that is over half of the article, equated these

⁵⁹This holds true, despite the recent investigations into the production of nationalistic landscapes in France in the early 1800s by Nicholas Green, cited in Andrews, **Landscape and Western Art**, p. 158. As played out over the 1800s, this version of French nationalism diminished, although traces of it may still be evident in Impressionist works. By 1927, however, it had disappeared entirely, as is evidenced by the reception to the installation of Monet’s water lily series in the pendant to the Jeu de Paume, L’Orangerie, which opened just after the Canadian exhibit to little fanfare or critical response, i.e. it was not seen as an event for a potential exposition of national sentiment.

⁶⁰“Exposition Canadienne à Paris”, **Le Figaro Hebdomadaire**, 13 April, 1927, p. 8. My translation as are the others.

artists with the indigenous peoples of Canada in their relationship with the land. It explained that that was why Native work had been included and how it was the true foundation for Canadian artists. “In trying to be themselves, they had the surprise of discovering that they had become traditionalists, they understood that they were the sons, not by blood, but by the heart, of the Indians which their grandfathers had hunted down.”⁶¹ This equation and reference to tradition disrupts the mythology and the genealogy. It could have been passable if the writer had affirmed that the Native work, and population in general, was a thing of the past, as perceived and presented by Barbeau and as to be re-presented that fall in Canada. The reviewer, however, unaware that the “Indians” were at that moment being erased by these very artists from the representations of Canada, implied their continued presence as the ancient and originary *volk* from which Canadian culture sprang, rather than their disappearance. He declared that in using Native art as a base, the new Canadian artists had become truly national, citing as a model the return among contemporary French artists to the art of the middle ages as more truly French. “Canadian artists outside of the English school of the 17th century, outside of our French school of the 16th century (which has representatives in the province of Quebec) cast their eyes towards the primitive art of the Indians from which they intend to proceed directly.” This assertion flew in the face of the assertion that the Group sprang from the land without parent, or at most from an intimate union of Thomson and nature. In the layout of the article, two large illustrations of model totem poles frame on either side, that is pictorially support, the work of the Canadian painters, i.e. Thomson’s **Jack Pine** and Gagnon’s **Village in the Laurentians**, thus reversing the format and priorities of the actual exhibition. He also included Barbeau’s detailed explanation of the meaning of the poles. Indeed, he went so far as to assert that there was a program underway in Canada to revive Native arts. This too would be met with another pointed denial back in Canada. In the end, he was far more interested in the Native works than in the paintings. The overshadowing of the Group, who remained unnamed either collectively or individually, by the Native art, for which the critical response could only be termed a triumph, and this mistaken identification was to be a continued refrain in France.

⁶¹Ibid.

The venerable Gustave Kahn, the avant garde critic who had supported the Symbolist movement, saw fit to write twice, once for the prestigious journal of the arts, **Mercure de France**, once for **Le Quotidien**.⁶² He went on at some length about Morrice, whom he called “*un maître incomparable*” and devoted much of his discussions to it. He was able to discern aspects of French modernism in this artist’s work which gave it value and pointed out its finer features that established links to French traditions. But contra Brown’s intentions, he brushed by Thomson and dismissed him as a lesser painter, “*beaucoup moins fort*”, thus withholding mastery.⁶³ He did note that Thomson was “the most autochthonic. His motifs are purely Canadian, sought out in the picturesque locales of the scenes and seasons”.⁶⁴ These picturesque references, however, were not redeeming features, as they would have been seen in England. His deployment of the term made the colonial connection transparent. Although he strongly praised MacDonald’s **Terre de Silence**, he did not single out the Group or their nationalist agenda, indeed, he inferred their British precedent. He finished his **Mercure** article with a notice on the Native work and hoped for the publication of the story of Edenshaw and his slave which had been mentioned in the Barbeau’s text.

René-Jean wrote twice for **Comoedia**.⁶⁵ His notice of 10 April started off by lamenting the lack of more Indian work, possibly picking up on the absence noted by Barbeau. Although he seemed to believe totem poles were carved from living trees, he proposed an entire room devoted to this work, thereby giving the work a potential presentness and literal vitality far beyond that of the show’s intentions. The next day he went on to regret the inclusion of Morrice, who he felt was

⁶²Gustav Kahn, “L’Exposition de l’art Canadien, Musée du Jeu de Paume”, **Mercure du France**, 1 May, 1927; Gustav Kahn, “L’Exposition d’Art Canadien (Salles du Jeu de Paume)”, **Le Quotidien**, 14 April, 1927. Kahn was not alone in his double recognition of Thomson as picturesque as well as Canadian. See also “Exposition d’Art Canadien”, **Nord Artistique**, June, 1927. Kahn saw no connection between the landscapes and the Symbolist movement which would have validated later claims to a Northern Tradition.

⁶³Kahn, **Le Quotidien**.

⁶⁴Kahn, **Mercure de France**.

⁶⁵René-Jean, “Exposition d’art canadien et ses beaux paysages”, **Comoedia**, 10 April, 1927, and April 11, 1927.

not Canadian. He saw little French modernist, i.e Impressionist [!] or Cubist influence in the other Canadian art and wondered what Matisse would have thought of Thomson, whose “followers shout, they lack the art of suggestion, mystery”. Although he noted the vigor, health and robustness of the Canadians, and saw them stereotypically entering the woods with an “Indian canoe, only a tent, some blankets, food and painting materials”, he used this as a point of contrast to speak at length about the virtues and superiority of French art, thus devaluing the Canadian painting. He never singled out the Group or the nationalistic intent or its claims to be without influence.

Even those directly associated with the exhibition went astray. Writing for **Le Renaissance**, Arsène Alexandre, who is listed in the catalogue as Inspecteur général des Beaux-Arts, and on the Comité de Patronage, did a credible job of reiterating Brown.⁶⁶ “In Canada, he [Brown] says, we are isolated from outside stylistic influences; the seasons are extraordinary, splendid, the climate at home is exceptionally clear. These circumstances have given birth to a school, more or less a particular manner of painting.” Alexandre was also able to isolate most of the Group and their associates.⁶⁷ On the other hand, in notices both here and for **Le Figaro**, he referred to the new school of Canadian landscape artists as “Primitives”. This was an ambiguous and double-edged term with an overabundance of possible significations. It could place the work within the complex discourse of the primitive as tribal Other which was reaching a peak in Paris precisely at this moment. But in the context of the exhibition this connotation would have been reserved for the Native art. Alexandre was instead referring to the artists through a related, but distinct, meaning of the term, as being innocent of any “influence”. This was, in fact, an integral part of the argument for their native originality and their separation from colonial ties. In this instance Alexandre was extending the arguments made for the Group to their logical conclusion. If the artists from this young country were autodidacts, as was claimed, then it proceeded

⁶⁶Arsène Alexandre, “Les Canadiens et le ‘Primitivism’”, **Le Renaissance**, 15 April, 1927. Arsène Alexandre, **Le Figaro**, 10 April, 1927.

⁶⁷He names, Florence [sic] Gagnon, Albert Robinson, J. H. MacDonald, Lawren, [sic] Harris, F. Hennessey, MacCallen [sic], A. J. Casson, F. Carmichael, and F. H. Johnson as part of this enterprise.

naturally that they were untrained, untutored, and hence rude but potentially fresh, vigorous and sincere. Such words and phrases appeared repeatedly throughout the reviews, but are placed in a binary contrast to French sophistication and refinement. In this sense, primitive would have meant not yet having attained or mastered the full possibilities of the art, as the early Italian painters, and implied childlike, “naif”. The problem with such an assessment was that, while it contained positive elements, it also reduced the status of the Group and their associates to less than that of the modern masters and opened them up to patronizing remarks. Such condescensions would be particularly painful for a country just emerging from a colonial status and with fragile, unproven, pretensions to its own mature and fully formed identity.

It should be noted that primitive in its sense of tribal Other implies something or someone outside one’s own cultural framework, whereas primitive in the sense of naive denotes someone within one’s own culture either in the past or the present. The link between the two lies in the assumption that the immature corresponds to the tribal, in either an idealized or degraded sense as not yet being aware of the civilized. Or, as Bourdieu would say:

Fields of cultural production propose to those who are involved in them a *space of possibilities* that tends to orient their research, references, intellectual benchmarks (often constituted by the names of its leading figures), concepts in *-ism*, in short, all that one must have in the back of one’s mind in order to be in the game. This is what differentiates, for example, the professionals from the amateurs or, to use a painter’s idiom, the ‘naifs’.⁶⁸

Interestingly enough, primitivism in this sense would have played well in England in the twenties. Charles Harrison outlines and deplors the cult of the “primitive”, equated with the childlike and primitive, which was then prevalent in English avant garde circles.

The cult of the primitive in the 1920s had many ramifications. It can be associated with that earlier, pre-war reaction against what was seen as the ‘materialism’ of the nineteenth century; it was consistent, in the shorter perspective, with the kinds of valuation placed by Bell, and to a lesser extent Fry, on the modern movement in art; and in a longer historical view it may be seen as a grotesque and attenuated reflection of the Romantic notion, for

⁶⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, **The Field of Cultural Production**, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 176. His emphasis. The Canadian artists were, it would seem, outside the game.

which the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau are the locus classicus, that there is a vigour and an ethical value in innocence and that this is dissipated by technical sophistication. The cult of Innocence and Naturalness has had a long and continuing history in modern English art and art education, where it has tended to militate against study of the epistemology of art. In so far as innocence is an ideological category, its promotion as a value in the practice of art is best regarded as a strategic resource and examined in terms of the end pursued.⁶⁹

For the Canadian in France, however, the appellation of “primitive” undercut claims to a unified nationalist position and a mastery of modernism. This assessment was confirmed by other critics who indicated that although the Group members might have desired to be nationalistic, they fell short of the mark, and that they were a school that had not yet fully matured.⁷⁰ The embarrassing reference to an immature “primitivism” was never again mentioned by Brown or the Group since it would have contravened any claim by the Canadian artists to being knowledgeable and cutting edge, or *avant garde*, an important component of their claim. Indeed, this apparent, but up to now unstated, contradiction, made explicit by the French critics, may well have caused grave anxiety back home and have accounted, in part, for the need to erase this response from the history of Canadian art and to conceal rather than publicize the reviews.⁷¹

⁶⁹Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900 - 1939*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 190.

⁷⁰R. R., writing for *Action Française*, Paris, 14 April, 1927 was the most explicit on this point. He theorized that those French Canadian artists who came to France to study were inevitably assimilated into a French artistic sensibility. It was a different matter for the English speaking landscape artists, which he linked to England through their subject matter. He claimed that the new national painting could not have emerged without the experience of French art both in Europe and Canada. “It would have been nothing short of marvellous, had they had the strength to liberate themselves from the French manner, however poorly suited they felt it was to the Canadian landscape. They have failed to attain their end. With the greater number, we might even say, with all of them, a conflict is apparent between an accepted technique, fine perhaps in its way, and the subjects they want it to depict.” (Except of course for Morrice.) R. R. notes that Thomson was unequal to the task, while the others were awkward and archaic. “They recall to our minds the agreeable clumsiness of our exotic poets of the descriptive school, trying to make us feel the beauties of the tropics in the language and the versification of Voltaire. Other Canadian painters, however, have let themselves slip into a rather too easy ruggedness. . . A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Franklin Carmichael, F. M. Johnston, Alfred Casson, Albert Ronineau, sensitive poets all, whose language has not yet reached maturity.” Gagnon, however, got high praise.

⁷¹As will be shown in Chapter Five, this unwanted appellation had a pronounced effect on the subsequent exhibition held back in Canada in the fall of 1927.

The critical failure of the Canadian paintings throws into sharp relief the French overvaluation of the other “primitive” work in the Jeu de Paume, that is the Northwest Coast pieces. Here the discourse around the term primitive takes on its meaning as *sauvage*. At the same time it becomes more complex and interdisciplinary. In the artistic field this discourse had been developing since before the turn of the century and reached its first peak with the works of the Cubists, Fauves and Expressionists. Although these groups had waned since the war, primitive art was rehabilitated in the twenties and underwent significant changes. After 1925 the Surrealists gave primitive art and its attendant discourses a new cachet. Concurrently, and not coincidentally, in related areas it had also been the subject of ethnographic activity in Paris.⁷² A school for the study of ethnology, the Institut d’Ethnologie had in fact just opened its doors under the direction of Paul Rivière, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss. There were, in addition, in the mid to late twenties, links between the Surrealists and the ethnographic community in the persons of Michel Leiris, Georges Bataille and others. Although there is nothing to indicate that they did or did not attend, one wonders what they might have thought of the exhibition and whether they would have considered incorporating it within what Clifford calls an ethnographic-surrealist subversive cultural criticism.⁷³

But there were other audiences and publics which this exhibition would have addressed. The Parisian interest in things primitive extended far beyond the specialized nascent discipline of ethnology. At the level of popular culture, “*l’art nègre*”, which seems to have had an imprecise and inclusive meaning, was sweeping the city, popularized by performers such as Josephine Baker. As Clifford points out:

Paris 1925: the *Revue nègre* enjoys a smash season at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, following on the heels of W.H. Wellmon’s Southern Syncopated Orchestra. Spirituals and *le jazz* sweep the avant-garde bourgeoisie, which haunts Negro bars, sways to new rhythms in search of something primitive, *sauvage* . . . and completely modern. Stylish

⁷²See James Clifford, “Ethnographic Surrealism”, in **The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art**, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1988.

⁷³*Ibid.*, pp. 129 - 130.

Paris is transported by the pulsing strum of banjos and by the sensuous Josephine Baker.⁷⁴

He continues, noting that in the 1920s, the Trocadero museum

was riding the crest of the wave of enthusiasm for *l'art nègre*. During the twenties the term *nègre* could embrace modern American jazz, African tribal masks, voodoo ritual, Oceanic sculpture, and even pre-Columbian artifacts. [And Northwest Coast masks and model poles?] It had attained the proportions of what Edward Said has called an "Orientalism" - a knitted-together collective representation figuring a geographically and historically vague but symbolically sharp exotic world. If the notion of the African "fetish" had any meaning in the twenties, it described not a mode of African belief but rather the way in which exotic artifacts were consumed by European aficionados. A mask or statue or any shred of black culture could effectively summon a complete world of dreams and possibilities - passionate, rhythmic, concrete, mystical, unchained: an "Africa."⁷⁵

Native art and performances had been spectacularized in Paris since the turn of the century when they were included within the Paris Exposition. One must also recall the Buffalo Bill shows in Paris which were seen as part ethnographic exhibit and part popular amusement. In short, the experience of the modern had become conflated with the "primitive" in complex and even contradictory ways. The audiences and publics for the Native work were very broad and cut across class lines or the divisions of specialized interests. The Parisian audiences, then, differed from those of either England or Canada in their makeup and interest in this material. This difference centred mainly on the artistic front. The Northwest Coast material slotted perfectly into Parisian discursive concerns. It was identified critically as being the same as or similar to

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 122. See also pp. 197 - 200, esp. n. 7.

⁷⁵Clifford, p. 136. Petrine Archer-Straw, in her recent analysis of the passion and fashion for Negro culture in Paris as signs of modernity in the 1920s, points out that, "[s]imilar notions . . . could be used in reference to the native, American 'Indian'". Petrine Archer-Straw, **Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s**, London: Thames & Hudson, 2000, p. 14. She charts the channels of its widespread distribution. "In prewar Paris, numerous African carvings entered the art market and fueled the avant-garde's appetite for new forms of expression. Painting, sculpture, ethnography journals, exhibitions, Dadaist and surrealist 'negro' balls, photography, fashion and furniture design all reflected the range of responses to *l'art nègre*." p. 51. She also mentions books, art journals, music, fashion, jewelry, exhibitions, museums and so on. In examining the shifts and ambiguities within this movement, she notes how the taste cut across class lines from the very conservative and state sponsored to the margins of the avant garde and took on various meanings for various groups at various times. See p. 66.

African tribal art, to which several critics compared it. In addition, it fit into the interdisciplinary discourse of the ethnologists and popular audiences. It is not surprising that in this context and at this time it received more attention than was originally intended. The same conditions, however, hampered validation of the Group who were caught between the French recognition of both Morrice and Northwest Coast art as partaking of the complex aspects of the “modern” and the “masterly”, and their own exclusion from this context to which they aspired. Small wonder that their next show combining Native and “Modern” Canadian art, held a few months later in Canada, would pointedly insist on the Group’s status as modern masters in precise opposition to Native art, which would be cast as a belonging only to the past and hence separated from the “modern”.

Masking the Critical Responses

That there was a rivalry and that the position of the Group was based on the absence of the “Indian” and belief in the failure of Native culture and identity to survive into the twentieth century are attested to by the fact that the reviews, although collected, were never published. From current perspectives there is enough positive in the reviews, despite the failure of the Group and the Gallery to achieve its goals, to call the show a qualified success, albeit in relation to the Native art. If the National Gallery had been fully interested in promoting Native art as part of Canadian art, then a selection of the clippings could easily have been published to great effect. Indeed, headlines could have read “Native art triumphs in Paris”. These never appeared. This begins to explain why the show was defined as a failure best to be forgotten. This success of the Native work only compounded the failure of the exhibition to promote Group of Seven work, on which the claims of national identity were based. And at the same time, there was no room within that identity for Native culture. Indeed, its very recognition threatened to disrupt the discourse of the former.

After the exhibition, Brown was confronted with the difficult task of dealing with the positive

critical reception to the Native work, and the preponderance of negative responses to the Group.⁷⁶ He made various attempts to put a positive spin on the situation after the event. He could not deny what had occurred, but he could minimize and contain it.⁷⁷ In the Annual Report for the National Gallery, Brown laid out his intentions and his version of the outcome of the enterprise.

In forming the exhibition, the suggestions of the French government were closely followed and the collection which resulted undoubtedly constituted the most important and comprehensive exhibition of Canadian art which has ever been brought together outside Canada. The first official appearance of Canadian art in what is generally regarded as the art capital of the world, was therefore made under appropriately *favourable* circumstances.

The reception accorded the exhibition by the French art critics was extremely *favourable*.

The general tone of the press comments and articles was as *favourable* as those of the British press at the Wembley Exhibition and the prestige of Canadian art was thereby firmly established in France and greatly enhanced generally.⁷⁸

He demonstrated this compulsive repetition of “favourables” with a selection of nine of the eighty some reviews. Given the actual circumstances, and his claims, he had to be very judicious in his selections. He chose only the most positive of the French critics, and it must be said that they were not without any “favourable” comments. Even so, he was forced to include reviews that were at best stinting in their praise, and even some with negative comments. To these he added the review by the English critic for the **Paris Tribune**, who cannot be said, strictly speaking, to be a “a French art critic.”

⁷⁶There was a certain but limited awareness in Canada of what had transpired in France. See **Mail and Empire**, Toronto, “Says Canadian Art Falls Flat in Paris”, 2 November, 1927, n.p.

⁷⁷The 1926 annual report for the National Museum also mentioned the exhibition and recorded that “nine of the best examples of British Columbia’s native carvings were lent to the National Gallery for exhibition at Paris, France, with the Wembley collection of Canadian Paintings”. Here the number of works is reduced one more time, from the actual eleven in the catalogue to nine, and this minor number of miniature works is the “best” the Native work has to offer. No mention is made of the appreciative response to the work. National Museum, **Annual Report for 1926**, Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1927, p. 5.

⁷⁸National Gallery of Canada, **Annual Report of the Board of Trustees for the Fiscal Year 1927 - 28**, Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1928. My emphasis.

In the remaining eight reviews, the lead two are not included with the material which remains in the Gallery archives. It is thus difficult to verify whether there were significant editings. A third original is also missing but does exist in the file as a translation. All speak, according to Brown's reprints, with some "favour" of the exhibition, but they are in the minority, and their comments are not without reservations. Indeed, it is difficult to see how Brown believed his claims were justified when he was obliged to include such sentences from the **Action Française** review as: "It would have been nothing short of marvelous had they possessed the strength to liberate themselves wholly from the French manner, however poorly suited they felt it was to the Canadian landscape. They failed to attain their end. With a greater number a conflict is apparent between an accepted technique, fine perhaps in its way, and the subjects which they want to depict."⁷⁹ But what is omitted from Brown's reprinting is even more devastating to his claims. It is clear why he could not include the followup assessment of Thomson from the same source: "How can one not perceive in his oeuvre the magnificent but unequal struggle between the object of a superb newness, and the means of interpretation which is insufficiently flexible for what it is supposed to render. His paintings turn easily into vignettes."⁸⁰

Brown's other selections also demonstrate important omissions. His citation from **Figaro**, April 10, 1927 is selective (albeit without ellipsis), leaving out any mention of the connotations of the "primitive" which Arsène Alexandre had made about the Canadian work. He also avoided other reviews mentioning this quality. In two other reviews which he cited, extensive comments appreciating the Native pieces were excised. For example, while Brown did report that the critic Paul Fierens, writing for the **Journal Des Debats**, had erred in the genealogy, had called Morrice the "father of Canadian painting", had said that Thomson "was not a backwoodsman either", and had qualified Harris' paintings as "a little dry, a little hard and metallic", he omitted the extended paragraph on the Native. In fact, any of the many reviews which were focused on the Native

⁷⁹NGC translation.

⁸⁰My translation.

work, and its presence within Canadian art, were absent from Brown's account.⁸¹ Judicious selection was followed by judicious editing in order to reshape the critical responses. The small audience for this bureaucratic publication would have been led to believe that even if the responses to the Group's works were somewhat qualified, the Native material, to the extent that any was present - and it is mentioned nowhere in Brown's personal statements - was extremely minor and went largely unnoticed. It was not only that it had no place within the construction of Canadian identity, but rather that its recognition threatened the integrity of that construction, which in the absence of French critical validation became extremely fragile and tenuous.

Simultaneously, for a broader audience, Brown published an article in **Canadian Forum**, which had become by this time the mouthpiece of the Group.⁸² Again, he attempted to put a positive spin on the negative French critical reception. He warned the readers from the start that "Paris is the most critical and capricious art audience in the world". Noting the "trepidation" experienced by exhibiting there, he continued to voice his apprehension, stating that "the critical verdict not unnaturally [was] awaited with some anxiety". The anxiety was justified. "This verdict, while it contained a modicum of the inevitable effort to be funny for the sake of the tabloid addict, was generally uniform, and greatly generous in its appreciation." Given the actual reviews, this attempt to downplay the negative by dismissing it as lacking in seriousness, that is, both capricious and meant for a low-brow audience, and to qualify the positive as "generally uniform" is about the best he could credibly do in the circumstances. Nonetheless, he still asserted that the Thomson group, as he called them, inspired epithets of "originality, nationality, individuality, not to mention *épatant*". But even this, while stretching the truth, was qualified by what he outlined as the "difficulty" the French critics experienced in terms of the exhibition, including their belief that France was the centre of art, their "ignorance of Canada as a country, which seemed far more complete than . . . in London" and the "shock" of the "hard brilliance of light, the sharp contrasts of colour and the immensity of forms". Apparently Fauvism had never occurred. Unlike the

⁸¹Paul Fierens, **Journal des Debats**, April 11, 1927, cited in National Gallery of Canada, **Annual Report of the Board of Trustees for the Fiscal Year 1927 - 28**, pp. 15 - 16.

⁸²Eric Brown, "Canadian Art in Paris", **Canadian Forum**, September, 1927, p. 361.

English critics who, as Brown states, comprehended the representation of nationality in landscape painting, the French had “difficulty” seeing and deciphering the work. The failure, then, although addressed elliptically, lay not in the art but in the inadequacies and incompetencies of the audience. Given his attempts to make the best of a bad situation, but to also justify why this occurred by placing the blame elsewhere, those reading the article must have wondered precisely what was the nature of the French reception, of which he gave only sparse examples.

At the same time Brown was obliged to admit that this ambiguous response was not the same for the Native art:

A small group of West Coast Indian sculpture in agilite [sic], stone [sic], and wood, lent by the national [sic] Museum at Ottawa, was included in the exhibition and produced so much interest from both sculptors and critics that it will be surprising if totem poles and mask motives do not appear in subsequent Salons. One of the most distinguished and discerning of the critics, Mr. Thiébault-Sisson of **Le Temps**, went so far as to discern in the decorative treatment of some of the modern landscapes the same indigenous impulse which had produced the highly stylized and decorative motives of the B.C. Indians. It is an interesting point and one that may be made a future battleground in the studios and round the club fires during the coming winter.⁸³

Brown’s displeasure at having his own project for creating a modern, national Canadian image and identity in painting overshadowed by a small group of Native sculptures, which threatened his monocultural construction, is evident in his deployment of the term “battleground”. The conflicted terms were now established in which the hostile relationship between the two art forms would be discussed following the major exhibition featuring both which was slated to open in Ottawa in a few months.⁸⁴ There was no doubt who would be the eventual victor after the winter campaign. Indeed, having already vanquished the Academy, perhaps the Group and Brown were up for another scrap, one that could be played out in a more controlled environment in which Brown was already predicting the conflict and prejudicing the outcome.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴“Battleground” was already familiar to his readership as the term used to define the relationship between the Group and the Academy. It clearly signaled which was to be seen as the privileged art form.

Indeed, any suggestion that Native art forms should be perceived as foundational or originary for modern Anglo-Canadian artists could never be a topic of disinterested debate given the discussion as it evolved in Canada. Such an assertion would reverse the accepted order of things which saw Native art as subject matter, not as point of origin or derivation, and saw the conventions of the Group of Seven as springing from the soil, not from the indigenous cultures that had previously [and still] inhabited that soil. The only point of contact was that they both might claim their origin in the land in a parallel fashion, but after that they were entirely different and other. Indeed, any suggestion of discussion or overlap between the two would meet with a pointed denial in the responses to the fall exhibition.

With all of this in mind, however, it must still be asked if this difference in the reception to the work between England and France had anything to do with some overlooked, but inherent aspect of the exhibition itself? Would an English critic who saw the show in Paris somehow be drawn into this discursive field through the manner in which it was staged which is not evident from our initial photographs and texts? Would an English critic presented with the work in this configuration have done the same, that is celebrated Morrice, disparaged the Group and delighted in the Native work? Is there then a control group for the supposition of varying degrees of competence? The answer lies once again with Konody, the privileged reader of the second Wembley Exhibition. Still writing for the **Observer**, he reviewed the Paris exhibition. The review is short and pithy.

Here the French will find . . . a distinctly national style which owes little or nothing to foreign influence . . . Tom Thomson . . . not only “discovered” Canadian landscape, but created a school of decorative painting that draws its inspiration partly from his own example, partly from close and intimate contact with nature, grand, picturesque, and unspoilt by human hands. . . . His mantle has fallen upon the shoulders of Mr. Laurens [sic] Harris, who has inherited his decorative instinct and carries his synthesis further towards the realm of abstract rhythm. Mr. F. Carmichael, Mr. A. Y. Jackson, Mr. A. Lismer, Mr. J. E. H. Macdonald, and others follow the path indicated by Tom Thomson, each adding his individual note to the common factor derived from their leader.

. . .

The late J. W. Morrice, though Canadian by birth, spent practically his whole life in France and can therefore scarcely be classed among the Canadian painters, though a whole room is devoted to him at the Jeu de Paume. He had an unusually refined colour

sense, but his eclectic leanings, which led him in turn to the imitations of Whistler, Boudin, Matisse, and others, prevented him from developing his own personality. His work has taste and charm, but does not rise to real significance.⁸⁵

Konody proves himself again the ideal reader of the exhibition. The work was national, autonomous, uninfluenced, mythically fathered by Thomson and mothered by the land. It was a child of nature. Furthermore he could correctly recite five of the seven members of the Group. But most importantly he was again willing to overlook and internalize the contradictions of their work, which had their precedence in British art. He confidently asserted that the work was distinctly Canadian, coming from an unmediated and uninfluenced response to nature and yet identified it as picturesque, confirming the devalued colonial connection. And in opposition to the French, he patronized Morrice and ignored the Native art, reaffirming the correct hierarchy.

The omission of the Native work from Konody's discussion is instructive. This was not a considered exclusion. Rather it reflected the differences between London and Paris in the discourses of the primitive and the role of primitive art. England had not seen the growth of the primitivist discourse as had occurred in Paris at the popular, scholarly or artistic level. This is not to say that there was no attention given to the idea of viewing the material culture of tribal societies as art work. Roger Fry, the English critic, had published two articles on the topic. "The Art of the Bushman" appeared in 1910, and "Negro Sculpture" in 1920. Both were included

⁸⁵P.G. Konody, **Observer**, London, April 23, 1927. Not all English critics reacted positively to the work in Paris. D. E. Wyndham Lewis, "Day by Day in Paris - Art in Canada", **Weekly Dispatch**, London, n.d., assumed the paintings were "all (no doubt) painted by great hairy men with clear cut bronzed features, keen eyes, and open necks". He summarized their "lack of subtlety . . . in the words of the gentleman who criticised Dr. Johnson's stage-play: 'Strong sense ungraced by sweetness or decorum.'" The ironic tone that this English member of the Vorticist avant garde employed in dealing with and deflating the projected and hyped up stereotype of virile woodsman/artist in his caricature is unmistakable. In later years Lewis remained unrepentant. In 1946, following an enforced stay in Canada during World War II, he published a second article, which appeared in the **Listener** of August, 1946, as a review of the Phaidon publication of **Canadian Painters**, reprinted in Douglas Fetherling, **Documents in Canadian Art**, pp. 106 - 111. Fetherling felt it necessary to warn the reader in advance that Lewis' position is "notable for its misinformation and wrongheadedness: valuable proof of how isolated Canadian art was at the time from intelligent world opinion, and vice versa". p. 106. In one area where Lewis undoubtedly went astray in Fetherling's view was in asserting that "the Anglo-Saxon genius has always displayed great affinity with primitive nature. . . . An Ossianic pantheism pervades the literature and the life of the Briton: a passionate inclination for the virginity of nature and the most unruly moods of the elements. . . . These are the things however that have spelled Empire." p. 107. This links the Group uncomfortably close to their British/colonialist roots. Such a view could only "lack intelligence".

within his 1920 compilations of essays **Vision and Design**.⁸⁶ But these essays, separated by ten years, were by far the exception rather than the rule. They were not metonymic representatives of a larger discursive framework in England and should not be seen as such. No such construction existed at the level of fine art. Konody had then no competence in this field, and would have had little experience in reading any tribal work as “art”.⁸⁷ He lacked the vocabulary to address it and consequently remained mute. The British, who had naturalized the picturesque, and lacked the discursive framework for consuming the Native material, then could not recognize the contradiction. Not so with the French, who had, it seems, not naturalized nature to the same degree. On the other hand, England was not entirely unaware of “primitive” art or even, more specifically the carvings of the peoples of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. There had been exhibitions of such work in London since the 1920s. But again, in comparison with Paris, these were minor and isolated events, with extremely limited audiences, and not indicative of a larger discourse.⁸⁸

The two Canadian exhibitions, although similar, met with two views. The French critics, by and large, did not grasp any of the points so carefully constructed by Brown. The Group of Seven was rarely singled out as a collective body working on a single project, the modernism and

⁸⁶Roger Fry, **Vision and Design**, London, s.n., 1922.

⁸⁷It is not surprising that the extensive current and historic literature on the primitive in Western art almost entirely excludes any mention of Britain, prior to Henry Moore. Colin Rhodes, in **Primitivism and Modern Art**, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994, p. 31, gives only the most cursory mention of Fry and primitivism in England. Rhodes does include an excellent summary of the literature on the topic. Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina and Gill Perry, **Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: the Early Twentieth Century**, New Haven: Yale, 1993, refer to Fry only in the context of his formalist theories and never in terms of his interest in “primitive” art. England plays no role in their discussions of the latter. One of the few places where Fry’s interest is given an extended, if flawed, analysis, is in R. Torgovnick, **Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives**, Chicago and London: 1990.

⁸⁸It could even be said, to a certain degree, that such imagery had penetrated popular culture in London, even if it was absent from avant garde work. The **London Illustrated News** reported that a play entitled **Rose Marie** had delighted audiences at Drury Lane in the spring of 1926. The play was a “a blend of musical comedy and melodrama, with excellent music and singing, a plot that includes murder, and a picturesque setting.” Although not entirely about Natives, the highlight of the performance illustrated in the **News** was a dance number, called “Totem Tom Tom” during “the finale of the first act [which] takes place at ‘Totem Pole Lodge, near Kootney [sic] Pass, in the Canadian Rockies.’” The accompanying illustration shows a weaving chorus line dancing before two totem poles within a picturesque mountain landscape. **London Illustrated News**, March 28, 1925, p. 529. Admittedly, this in no way paralleled the situation in Paris.

national identity of that project was not valorized, the originality and mastery of the work was not ratified, nor was its separation or uniqueness from Britain. The small collection of Native work was given far too much significance and presence when it was supposed to signal its own disappearance. While the British could readily decipher the work, most of the French critics could not.⁸⁹ The show was an unqualified failure for the central institution which put it together, a sharp contrast with Wembley. This could only have been made more apparent by the previous Wembley successes and the expectations they engendered.

The successes of the exhibition in one geographic location coupled with the failures in another have a greater significance than merely establishing variances in the competencies of differing national audiences. The French responses, which devalued the Group work and overvalued the Native pieces, and thus upset the desired hierarchies of the exhibiting body, were seen as “misreadings” in Canada. Yet the competence of the French viewers could not be easily questioned, especially after their opinions had been openly solicited and were a necessary component of gaining recognition for a Canadian culture on the world stage. Their reaction was doubly troubling because it offered an alternative vision from a source that was considered authoritative within the hierarchies of modernity. It opened to critical scrutiny both the construction of an essentialized, unified, modern national identity as represented in the visual arts in Canada in the 1920s and its relationship to the destruction of Indian identity, which involved staging the absence and disappearance of the Indian. Best then not to defy the responses but rather to conceal them, even though the Group’s initial agenda explicitly invited oppositional criticism. But even though the responses remained securely within their files and were not published, both discursive structures, and the historical narratives that they produced, as well as the dualisms and hierarchies on which they were based, were challenged, if not destabilized and fractured. That this could be seen at the time will become apparent as aspects of denial and concealment as well as attempts at recovery and recuperation are examined.

⁸⁹One must go to the **Petit Provençal** of Marseilles for a critic who actually identified the Group by their names, reiterated their ideology and ignored the Native work. The review lists together Thomson, Jackson, Harris, Lismar, Varley, MacDonald, Carmichael and Casson. “Les artistes étrangers en France, une exposition canadienne”, **Petit Provençal**, April 13, 1927.

The inclusion of even this small amount of Native art within the Paris show allows us not only to begin to examine the complex and entangled relationships between the Group's claims to the being the native artists of the Dominion and part of the formation of national identity and culture, and the simultaneous claims that Native culture was disappearing, but also to begin to understand the resistance to those claims which can no longer be seen as merely coming from a *retardataire* and self-interested Academy that represented a European and colonial viewpoint. Resistance at home implicated far more publics and audiences, such as the Native populations and those who sided with them, the output of various artists and the critical responses to them, as well as divisions within the practice of ethnography which were occurring at the moment. All of these must be accounted for. Indeed, on the broader level the openings provided by the Jeu de Paume debacle brings up the complex forces that were at work within the entire issue of post-colonialism, and post-colonial identity in Canada, which I will pursue in the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter III

The Strange Case of Langdon Kihn Who Got Lost in the Wiles of Canada

The previous two chapters have given some idea of the ambiguities and disruptions which resulted from the inclusion of a small amount of Native material within a large exhibition in Paris in 1927 whose intent was to solidify the image of a unified national visual identity as presented by the National Gallery of Canada. These twelve pieces, mostly miniature totem poles and argillite carvings, with some Haida, Tsimshian and Nisga'a masks, did much, despite their modest numbers and sizes, to distinguish this exhibition and its reception from its similar, but not identical, counterparts held earlier in London. The reviews for the latter were displayed in Canada as proof of success in the cause of gaining recognition of a distinct Canadian identity at the imperial centre, represented visually by the landscapes of the Group of Seven. Conversely, the subsequent critical responses from Paris were deemed an embarrassing failure and suppressed, although - or rather because - the Native pieces in the exhibition were greatly appreciated, more than the work of the Group, which did not receive the validation as either modernist or nationalist that had been solicited. I proposed that differences in the discursive climate concerning the picturesque, the modern, the primitive and the nationalistic accounted for the varying critical responses. The reaction to them as success and failure back home had to do with the fact that the construction of a fixed and stable Canadian identity and a singular, unified "narration of the nation" in the visual arts was predicated on two mutually supporting assumptions. These involved the construction of an Anglo-Canadian monoculture based on English precedents and a solidarity with the empire, which could, at the same time, claim a direct and originary connection to the land and thus re-territorialize it, and the demonstration of the disappearance and/or destruction of Native cultures and peoples, which had no place within that construction. The paintings of the Group fulfilled both functions. The disruption that these few small Native pieces produced when displayed with the Group works testifies to their ambivalent position within these frameworks which they opened up for critical evaluation by introducing a third problematic term into what was presented as an essentialized duality between colony and parent. Further investigation will demonstrate that this incident was symptomatic of much larger

and even more complex issues.

While it was true that the Native material from the West Coast appeared only in the Paris exhibition, the prior English exhibition on which it was based was not entirely devoid of the presence of Native imagery. This was, however, restricted to representations *of* Natives rather than *by* them. The Wembley exhibition in 1925 included **Mounted Indian Fighting**, by F. S. Challenger, **Weasel Calf, Blackfoot Chief**, by J. Henderson, and **Big Chief**, by W. E. Huntley. Only one artist, however, worked exclusively with such subject matter and did so in a manner that engaged elements associated with modernism. The American artist, Langdon Kihn, showed two landscapes of the Native villages and totem poles of the Gitksan people of the Upper Skeena River Valley in northwestern British Columbia, done in 1924. The 1925 catalogue listed the two works as **Gitksan Indian Totem Pole** [sic], **Village of Gitwincool, B.C.** and **Potlach** [sic] **Among the Gitksan Indians of B.C.**¹

These two paintings serve in an important way to further distinguish the two exhibitions. In a little acknowledged, but significant detail, the two Kihn works were excluded from the Paris venue, despite the fact that the second was one of the twenty works illustrated in Brown's lead up article, a clear indication that it, at least, was being considered until close to the opening day.²

¹[Catalogue of the] **Canadian Section of Fine Arts, British Empire Exhibition, 1925**. The latter work is sometimes known as **A Feast Among the Skeena River People**. See illustrations 56 and 57. A third Kihn painting, a portrait of a Gitksan chief, **Hlengwah, Kitwanga Indian Portrait**, also known as **Earthquake**, which was more characteristic of his output, was also sent to Wembley but was not hung. See McCurry to Kihn, August 11, 1925. Langdon Kihn Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; hereafter, Langdon Kihn Papers.

Sandra Dyck, "'These Things are Our Totems:' Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s", p. 64, note 92, states that both landscape works shown at Wembley came from Barbeau's personal collection. The letter on which she bases this claim is not entirely clear on the point. Barbeau to Kihn, December 13, 1926, CMC Archives. In fact, the first came to the Gallery from the Southam bequest. R. H. Hubbard, **The National Gallery of Canada Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture, Vol II: Modern European Schools**, Ottawa: University of Toronto Press for the Trustees of the National Gallery of Canada, 1959, p. 169. Dyck later states that in 1927 the National Gallery acquired two works, including **Gitwinlkool** [sic] **Totem Poles** and **Totem Poles, Kitwanga**. *Ibid.*, p. 74. Hubbard does not list **Totem Poles Kitwanga** as part of the collection, nor is it in the current holdings.

²The illustration was mis-labeled as **Totems du Village Indien de Kitwanga, (Totems at the Indian Village of Kitwanga)**, Eric Brown, "La Jeune Peinture Canadienne", p. 194. The poles featured are not from the village of Kitwanga, but rather Kispiox. See Barbeau, 1929, pp. 220 - 221 and 246 - 247. (Kihn had done a separate

The omission of Kihn's Indian images from the *Jeu de Paume* points to what I will present as a growing crisis in the discourses that surrounded the representation of the Indian in Canada.³ They would not have been dropped on the grounds of their affiliation with the Royal Canadian Academy, which was the commonly stated criterion for editing out "inferior" work. Rather, through somewhat roundabout means, they were excluded from the *Jeu de Paume* for the reason that, while they were of Canadian subject matter, and done in Canada, they were not by a Canadian artist, even though this had not been a consideration at Wembley.⁴ In a complicated manoeuvre, admittedly designed primarily to justify the omission of work seen as "academic" and for highlighting the Group of Seven, Brown wrote a directive outlining the grounds for making exclusions.⁵ But once again, perhaps because it could have made him the target for attacks, he did not want to be seen as the author. Through Gagnon, in Paris, Brown's categories were forwarded to the French ministry, where the document was rewritten, signed by the French authorities, and returned to Ottawa.⁶ This ruse made it appear that it was the French government

work which included poles at Kitwanga. See illustration 30.) Brown made no reference to the work, under either title, within the text. Gagnon had advised Brown of those who were to be illustrated. Gagnon to Brown, February 3, 1927, NGC Archives.

³Kihn was not the only artist to have his Native works illustrated in Brown's article, but not exhibited. An illustration of a painting listed as by "M. Crea", [McCrea?] titled **Aurore dans le Nord**, showing a Native in a canoe, also appeared in Brown's article but not in the catalogue. Eric Brown, "La Jeune Peinture Canadienne", p. 182. There was still a small sampling of works based on Native subject matter at the *Jeu de Paume*, although these no longer included paintings: the catalogue lists a portrait drawing by Challenger, a drawing by W. Huntley, and sculptures by Hahn and Suzor-Coté.

⁴List of proposed artists, Gagnon to Brown, [November, 1926], NGC Archives

⁵Brown to Gagnon, Dec. 1926, NGC Archives. In arranging for the exclusion of works which had been shown at Wembley, Brown wrote that he needed a letter from the French ministry which "will enable me to take only the best of the Wembley pictures and to keep out work which has no place in such an important foreign exhibition". He indicated that he would write the draft, which would be translated and signed by Mr. Dayot or Mr. Masson and then be "forwarded to me".

⁶See *ibid.* No copy of this document was found in the files of the NGC. An unsigned, undated typescript remains in the archives of the Louvre in Paris, addressed to Monsieur le directeur de la Galerie Nationale du Canada. It states: "Given that this is the first exhibition of Canadian art to be held in Paris and given equally that the space available in the *Jeu de Paume* is limited, the Minister of Fine Arts respectfully submits the wish that only the most distinguished Canadian artists be represented in this exhibition and that it be mostly composed of the best works shown in the Canadian Section of the British Empire Exhibitions of 1924 and 1925." The document goes on to outline in detail what could be substituted in case of prior sales of work, or if work of importance appeared in the interim, or if an omission had occurred. But it also states: "The Minister of Fine Arts particularly desires that this

rather than the National Gallery that was the authority responsible for setting the standards and making the decisions as to who could and could not be included within the exhibition. Brown's authorship remained concealed. An addendum was attached to the letter which went beyond the necessary requirements for getting rid of "inferior" work. It implied that all work now had to be done by resident Canadian artists. Furthermore, the addition of the phrase "often seen in Paris" may also have been directed at Kihn. At the time he was expected to hold an exhibition in the city in early 1927, although this did not occur until 1930.⁷ These provisions, and the elaborate stagings and extraordinary concealments that accompanied them, were mentioned in the correspondence as being applied to Kihn and his two small works. This leads inevitably to the possibility that his seemingly innocuous paintings posed a unique and special threat for those organizing the show who saw their task as defining Canadian identity and the "narration of the nation" abroad.⁸

exhibition be, as much as possible, representative of Canadian contemporary works created in Canada and consequently that the works of ex-Canadians permanently resident abroad, whose works are often seen in Paris, are not included." (My translation) Brown's formal response also exists only in the Louvre archives. He states, (in English) "Sir: I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed communication of January 9th, containing suggestions with regard to the proposed Exhibition of Canadian Art in the Musée du Jeu de Paume. The National Gallery is quite in accord with the views expressed and I am directed to thank you for your letter and to assure you that the exhibition will be arranged in accordance with this plan." Eric Brown to Charles Masson, le Conservateur du Musée national du Luxembourg, January 28, 1927, Louvre Archives, Exposition [d']art Canadien, 10 avril - 10 mai 1927 file.

⁷Langdon Kihn, Biographical Information, Langdon Kihn Papers.

In late 1926, Barbeau, in a somewhat cryptic letter to Cleveland Morgan, hinted at the possibility of Kihn's inclusion in the Jeu de Paume, although he did not mention the exhibition by name. It will be recalled that Barbeau was not as yet officially affiliated with the Jeu de Paume. His position is also unclear on the prospect as he expressed his desire to have Kihn's work returned to Canada from the touring Wembley exhibition before the Jeu de Paume opened, "as it might be needed in the spring here". He does not say what use that might be. Barbeau to Morgan, December 30, 1926, [copy], Langdon Kihn Papers.

Concerning the other Paris exhibition, see Kihn to W. R. Mills, Gen'l Advertising Agent, Great Northern Railway, January 8, 1927, Langdon Kihn Papers. Kihn wrote, "Enclosed please find copy of a letter to Mr. Charpentier, who invited me to exhibit in his galleries in Paris, in March. This invitation came to me some time ago, and I did not accept at the time because I did not know then what material I would have to offer him." Kihn to Barbeau, Dec. 7, 1926, CMC Archives, also mentions his forthcoming Paris exhibition. Barbeau had been aware that Kihn was planning European exhibitions as early as July 1925. "I hope that you will have your European exhibitions as planned." Barbeau to Kihn, July 18, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers. The exhibition at the Charpentier Galleries did not occur, however, until 1930.

⁸Although Kihn is the only artist mentioned in the correspondence between Gagnon and Brown to whom these restrictions were applied, there is the possibility that they may have been used to exclude other artists. For example, Frank and Caroline Armington, Canadian ex-patriots living in Paris, were included at Wembley. Their

It is my contention that Kihn's Canadian paintings, which were largely portraits of Western Natives, with some landscapes showing primarily their villages sites, when taken as a whole, presented enormous, albeit unspoken, problems that went beyond the nationality of the artist or his international exhibition record. These problems lay in their relationships to the essentialized dualisms which underscored both the formation of a Canadian national identity as represented in the visual arts, and the corresponding discourse of the disappearance of Native identity, upon which the first has been shown to be dependent. An investigation of his activity in Canada after 1922 will demonstrate that, while Kihn's ambiguous works were seen as valuable to both of Canada's major railways in the early 1920s, by 1926 they tended to destabilize both constructions and thus had to be eliminated. I will also show that these exclusions went well beyond the symptomatic dropping of the two Kihn works from the *Jeu de Paume* exhibition. They included a drastic reduction in his role in a major publication project, the collection and then concealment of his work, and even the active discouragement by his erstwhile Canadian patron and partner, Marius Barbeau, in pursuing access to his very subject matter. While it is true that his work was still included by Barbeau within the later 1927 exhibition of **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, his role there was overshadowed by other artists, especially the Group, and the "discovery" of Emily Carr.⁹ In addition, as will be seen, unlike the situation in Paris, the public's response to his work in Canada could be carefully contained and predetermined through numerous textual interventions and repeated critical disciplining.

An investigation into Kihn's paintings, the conditions of their production, his contribution to and subsequent exclusion from the Canadian art scene, as well as the critical disciplining to which

work was not seen at the *Jeu de Paume*. Brown expressed some antipathy to them in a letter to Gagnon. "I was very sorry to see that Dayot immediately printed an Armington article. . . . [H]e was one of the people most strongly against Armington's inclusion in the Canadian show." Brown to Gagnon, Oct. 12, 1927, MMA Archives. Oddly, if the restrictions concerning residence and exhibitions had been applied consistently, they should have excluded both Morrice and Gagnon! That they did not was indicative of the fact that they were, in fact, something of a prevarication. It is probably no coincidence that the correspondence with the French ministry concerning the necessity of setting up restrictions occurred at almost precisely the moment at which people in Ottawa became aware of Kihn's forthcoming Paris exhibition.

⁹See Chapter Five.

they were subject, and the unusual aspects of their collection, shows that the various relationships which came into play around it were complex, entangled and at times contradictory. Unravelling them revealed not just the institutions of the art world, such as art galleries, and the practice and reception of art and its histories, but also involved museums and their personnel, and the disciplines of ethnography, literature and history. Also at work were the forces of capital, as represented by the railways which formed a major role in Canada's economy and national identity and were Kihn's primary patrons.¹⁰ The railways, in turn, invoked the presence of colonization and tourism.

Beyond or alongside these variables lay government agencies, other than museums and galleries. The Department of Indian Affairs was always a factor in anything to do with the Native population in Canada, especially as Duncan Campbell Scott's goal during his tenure as the Deputy Superintendent from 1913 to 1932 was to eliminate anything that could be defined as Indian, as well as fighting land claims.¹¹ Scott was, like Marius Barbeau at the National Museum, with whom he often collaborated, a complex individual with diverse interests. A career bureaucrat, Scott was at the same time a poet of some renown. He had a profound interest in the role of art in creating a national identity and used the image of the Indian extensively in his writings. He also actively intervened in the visual art world as a critic, writer, art dealer and host. He closely associated, both professionally and personally, with the personnel of the National Gallery and the National Museum, as well as with many artists including members of the Group and Clarence Gagnon.

In many instances the varied governmental and private institutional interests worked in harmony,

¹⁰Utilizing Bourdieu and Foucault in this analysis deals with the problem that any investigation into the interests of capital easily falls into a form of vulgar Marxism, in which the corporate owners of the means of production, the railroads or banks for example, become simplistically linked to the ideology of the image. Things were far more complex than this in the non-fixed and shifting relationships between power and knowledge, both in the construction of an identity for Canada and in the representation of the Indian.

¹¹Coombes has pointed out that "any analysis of how exhibitions and ethnographic museums defined and addressed their constituencies, and the question of their effectivity, has to be seen in relation to the rise of anthropology and . . . in terms of its usefulness to the imperial state". Coombes, **Reinventing Africa**, p. 3.

but in some crucial areas, such as that of Kihn's paintings, critical differences arose between the various viewpoints. These gaps and lacunae indicate that the matter of a homogeneous Canadian identity, as well as the place of the Indian within it, was a contested site. To preserve the integrity of the myth of "unity", however, such fissures had to be covered over. I will argue that together with the unexpected critical reaction to the inclusion of the Haida and Nisga'a pieces in the Paris exhibition, Kihn's portraits of Natives done between 1922 and 1927 provoked another crisis by exposing further internal and external inconsistencies and contradictions in the discourse of disappearance. A case study of his work in Canada will help both to clarify why it was necessary for him to be systematically excluded from venues instrumental in the construction of a Canadian identity and nationhood, and to indicate what the requirements for inclusion within that identity and those sites signified.¹²

Imag(in)ing the Indians of the Canadian West

Langdon Kihn's initial presence in Canada in the early 1920s was seen as a boon on several fronts. Beyond the limited realm and audiences of art they included ethnology, tourism, and an even wider audience who may never have encountered the "Indian" but who would have constructed their knowledge of this subject from popular sources such as journals and travelogues. Those involved with his presence were not just the National Gallery but also the

¹²Given his national origins and the early acceptance and later rejection of his presence, Kihn's work has always occupied a somewhat ambiguous place in the narration of the history of Canadian art. When mentioned, he has generally been compared unfavourably to his Canadian counterparts, as if their standards established the critical framework for evaluating his work. Since his production was of a different type, he has fared poorly. At best, he was patronized. Although his work is uneven, especially later in his life, one senses here at times a thinly disguised chauvinism clothed in an essentializing aesthetic. Lawren Harris exemplified the Canadian attitude in his correspondence with Emily Carr. "I don't like comparisons but for your ears I'll make two, strictly for the purpose of doing what I can to encourage you to work. Take Kihn's things, precise, fine, descriptive but obvious, almost illustration." Harris to Carr, January 8, 1928, Emily Carr file, MG 30, D 215 Vol. 2 Harris-Carr Correspondence 1928-1929, Public Archives of Canada. This assessment continues to the present. "His graphic style reflects his forte as an illustrator." Jay Stewart and Peter Macnair, **To the Totem Forests: Emily Carr and Contemporaries Interpret Coastal Villages**, Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1999, p. 42.

National Museum, the national railway system and the print media. There were at this time two major railways in Canada that employed the services of both artists and ethnographers, as well as the Native population, to promote rail travel to the west coast. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) seems to have been the first off the mark during this period. Charles Hill, in his recent study of the Group of Seven, notes that the CPR's general publicity agent, John Murray Gibbon, worked closely with Marius Barbeau and the Victoria Memorial Museum (later the National Museum).¹³ The Ceylon-born, Scottish, and Oxford-trained Gibbon had come from England to Canada in 1913 to take the post at a time when rail tourism in western Canada was reaching record levels.¹⁴ He had an abiding interest in Canadian history and "the cultural traditions and abilities of the diverse racial groups in the country" and used these extensively in promoting not only Canadian culture and history but also the railroad, which he saw as intimately linked.¹⁵ Gibbon was aware that Barbeau specialized in studies of French-Canadian folk art and lore, as well as the indigenous cultures of Canada, and that he employed both of his interests in

¹³Hill, *The Group of Seven*, p. 177. John Murray Gibbon's role in defining Canadian identity was to come later, in his publication: *Canadian Mosaic*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1938. Although it is unclear precisely when he first formulated the idea, his book developed out of a series of radio programs which he undertook in the 1930s, for what would become the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. By this time he had already published "The Foreign Born", *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, (April/May/June, 1920), pp. 331 - 51, in which he analysed the suitability of various immigrant groups, including Italians, Scandinavians, and especially those from Eastern Europe for their potential as labour, proper political stances and ease of assimilation into a English culture in Canada. Anyone British apparently did not qualify as "foreign". Although Gibbon came to advocate "the general acceptance of Canadian citizenship made by each racial group and the desire to contribute to the building up of the new northern nation", his pluralistic notions of Canadian identity did not come to include Native identity. "The Canadian race of the future is being superimposed on the original native Indian races and is being made up of over thirty European racial groups." *Canadian Mosaic*, pp. vi - vii. The Canadian mosaic, a term which had been mooted in the 1920s, (see p. ix), and one of the foundations of multiculturalism, is dedicated solely to emigrant European groups. Nonetheless, in the 1920s Gibbon took a positive attitude towards the role of Native culture as part of tourism.

¹⁴Gibbon's arrival corresponded closely to the hiring of Eric Brown as director of the National Gallery, Barbeau's as ethnographer at the National Museum and Scott's rise to Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs. They formed a generation with close affinities.

¹⁵E. J. Hart, *Trains, Peaks and Tourists: the Golden Age of Canadian Travel*, Banff: EJH Literary Enterprises, 2000, p. 122. First published as: E. J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: the CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism*, Banff: Altitude Publishing, 1983.

furthering the involvement of French speaking Canada in his promotions.¹⁶ Campaigns to use vibrant and ongoing traditional French-Canadian cultural activities and arts such as weaving, carving, painting and music had proven popular with tourists at the CPR's Chateau Frontenac hotel in Quebec City since 1920.¹⁷ For Barbeau, however, these were not just exotic curiosities to be exploited as spectacular commodities to enhance the tourist trade; they formed part of a continuing cultural heritage in Quebec and a future source for a purely Canadian culture.¹⁸ Tourist spectacles are frequently a place for establishing unique regional identities within a national context. As we have noted, Barbeau saw these traditions and identities as under threat. He worked tirelessly to ensure that they were recognized as an integral and living part of Canadian culture and identity, using their value to the railroad as tourist draws as a lever in negotiations to ensure the largest possible audience to validate the claim.

As an ethnologist specializing in the indigenous peoples of Canada, especially in the West,

¹⁶Ibid., p. 123. There has been a tendency to conflate or confuse Barbeau's differing attitudes towards French-Canadian and Native culture. Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 177, tells us: "In all of Barbeau's work, one intention was primary: to preserve those aspects of this heritage [i.e. French-Canadian folklore and the indigenous cultures] which he perceived as menaced by political, cultural, and economic changes, indifference, or hostility from a Europeanized and colonialised elite. At the same time he encouraged the maintenance of traditions, he saw them as a rich resource for a national, contemporary artistic expression." Hill is, however, wrong on almost all counts in his claim when it is applied to indigenous peoples. Barbeau had a different attitude towards culture in Quebec. This distinction will be further explored in Chapter Five.

¹⁷These were part of a series of similar festivals conceived for CPR Hotels across Canada. Gibbon states in **Canadian Mosaic**, p. x.: "Ten years after the Armistice, Sir Edward Beatty, Chairman and President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, authorized me to organize a series of folksong, folkdance and handicraft festivals, starting with Quebec and going west to Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary, for the New Canadians of the Western prairies; then some Scottish Music Festivals and Highland Games at Banff, as well as a Sea Music Festival at Vancouver, and a Christmas Music Festival at Victoria, B.C. These gave me the opportunity of getting to know more about the talent in music and handicraft brought to Canada by the Europeans, and also convinced me that in music these racial groups found contacts which helped greatly in making them understand each other and in creating good will for themselves among Canadians of British Stock." Somehow in his list of cultural contributions to the mosaic, which privileged the British to which all other groups are beholden, he forgot that Banff Indian Days was still ongoing. This omission of the Indian from these accounts continues to the present. Several decades later, E. J. Hart in both editions of his book recounted in some detail Gibbon's career, and the history of tourism in and around Banff, but, in his revised edition, failed to mention Banff Indian Days in any context. Although he offered an account of the Group of Seven working with the railways, he also omitted any mention of the Skeena River project.

¹⁸Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 183.

Barbeau was also valuable to the railways. It is this relationship that brought him into contact with Langdon Kihn.

Barbeau and Gibbon shared common interests and would work together on a number of mutually profitable enterprises throughout the twenties. Their first co-venture resulted from Gibbon's invitation to the young American artist Langdon Kihn to visit the Stoney reserve at Morley, Alberta, in 1922, in order to publicize the annual Indian Days celebration held at the Banff [Springs] hotel. The Canadian Pacific Railway purchased eighteen of Kihn's portrait drawings and commissioned Barbeau to write **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, paying for the illustrations which reproduced Kihn's drawings.¹⁹

Although Hill has explained the how he has omitted the why. Why an American rather than a Canadian or even a British painter? Why Kihn? Lacking direct documentary evidence, we can only speculate. He had trained under the "decorative" painter Winold Reiss, a German emigré to the United States, who was known for adopting aspects of modernism to precise realism, especially in portraits of Native subjects.²⁰ Kihn had already painted among the Blackfoot Indians in Montana with Reiss and, "encouraged by the American ethnologist, Charles W. Lummis", whom he met while in California, had travelled to the Pueblos in New Mexico in 1920 and 1921, where he had painted in the vicinity of Laguna, Acoma, Santa Fe and Taos.²¹ Although relatively young, Kihn was rapidly gaining an audience and exhibiting extensively across the United States to the same prosperous bourgeoisie whom the railroads would be courting as passengers. A large sampling of this work appeared in the spring of 1922 at his first highly successful New York showing at the Anderson Galleries, under the auspices of the Sante

¹⁹ Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 178. Hill cites a variety of archival correspondence on the arrangements. See also Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923.

²⁰ **Blackfeet Indians**, New York: Gramercy Books, 1935.

²¹ Gregory Edwards and Grant Edwards, "Langdon Kihn: Indian Portrait Artist", **The Beaver**, (Winter 1984/85), pp. 4 - 11. Charles F. Lummis was part of a collection of anthropologists and populists who were "[b]y the late 1880s . . . drawing conclusions about the continuity between present-day Pueblo peoples and the ancient inhabitants of the archeological sites they were excavating. . . . Similarly, 'ethnographers,' whose travel in the southwest was facilitated by the Santa Fe Railway's desire to promote tourism, also contributed to the romanticization of Pueblo culture." W. Jackson Rushing, **Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: a History of Cultural Primitivism**, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 4 - 5.

Fe Museum and with the support of the Great Northern Railway.²² The Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences, in conjunction with the Denver Art Association, sent the work that was not sold from the Anderson show on an extensive tour of galleries throughout the United States.²³

Kihn's images, even at this early stage, demonstrated a hybridization that owed much to his instructor and would serve him throughout the decade. His subject matter consisted primarily of portraits. These combined two contrasting sets of conventions within a fairly standard format.²⁴ His Blackfeet and Pueblo pictures generally show the head and upper body of the sitter, in either a frontal, three-quarter or profile pose. The faces are drawn in precise detail, carefully delineating the distinctive physiognomy of the visage. The sympathetic, intimate treatment conveys a strong sense of individuality while the subtle chiaroscuro creates a full sense of volume and physicality. Had this naturalism been carried through the entire composition, the images would have approached the banality of standard portraiture. The final versions, however, set up a striking contrast. The sitter's clothing and accessories were frequently rendered without shadow in flat, textureless patterns that emphasised the bold, colourful, graphic, abstract motifs of woven blankets, beadwork, feathers or jewelry. This linked the work to the tropes associated with modernism and set up an ambiguous space in which the sitter partook both of a traditional culture and a modern setting. Even in these "decorative" treatments, he had a keen eye for accurate ethnographic detail which he did not sacrifice in the interests of simplification. The distinctive features which characterized the costumes of each group were carefully demarcated, thus ensuring that their cultural difference was clearly established, despite the similar treatments. These continued to the grounds behind the heads which were usually left as flat, blank white fields. The three different treatments produced abrupt transitions between the three zones of the pictures. Kihn made no attempt to integrate them by softening their edges, although they do

²²Kihn to George William Eggers, Director of Denver Art Association, October 31, 1921, Langdon Kihn Papers.

²³Memo on W.J. Kihn, [1925], Painter of Indian Portraits, Previous work among the Indians of U.S., in Barbeau correspondence, Kihn file, B208/42, Canadian Museum of Civilization Archives, (hereafter CMC Archives), date in pencil possibly added later. See also *ibid*.

²⁴See illustration 20.

work harmoniously together. Nonetheless, the overall effect could tend towards the ingratiating, as if the artist were trying to please too many tastes simultaneously. Conversely, these ambivalent qualities allowed the work to appeal to diverse tastes and interests.

Kihn's paintings from the Anderson show were reproduced in an article, "Immortalizing a Disappearing Race, What One Painter Is Doing to Perpetuate the Indian Physiognomy", which appeared in **Arts and Decoration** in the spring of 1922 and may have served as an introduction to his Canadian sponsors.²⁵ The title would have confirmed that his work could be appropriated to the discourse of disappearance and the interests of ethnography. The American article and the exhibition were prescient for Canadian developments in several ways. The author noted that "certain specimens of American Indian craftsmanship, ancient and modern, [were] . . . so arranged as to add the proper atmosphere to the eighty portraits and landscapes". This must be one of the first instances of such a combination, which included "the more modern specimens of blankets, jewelry, basketry and pottery to be placed on sale . . . to develop an appreciative market in the East for objects of art, seldom offered for sale here". The exhibition also included an eighteen-foot tepee with a "draftsmanship and a simplicity of composition that might well be envied by our modernists". The Native material was supplied by "the Great Northern Railroad. . . and such material as I am to secure from Mr. Cull[?]n and from the Central Museum of Brooklyn, comprising material from the Indians of New Mexico".²⁶ There was "also to be some Indian blankets, pottery, basketry, bead work, etc., which will be distinct from the loans mentioned above".²⁷ These were loaned from Dr. Edgar Hewitt, director of the Museum of New Mexico. The format was later picked up by Barbeau and Brown for the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition. The article also called for the incorporation of Native motifs by "our designers" who could adapt the "simple forms" to "our own vigorous, but

²⁵Warwick Ford, "Immortalizing a Disappearing Race, What One Painter is Doing to Perpetuate the Indian Physiognomy", **Arts and Decoration**, Vol. 17 (May, 1922), pp. 13 and 70.

²⁶Kihn to Walter M. Grant, Exhibition Mgr., Anderson Galleries, March 13, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

²⁷Ibid.

complex civilization”.²⁸

But certain ambiguities and disjunctions pervade the article, just as they did the paintings. Both the title and concluding paragraph which bracket the text underscored the disappearance of the Indian in the most general, but definitive, terms. Although they offered no specific evidence on the topic, it seemed to be an a priori assumption. Conversely, nothing in the body of article in any way confirmed or even addressed this premise. If anything, the reverse seemed true. The images on display were, as the article says, “obviously portraits of actual people, not the fanciful studies of an idealist”.²⁹ The accuracy of their likenesses, which the article praised and the fact that the names of the individuals were given as titles to the paintings, albeit in Anglicized versions, spoke to their existence and presence rather than their disappearance. In addition, contrary to the generalization of racial sameness in the title, all of the individuals were further distinguished by tribal affiliation which tended to speak against a common history or predicament. Furthermore the “modern” Native work on display in the exhibition, examples of which were also seen being worn by the sitters, indicated that the makers were in possession of their culture, notwithstanding the misidentification of one person as the last to know the secrets of Acoma pottery. Lastly, the fact that the “modern” work was for sale in an attempt to create a potential market recognized the present production and future viability of Native culture, albeit in a commodified context.³⁰ All of this spoke against the premise of disappearance.

The conflicts and ambiguities embedded in the discrepancies between the article’s title, text and illustrations were indicative of the emergence in the American Southwest and certain urban centres of a growing challenge to the discourse of disappearance. Throughout the 1920s there was a gradual, although by no means uncontested, transition from a policy of assimilation to one in which Native cultures and peoples, and especially those from the Southwest, could be seen as

²⁸Ford, p. 13.

²⁹See illustration 20.

³⁰The examination of the commodification of Native art has been recently studied in Phillips and Steiner.

surviving and taking an integral place within a broader American national identity. This reversal in the construction of the Indian as it had existed for over a century has received much scholarly attention in the past decade and has been attributed to several complex, interlocking factors. A primary factor, although perhaps less studied, was the persistence of the Natives themselves who negotiated the survival of their culture and identity through a period when there was a systematic attempt, particularly after the Dawes act of 1887, to undermine it.³¹

They were assisted in their efforts by the arrival of the tourist trade which flourished after the railways were constructed through the area in the 1880s. Investigations into the activities of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railway have shown that by 1900 it had begun successfully using Native art and ongoing ceremonial activities as tourist draws in the American Southwest, thus giving them an audience and a legitimacy that was at odds with government policy. The Fred Harvey Company, which by and large took over from the local traders, specialized in providing tourists with railway travel and picturesque hotel accommodation where Natives sold textiles, pottery and jewelry, produced under the auspices of the company. As well, by 1926 the company was responsible for arranging extended motorized tours to Pueblo villages to watch displays of traditional rituals with costumed figures performing dances.³² As Penny and Roberts point out, “success in saving Pueblo ceremonies from government policy was assisted immeasurably by their increasing value through the 1920s as tourist attractions.”³³

The second major contributing factor during and after the war was the arrival in the area of an

³¹ “[T]he institutional policies set in motion by the Dawes Act of 1887, also known as the Allotment Act, [were]. . . intended to impose acculturating education, discourage traditional religious ceremonialism, and eliminate tribal principles of land tenure to replace them with the laws of private ownership, a policy which in practice resulted in white confiscation or purchase of reservation lands. Government Indian policy of the period between 1887 and the early 1920s was designed to break up the ‘great tribal mass,’ as Teddy Roosevelt called it, and speed the assimilation and absorption of Native societies into the American mainstream.” David W. Penny and Lisa Roberts, “America’s Pueblo Artists, Encounters on the Borderlands”, in Jackson Rushing III, ed., **Native American Art in the Twentieth Century**, New York: Routledge, p. 22.

³² Marta Weigle and Barbara Babcock, eds., **The Great Southwest of the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway**, Phoenix: Heard Museum, 1996, passim.

³³ Penny and Roberts, p. 31.

urban elite of intellectuals, artists, and wealthy and powerful easterners who, for various reasons, took an active role in championing the Native cause and in attempting to formulate a new purely American national identity with links to the Indian as opposed to Europe. Molly Mullin among others, has investigated the reaction “against the coercive, assimilationist policies of the federal government and of Christian missionaries” by a “generation of eastern Anglo-American intellectuals, artists, and art patrons” in the American Southwest who were interested in the “preservation and the national appropriation of Indian cultures” in “remapping the geography and aesthetics of American identity - away from Europe and from colonial New England” during the 1920s.³⁴ Penny and Roberts have also pointed out that after World War I, “Anglo supporters of Pueblo sovereignty, such as it could be conceived by them, promoted Pueblo art as a strategy in support of Pueblo cultural survival.”³⁵

Alice Corbin Henderson, Mable Dodge Luhan, Mary Austin and Amelia Elizabeth White were four of the wealthy and powerful patrons of Pueblo arts and supporters of their concerns who were instrumental in defending both Pueblo land rights and traditional ceremonies which were under increased attack at precisely that moment.³⁶ They were joined in their endeavours by artists such as the American painters John Sloan and Marsden Hartley.³⁷ Pueblo art became a prominent factor in the battles carried on in urban centres by these artists, patrons and sponsors to “save the Pueblos” and to employ “American Indian art . . . [as] an autochthonous foundation for

³⁴Molly Mullin, “The Patronage of Difference: Making Indian Art ‘Art, Not Ethnology’”, in George Marcus and Fred Myers, **The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology**, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 168 - 169. See also Penny and Roberts for further discussion of those who “who fought to ‘preserve’ Pueblo culture . . . because of a perception of its value to America, as a unique American ‘contribution’ to the world”. p. 23. “The Pueblo peoples . . . provided America with a cultural, historical legacy that urban intellectuals of the Santa Fe and Taos colonies wished to appropriate as the foundation for a uniquely American identity in a world they feared was dominated by Europe.” p. 30. Penny and Roberts do not cite Mullin.

³⁵Penny and Roberts, p. 22. Both Mullin and Penny and Roberts problematize this relationship and point out its ambiguous nature.

³⁶Penny and Roberts, p. 32.

³⁷See Rushing, **Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde**.

a uniquely American aesthetic".³⁸ Sloan arranged for the exhibition of Native material at the Society of Independent Artists exhibition in New York City in 1920. The recent watercolours done by Pueblo artists were valued by the critic Walter Pach for their "primitive" qualities, linking them directly to the past.³⁹ This is evidence of the beginnings of a critical framework which would position Native work from both the present and the past into a purely American aesthetic. Marsden Hartley also wrote in that year that "[i]n the aesthetic sense alone, then, we have the redman as a gift. As Americans we should accept the one American genius we possess, with genuine alacrity. We have upon our own soil something to show the world as our own, while it lives."⁴⁰ By 1922, followup shows were noted as marking "the birth of a new Art in America".⁴¹ Also in that year, that is at the same time as Kihn's exhibition at the Anderson Gallery, White opened a gallery featuring Native art on Madison Avenue.⁴² The purpose of both was to "encourage a market for American Indian Art". This concurrence suggests that Kihn was, by this time, drawn into the program to create a critical, aesthetic and commercial framework which would validate the current and future contributions of Native art to an American identity.⁴³ White continued to arrange exhibitions of Pueblo work, at times using material gained through Henderson, throughout the decade both at home and abroad. She was instrumental, with Sloan, in organizing the **Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts** in 1931, which is generally seen as the culmination of these efforts to have Native art recognized as a distinctly American art.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 31 - 32.

³⁹Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁰Marsden Hartley, "Red Man Ceremonials: An American Plea for American Esthetics", **Art and Archaeology**, Vol. 9, No. 1 (January, 1920), p. 13, Cited in Penny and Roberts, p. 30.

⁴¹E.H. Cahill, "America Has its 'Primitives'", **International Studio**, Vol. 75, No. 299 (March, 1922), p. 81, Cited in Penny and Roberts, p. 33.

⁴²Ibid., p. 32.

⁴³In 1921 Kihn had already taken up the cause of the Blackfeet Indians of Montana and expressed his "anxiety concerning them for fear they may suffer during the coming winter". He received a non-sympathetic reply. Commissioner, Department of the Interior, Office Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Kihn, October 12, 1921, Langdon Kihn Papers.

The concentrated activities of these powerful individuals led to substantial reforms in Indian policy in the 1930s under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and the administration of John Collier, "the progressive social activist" who became the Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.⁴⁴ Collier had earlier taken an active role in attempting to preserve Pueblo culture and to enlist the assistance of the group of artists and patrons. In an effort to gain recognition for the viability of Native culture and the possibility of its preservation into the future, he had brought thirteen Pueblo "officials to New York in early 1924 and presented them to New York society at a Cosmopolitan Club reception. The Pueblo visitors danced and Collier spoke."⁴⁵ By the mid-1930s, under his administration, the government had reversed its policies and implemented the "Indian Arts and Crafts Board . . . and other initiatives to support and encourage arts production".⁴⁶

It is no coincidence, then, that Kihn had met with Mable Dodge Luhan and her husband on his trip through the Southwest in 1919, before his first excursion to Canada.⁴⁷ Here, he would have encountered a concept of the role of Native culture and art completely different from that which subsequently framed the article on his work. His connection to this group continued and expanded. He received a letter of introduction to Mary Austin from Sheldon Parsons of the School of American Research, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, who had given Kihn exhibitions of his early work in 1920 and 1921.⁴⁸ He was invited to the Pueblo event arranged by Collier. He was also in communication with the Eastern Association of Indian Affairs, the umbrella organization assembled to promote the cause of the Pueblos, of which White was the secretary.⁴⁹ This is not to say that he was completely converted to this new view. He would still,

⁴⁴Penny and Roberts, pp. 30 and 34.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁷Langdon Kihn, "Memoirs", unpublished manuscript, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁴⁸Parsons to Kihn, October 23, 1921. See also Parsons to Kihn, November 5, 1921, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁴⁹A. E. White to Kihn, April 16, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers. See Penny and Roberts, p. 32.

in the future, speak of the inevitable “death of the Indian”, but at the same time his exposure to the ideas espoused by the likes of Luhan, Austin, Hendersen, White, and Collier and his partial integration within their programs meant that his artistic production took on an ambiguous role. It would be, in the end, his ambivalence and oscillation on precisely the point of disappearance or continuity, and on the role that Native arts took in the formation of a national identity, that would be most problematic for his position in Canada, where, as will be shown, conditions were substantially different. In the meantime, it would have been Kihn’s direct involvement with the American programs for successfully promoting tourism to the Southwest, rather than any links to those who professed a desire to preserve Native culture and art, that would have made him an ideal candidate for similar promotions in Canada, where preservation was a moot point.

Banff Indian Days had had their beginning around 1889, three years after the CPR reached the Pacific coast, when Natives from the Stoney Reserve were asked to entertain passengers who had been stranded in Banff by inclement weather. By the end of the century it was an organized annual event.⁵⁰ The CPR had also started to engage artists to paint the picturesque scenery of the west in 1886. Who influenced whom is therefore open to question.⁵¹ Whatever the case, the success of the American enterprises and Kihn’s indirect involvement in them may well have predisposed Gibbon in Kihn’s favour. Indeed, the **Arts and Decoration** article featured precisely the type of broad publicity of tourist images that the Canadian railroads coveted and which the American railroads had already pioneered. Kihn’s connections may have been seen as a way of breaking into the American market and competing with the growing draw of the American Southwest in a manner that no Canadian artist could accomplish.

⁵⁰The precise date for the beginnings of Indian Days is uncertain, and may be any where between 1889 and 1894. Patricia Parker supports the early date in her non-scholarly history, **The Feather and the Drum: the History of Banff Indian Days, 1889 - 1978**, Calgary: Consolidated Communications, 1990, p. 5.

⁵¹The complex links between the Canadian and American western railway programs to use artists and Natives as part of their attractions have yet to be sorted out. But such claims as that by William H. Simpson, that the Santa Fe “was the first road . . . to take art seriously, as a valuable advertising adjunct” are clearly exaggerated and ignore Canadian precedents. Simpson, cited in “Introduction”, Weigle and Babcock, p. 2. In addition, Greyline Bus Tours had been established in the Banff area before they occurred in Sante Fe. There were crucial differences, however, between the Canadian and American programs as they developed in the twentieth century.

Another source of support for Kihn may have come from Harlan I. Smith, an American who joined the National Museum as an archeologist in 1911, since he had previously worked with the Pueblo and in Wyoming. Smith, however, had his own particular ideas on the role of Native art in contemporary Canadian culture. Given his interest in petroglyphs and other archeological material, he wrote several articles on the use of prehistoric motifs as a source for commercial designers searching for distinctly Canadian motifs.⁵² He even produced a museum handbook of useful images of Native art for adoption by corporations, an idea which we have seen turn up in the **Arts and Decoration** article.⁵³ He actively promoted these ideas throughout the twenties. As we shall see, they met with some internal resistance, and added another voice to the debate on the role of Native culture in the construction of Canadian identity.

In any case, by 1922 Barbeau and Kihn were working, possibly independently of each other and without formal introductions, in conjunction with Gibbon and the CPR, in a program that would duplicate features found south of the border, but with significant differences that distinguished the Canadian experience on the Prairies and the West Coast from the American Southwest.⁵⁴ Smith soon joined them. This joint, albeit at times troubled, alliance between museum personnel and artists and railroads would continue until the following decade.

Arriving in Montreal from New York, Kihn met Gibbon, who had provided him with railway passes, and then travelled west, spending “seven months from late May to December 1922 in

⁵²Harlan Smith, “The Use of Prehistoric Canadian Art for Commercial Design”, **Science**, July 20, 1917, pp. 60 - 61. This was followed by “Distinctive Canadian Designs: How Canadian Manufacturers May Profit by Introducing Native Designs into their Products”, **Industrial Canada**, September 17, 1917. The latter was abstracted and revised in **Saturday Night**, November 24, 1917. Smith indicates in the **Science** article that the idea originated while he was at the Peabody Museum. He gave frequent talks promoting the proposal at various places, including the British Columbia Provincial Museum in 1923. It is not unlikely to suppose that Emily Carr was in attendance and that her engagement with pottery in Native designs in 1924 is connected to Smith’s presentations. See Maria Tippett, **Emily Carr: a Biography**, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 132 - 34.

⁵³Smith, **An Album of Prehistoric Canadian Art**.

⁵⁴Kihn’s correspondence makes no mention of any meeting with Barbeau on his first trip, although his father did ask him about “the ethnologist who was to join your party at Montreal on the way out”. “Dad” to Kihn, June 17, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers. The first confirmed meeting between Kihn and Barbeau did not occur until 1923, when Barbeau travelled to New York.

western Canada and B.C.”.⁵⁵ His main focus was the Stoney Indians of the Morley reserve which was situated just outside the mountains to the east of Banff, Alberta. He remained there for several weeks, with a side excursion to the Kananaskis. He seems to have been well integrated into the Native community, which he viewed very positively. During his stay he was invited to a sun-dance, “a thing that is forbidden all whites to see” since they were against the law.⁵⁶ His mandate was also intended to include what Kihn called the “Totem Pole Indians” of Alert Bay, just off the North end of Vancouver Island. He was diverted from this destination when he was informed through Gibbon that the poles there had been sold.⁵⁷ No mention appears to have been made of the problems surrounding the prosecutions of the Cranmer potlatch which were then underway, and which will be discussed later. Instead, Kihn was directed to the remote west coast of Vancouver Island to paint the “Nootka” (i.e. Nuu-chah-nulth), which he described as “entirely an Indian totem-pole village”.⁵⁸ On his return trip Kihn travelled south, still at Gibbon’s request, and did portraits of “seven or eight of British Columbia’s Doukhobors including John E. Konkin, Anastasia Verigagan [sic] and Billy Chernoff, all of Brilliant”.⁵⁹ Back in Invermere, he met with Gibbon again, who had extended his pass until the end of November and assigned him the task of recording his experiences and collecting stories from his Native contacts, with the hint of substantial, albeit “confidential”, plans for a forthcoming project, although no firm commitments were made.⁶⁰ Although Duncan Campbell Scott’s name was

⁵⁵Kihn to Barbeau, [1923], Coll. Marius Barbeau (1922-1928, 1939-1953) / Kihn, W. Langdon, file B208/42. CMC Archives.

⁵⁶Kihn to “Mother and Dad”, June 9, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁵⁷“Mr. H. Brodie, General Passenger Agent here, tells me that most of the totem poles at Alert Bay have been sold to rich Americans and that it would be better for you to go to Nootka on the West Coast of Vancouver Island.” Gibbon to Kihn, July 11, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁵⁸Kihn to “Folks”, July 21, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁵⁹Edwards and Edwards, p. 5. One wonders at the precise nature of Gibbon’s interest in this problematic, reclusive group, and why Kihn would be dispatched to ingratiate himself within their remote community and report back on any information he might acquire from his intimate contact. Tourism was hardly a factor here. They were, on the other hand, seen as potentially politically subversive and requiring infiltration and surveillance. One wonders to what extent similar functions may have extended to Kihn’s visits to the Native peoples.

⁶⁰Kihn to “Folks”, September 4, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

mentioned as someone to whom the work would be shown, Barbeau's name did not occur and it remains uncertain as to what extent he was involved at this point. The project of the book was brought up, but Kihn assumed that it would "contain most of my writings and legends that we gather, and will be illustrated with *colored* reproductions of my Indian portraits".⁶¹ After another trip south to render Kootenay subjects, Kihn finished up with a further stay outside of Banff on the Morley Reserve where he remained until winter set in, when he returned to New York. By this point, Gibbon's plans must have coalesced. It was here, in January 1923, that Kihn finally met Barbeau, to whom Gibbon had by this time given the project for a book on the Indians of Western Canada, which was to feature reproductions of Kihn's images.⁶²

Kihn's experience in the Southwest served him well. He approached his subjects in Western Canada in much the same way as he had in Montana and New Mexico. Kihn's style was decidedly different from either the portrayals of Indians of the 1800s, such as George Catlin or Paul Kane, or, more recently, Edmund Morris.⁶³ But it was also remarkably free from the conventions of the painters of the West and the Indian who were then popular, such as Frederick Remington and Charles Russell. Both invented an "authentic", albeit romantic, image of a past era by painting Indians in carefully detailed but fictional and dramatic settings that bore little or no relationship to the present.⁶⁴ Kihn bypassed these popular but nostalgic narrative conventions that did little to dispel the notion of disappearance, and took a more modern, if somewhat hybrid, view. He insisted that his portraits "are made from life by living with and among the Indians in

⁶¹Ibid., his emphasis.

⁶²Gibbon to Kihn, December 8, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers. See also, Kihn to Hugh S. Eayrs, January 28, 1923, Langdon Kihn Papers. "Mr. Barbeau and I have gotten together several times since he's been in town, and he feels he's coming along very quickly and satisfactorily with the text." Laurence Nowry reports that Kihn came to Ottawa in December 1922 and "met Gibbon, Barbeau, Sapir and National Gallery Director Eric Brown." Laurence Nowry, **Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana**, Toronto: NC Press, 1996, p. 217. He gives no source for this assertion.

⁶³See illustration 21.

⁶⁴Remington was dead by this time but was still seen as a model by the public. On the nostalgia attached to their work, and its attempt to hold time still, see Brian W. Dippie, "The Moving Finger Writes: Western Art and the Dynamics of Change", in Yale University Art Gallery, **Discovered Lands Invented Pasts**, New Haven: The Gallery, 1992, pp. 89 - 115. See illustrations 22 and 23.

their own territory”, and, one might add, in their own time.⁶⁵ This attention to the details which defined the people as living individuals and *their* culture as unique and contemporary, is evident in his production and will be investigated shortly. It may well have been his ability to clearly articulate both individual features and tribal characteristics, as opposed to any generic formula for “Indianness” that attracted both Gibbon and intrigued Barbeau. The work’s ethnographic detail and its close scrutiny of the faces of the sitters loaned itself readily to the possibility of using the images to define racial characteristics and origins, in which Barbeau was engaged.⁶⁶ Kihn’s portraits would serve the ethnographic record far better than landscapes. The vitality of his work and the documentary portrayal of the costumes which formed a large part of the Banff Indian Days’ attractions, as well the work’s easy adaptability to graphic design, would have served Gibbon’s purposes splendidly.

The Discourse of Disappearance is Affirmed and Challenged

So how and where did Kihn go astray? It is my contention that Kihn’s paintings also formed a site in which the possibility of conflicts arose, conflicts which again demonstrate disunity in the idea of a homogenous national identity, and are essential to situating the place of Native culture and/or its representations within that construction. In this instance, the contentious issues concerned the state of Native culture, its expression in public performances, and its position in the construction of a national identity. Duncan Campbell Scott, who was taking a concentrated interest in any Native ceremonial activity in Western Canada, as well as in Kihn’s works and

⁶⁵Kihn to Barbeau, [1923], CMC Archives.

⁶⁶Barbeau later confirmed his interest in Kihn’s portraits in that they were “the first to characterize their Mongolian-like features in forceful portraits”, a theory he held on the origins of the peoples of the Northwest Coast. Marius Barbeau, “The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies: a Theme for Modern Painters”, **University of Toronto Quarterly**, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1931), p. 199. See also pp. 200 - 201: “The sharp contrast between these two stocks of Indians [from the Plains and Coast] become more intelligible in the presence of characteristic portraits from both areas, those by Holgate, Kihn or Winhold Reiss. . . . The face of the Nootkas of Vancouver Island and of the Gitksan of the Skeena, is broad and square; the jaw is massive and the nose often flat. Their physiognomy is Mongolian.”

Gibbon's projects, did not share what came to be the latter's view on the pluralistic possibilities for Canadian identity. Scott's ideas were more monocultural and excluded the contribution of indigenous cultures. Christopher Bracken has given an accurate account of Scott's position on art and nationhood and the place of Native peoples and culture.⁶⁷ In analysing Scott's ethically questionable suppression of a report by experts which recommended that he cease his persecution of potlatch activity, Bracken notes Scott's

conviction that the poet's [i.e. his own] foremost ethical responsibility is to contribute to the building of a nation. . . . It is their duty to help raise people from barbarity and lead them toward nationhood, which he understands to be the crowning achievement of human civilization, its ultimate, rational 'social state'. . . . Scott's 'perfect social state' has no place for non-European cultures. The poet's duty is to contribute to the building of a homogeneously white Euro-Canadian society. . . . Aboriginal cultures have a place in Scott's nation only if they consent to die and leave their remains - such as their names or confiscated potlatch regalia - in national archives and museums to be remembered by future generations of homogeneously white citizens.⁶⁸

Kihn's primary subject, the Stoneys, and their role in Banff Indian Days, as well as their presence at the parallel Calgary Stampede, also in its nascent state in the 1920s, was a particular sore point for Scott and those working under him. Brian Titley's thoroughly researched study helped to reshape established perceptions of Scott and to focus attention on his role as a bureaucrat rather than as a poet. His detailed account of Scott's reactions is worthwhile recapitulating.⁶⁹ This is

⁶⁷Christopher Bracken, **The Potlatch Papers: a Colonial Case History**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Bracken's book is a fascinating study in the attempt to bring together a complex methodology, based on Paul de Man, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, into the practice of simultaneously writing and deconstructing a detailed history of the problems within the texts surrounding and defining the potlatch. Although I appreciate the book's sheer beauty, ambition and originality, I do find parts problematic, particularly the tendency to at times separate out his theoretical speculations and textual analysis from his extensive archival research. Nonetheless, the historical material, which I will be drawing on here, is sound and well researched as are the doubts he raises about the ability to contain and know, and thus gain power over, the potlatch within a discursive framework.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 224 - 225.

⁶⁹Brian Titley. **A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada**, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986. The repression of Native culture and identity in Canada in the 1920s has been investigated in a piecemeal rather than a co-ordinated fashion. Much focus is, for example, given to the persecutions resulting from the Cramner potlatch. This event, while important, often overshadows or completely eclipses the range of tactics used by the federal government among various groups in a widespread campaign. As recently as this year, although the material was written a decade before, a posthumous article by Douglas Cole appeared which investigated Emily Carr's apolitical positions. Cole noted the lack of documentation on various

especially so since the repressions on the Prairies are less well known than those on the Coast. But most importantly, the history he recounts opens up for critical evaluation the question of Native culture and its role in Canadian identity. Indeed, his work can be used to demonstrate one important aspect of the crisis that occurred within the discourse of the disappearance of the Indian during the 1920s.

It must be kept in mind that although this discussion will focus on Scott, he did not act alone. Insofar as he was able to hold onto his position for two decades while governments came and went, he must have carried out his policies with their approval. His overall policies reflected the will of all the parties who came to power, rather than being specifically his own. Neither was Scott, of course, responsible for introducing the federal government's repressive Indian policy which had begun in the previous century. In 1895, Section 114 of the Indian Act was revised "which sought to extend the prohibition of the potlatch to the dances of the plains".⁷⁰ The revised statute now provided prison sentences for such "crimes". Still, at this stage, imprecise wording made the law difficult to enforce against all dancing, as did variances in opinions between the RCMP and over-zealous and punitive Indian agents on the precise targets and purposes of the law.⁷¹ What convictions did occur on the Prairies were proclaimed a deterrent,

topics concerning the Native question during the 1920s including "such matters as the moving of the Kitsilano from their south shore reserve, agitation over the land question and the McKenna-McBride commission, or the attempt to suppress the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch during and immediately after the Great War". Douglas Cole, "The Invented Indian/The Imagined Emily", in *BC Studies*, Nos. 125/126 (Spring/Summer 2000), pp. 147 - 162. Potlatch repression went much further in British Columbia than the Kwakwaka'wakw, as Cole and Chaikin have reported elsewhere, and included, among other groups, the Gitksan, who were a particular concern of Carr. The same law concurrently targeted cultural activity on the Prairies. See Margaret Anderson and Marjorie Halpin, eds., *Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Beynon's 1945 Field Notes*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000, pp. 208-209. There appears, however, to be an established direction taken in the development of the literature on the subject in the last twenty years. Ever more evidence seems to be accumulating which demonstrates effective Native resistance to the ban through increasingly complex means negotiated over a longer period of time. This is combined with a growing acknowledgment of the government's anxieties and doubts. The history is, however, still fragmented. Operating within these changes within the historical discourse, I will attempt here to present the rudiments of a broader picture, although still with a focus on Western Canada.

⁷⁰Titley, p. 166.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 167.

but often, in fact, proved less than effective, if not counterproductive.⁷² In the first decade of the century, W. M. Graham, an agent at Qu'Appelle, and J. A. Markle of the Blackfoot Agency, were adamant at the local level in advocating the repression of all dances of whatever type, which were associated with "evil", "debauchery", "paganism" and "indolence", and were "inimical to progress", especially farming.⁷³ By 1907, however, the Prairie Natives enlisted legal counsel and actively resisted the law as the numbers of dancing ceremonies, and especially the sun-dance, began to rise, contrary to the expectations of the bureaucracy.⁷⁴

It should also be noted that at this point, in the second half of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Natives on the Prairies found support in unexpected places for their case for continuing traditional ceremonial activities. Titley reports:

The "recrudescence" of dancing had a further disturbing dimension. Around this time, the organizers of fairs and exhibitions began to invite Indians to perform their dances as a form of entertainment. . . . Indian dances and parades were to be part of this spectacle. In some ways, this was not surprising. Only a decade or so earlier Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the prototype of the exhibition cum circus, had featured Sitting Bull and Gabriel Dumont among its leading stars. It meant that prairie settlers no longer viewed Indians as a menace, but rather as colourful and exotic neighbours who could be relied upon to enliven a festive gathering. Undoubtedly, fair organizers sought to exploit the dancers as inexpensive entertainment. But it is equally certain that the Indians enjoyed the participation and being the centre of attention. It was an opportunity to evade, if only temporarily, the oppressive regime of work imposed by agents and farm instructors. And it must have been reassuring to know that not all elements of the dominant society perceived their dances, songs, and costumes as relics of a barbarism that ought to be

⁷²Ibid., p. 168. Titley cites one case in which bad press arose over the sentencing of an elderly, almost blind Native to two months hard labour.

⁷³Ibid, pp. 168 - 169. Of interest here is the number of times the phrase "nearly nude" comes up in horrified responses to the costumes worn by the dancers. Obviously unbridled sexuality was associated with the vision of the semi-naked male Indian body in unrestricted movement in the eyes of white officialdom. See also p. 172 for Markel's response in 1907 to "male Indians in almost nude attire parading streets and other public places, giving so-called war and other dances for the edification of the wives and daughters of people who claim to be civilized and refined". Obviously, he is expressing a terror at the prospect that a threatening sexuality lurked just below the veneer of his own civilization, particularly in its women and female children, and had thus to be doubly suppressed in women and Natives. David Laird, shortly thereafter, wanted ceremonies forbidden on the grounds of "indecent exposure". p. 173. Horror on the West Coast seems to have been reserved for "cannibalism" and the wanton destruction of property.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 171. Sports days had also become an acceptable arena for gatherings at this time.

ruthlessly stamped out.⁷⁵

What Titley does not mention, and where it is necessary to supplement his narrative, is that the long standing and successful Banff Indian Days may well have served as the intermediate model for these exhibitions and fairs. Nor does he suggest the possibility that they might also have been considered by the Natives as a venue for gathering to discuss problems in educating white audiences on the value and beauty of their traditions, to hand on those very traditions, and to assert their potential contributing role in contemporary Canadian society. A pamphlet from the 1931 Indian Days indicates that the Native participants may have had an entirely different view of the event than their non-Native audiences. Not only does it give the number of ceremonies that were performed and handed on there, but it describes their significance.

Were the Stoneys not brought periodically to Banff, the rising generation would not see the 'mustcosch' (cattle) [bison] of their father's stories and the narratives of wonderful hunting would not mean so much to them. Thus the annual trip of the Stoneys to Banff assists in keeping alive the precious stories and legends of that race. Go out to the village at some hour when the tribe is at liberty and note the number of Indians taking their small sons over to the animal corrals. Follow them up and, if you understand Sioux, you will find the fathers relating stories of past great days. Particularly will you find this so at the buffalo paddock. You will also find the youngsters are being given a first hand natural history lesson.⁷⁶

Their participation in such events must then be recognized as more than an attention-getting mechanism or a holiday from enforced farm labour. Although Titley does not consider the possibility, the fairs, festivals and stampedes must be seen as sites for creating a case against and resisting the opposition of the bureaucracy and some of the missionaries, while at the same time negotiating the validity and vitality of Native culture within the modernist context.⁷⁷

The situation of which Titley speaks centred, after 1908, on the Dominion Exhibition in Calgary,

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 171 - 172.

⁷⁶"Banff Indian Days, July 21-22-23, '31", on file in the Archives of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta.

⁷⁷As Titley points out, not all missionaries sided with the government. For example, "John McDougall, the veteran Methodist missionary, was also accorded some of the blame for the 'recrudescence'." Titley, p. 170.

which became the Calgary Stampede in 1912. It was feared here that the presence of costumed Natives might gain worldwide press exposure and give “the wrong image of the Dominion abroad”.⁷⁸ Although Titley does not mention it, this anxiety was undoubtedly in response to what was perceived as a disaster at the Chicago World’s Fair where the Native dances were seen as a tarnish on the image of Canadian civilization. Despite concerted attempts by the Department of Indian Affairs, under Scott’s predecessor, Frank Pedley, to have the Indians excluded, their inclusion had already been established under the auspices of Reverend John McDougall, who

undermine[d the] Department’s efforts to prevent Indian dancing at public events. In 1909 McDougall was responsible for the presence of about three hundred Stonies at the Dominion Day celebrations at Banff. A few days later, and again with the missionary’s involvement, close to six hundred Indians, including Stonies, Crees, Blackfoot, Sarcees, Peigans, and Bloods, attended the Provincial Exhibition in Calgary where they were the main attraction. Department officials viewed these events with dismay and complained bitterly to headquarters both about their inability to control the situation and about McDougall’s activities.⁷⁹

Throughout this period Scott was rising to prominence and power, first as Superintendent of Education within the Department in 1909, and then as Deputy Superintendent in 1913, when it was discovered that his predecessor had been found privately disposing of Native land for his own profit. During Scott’s initial period in office, while establishing his policies, he encountered powerful politicians with vested interests in the exhibitions and fairs, especially the Stampede, who began to intercede in resisting his initiatives. Worse yet, they were succeeding. On taking over the Department, Scott realized he would have to strengthen Section 149 (formerly Section 114).⁸⁰

Consequently, an amendment to Section 149 was drawn up forbidding Indians in the four western provinces and in the territories from participating in “Indian dances” outside of their own reserves and from appearing in shows or exhibitions in “aboriginal costume”.⁸¹

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 172.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 173.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 174.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 174 - 175.

By 1915 convictions were secured in Saskatchewan, but Native resistance was strong, and it appears that dances continued as before. The war provided Scott with the context he needed to further amend aspects of the potlatch and dancing ban to make it more enforceable.⁸² These changes were passed in 1918, based, Scott claimed, on the “urgent necessity of conserving everything, especially food. Those who participated in ‘give away’ festivals of any kind, [either on the Prairies or the West Coast] could now be prosecuted and tried without reference to a higher court.”⁸³ By changing the nature of the crime to a summary rather than an indictable offence, “the law gave them [the Indian agents] the power to act as prosecutor, judge and jury.”⁸⁴ This assured the elusive convictions. Although the ostensible context for these measures disappeared the same year the bill was passed, the law did not. It became the basis for increased prosecutions in the early 1920s. On the Prairies, W. M. Graham, who had by 1920 risen to the rank of Indian Commissioner of the Prairie Provinces, and who was related to the new Prime Minister, became an adamant foe of dancing.⁸⁵ He was more zealous than Halliday in the new outbreak of repression after 1920.⁸⁶ The only differences he had with Scott on the matter were the degrees of harshness with which their ends were to be met. With increased co-operation from the recently re-organized RCMP, now on the lookout for anything deemed “subversive”, and the new law in hand, convictions for the crime of dancing should have become an easy matter. As in British Columbia, “1921 and 1922 were the peak years of prosecution for violation of Section 149 on the prairies”.⁸⁷ At this moment, confidence must have been high that the programmatic extinction of Native culture and identity in both regions was on the verge of success.

⁸²See also Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, **An Iron Hand Upon the People: the Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast**, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990, pp. 107 - 109, for a more complete summary both on the relationship of the bill to the war and on its effect on the West Coast. The value of reading both together is that each focussed on a different region, one the Prairies, one the West Coast, yet the same laws and policy of repression extended over both.

⁸³Titley, p. 176.

⁸⁴Bracken, p. 209. Bracken, although his study is also limited to the West Coast, adds yet more details to the proceedings which may be missing from the others.

⁸⁵ibid., p. 176. Again, also see Cole and Chaikin.

⁸⁶On Halliday’s initial lack of enthusiasm for enforcement of the law, see Cole and Chaikin, p. 109.

⁸⁷Titley, p. 178

This belief soon proved to be misguided. The Natives on the Prairies again sought legal council, and found ways to get around the law. "On a visit to the west during the summer of 1922, Scott saw for himself the tenacity with which the Indians clung to their customs".⁸⁸ He realized that a measure of compromise might be essential to preserve a sense of control and avoid admitting outright defeat. Recognizing that he had failed in halting dances, he thus proposed a limit on the time spent at such events, but with little effect. The Prairie dances went on as before and increased in number throughout the 1920s.⁸⁹ All of this provoked apoplexy in Graham, who fulminated against any dances, now even including polkas and two-steps. He had, however, lost his connection to the Prime Minister's office in the 1921 election and consequently was more easily defied.⁹⁰ His worst humiliation would be at the hands of the Calgary Stampede Board.

Indian resilience succeeded in negating the department's efforts to suppress their dance festivals throughout the 1920s. And they were equally successful in their defiance of regulations forbidding performances at fairs. The Calgary Stampede was revived in 1919, and it proved to be the principal source of difficulty in this respect.⁹¹

By 1923, defying disapproval from Scott's office, and knowing they could count on the support of the new Inspector General of Indian Affairs, Charles Stewart, a former premier of Alberta, the Stampede board went ahead and included Native participation. Graham and Scott now found themselves outflanked from below and overruled from above, and had to accede and become

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 178. Compare with reports on proceedings on the West Coast where the emphasis on the Cramner prosecutions has sometimes given the effect that Native resistance was, at this time, ineffective.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 179. By 1923 some alarmed missionaries noticed a "revival" of the sun-dance although it is hard to imagine a "revival" of something that had not died out. It is possible that other more prominent concerns were now facing Scott and the federal government, namely land claims in British Columbia. Not only were the Allied Tribes pressing to have aboriginal title recognized, the Privy Council in London had just established a precedent in Nigeria recognizing such claims. As we will see, the goal now became keeping the Allied Tribes from taking their case to the Privy Council.

⁹⁰The necessity to hold the Native body in check, to deny it motion outside of a disciplining labour, becomes evident in Graham's bid to stop not just traditional dances, but even dances which would demonstrate acculturation.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 180.

active participants in regulating rather than prohibiting the events.⁹² They found the consequences of this period of tolerance to be calamitous. Other communities throughout the Prairies, on seeing the success of the Stampede, and knowing they could bypass Scott, immediately followed suit with fairs of their own. By the end of Scott's tenure in 1932 dances on the Prairies had reached new heights and he was more or less obliged to admit a measure of defeat for his policies and wish that he had imposed more Draconian measures, which would have turned the reserves into virtual prisons under constant surveillance.⁹³

Barbeau and Scott: a Crisis Appears, the Discourse Falts

The question now legitimately arises: to what extent did this growing crisis in the discourse of disappearance of Native culture and identity, if not the Natives themselves, which Titley documents on the Prairies in the 1920s, and which Scott attempted to stem, have an impact on both the production and reception of Kihn's representation of the Indian both in Alberta and British Columbia? Could it not be said that Kihn's works, and what Bourdieu would call the "field of cultural production", were at some remove from what could be perceived as a strictly bureaucratic, administrative and legal problem contained within one government department? Such was not the case. The contentious issue spilled out from Scott's jurisdiction into a variety of other areas to which he was linked, including the visual and literary arts, the ethnographic arena, tourism, and all the way to the formation of a Canadian identity. The conjunction between Scott's policies and Kihn's paintings came first and foremost through Marius Barbeau under whose auspices the latter were produced, promoted and received. Barbeau and Scott were of a

⁹²Ibid., p. 181. Titley does not mention to what extent the precedent of Banff Indian Days had an impact on the arguments submitted by the Calgary Stampede Board. In fact, they play little role in his analysis. Nor does he mention that Graham attempted one last time to forbid Native attendance at the Stampede in 1925. As the Stampede Board had decided that they were going to feature a recreation of the NWMP ride to the West in commemoration of its fiftieth anniversary, in which the Native presence played a major role, this was unthinkable. Graham had to settle for keeping the young and able-bodied Indians on the reserve, presumably hard at work on their farms, while the elderly were allowed to take part. See James H. Gray, **A Brand of Its Own**, Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985, pp. 80 - 81.

⁹³Ibid., p. 183.

similar mind on the issue of the disappearance of the Indian. The two, in fact, worked in tandem in supporting the discourse throughout this crucial period, when it was in a state of breaking up. Both must have shared the same anxieties as they watched the growing challenges to the once secure premises upon which their practices were based. Evidence of their mutual attempts to shore up the crumbling edifice occurs in two articles which they published jointly for a widespread popular audience in a supplement to the **Mail and Empire**, in its Diamond Jubilee Number in 1927. They are important in that 1927 was the year in which the crisis was coming to a head, and Canada was celebrating its identity and independence.

Undoubtedly aware, as the 1920s progressed, of the continued vitality of the Native presence in Western Canada, Barbeau and Scott supplied an alternative textual image of the present and future. It appears that if the Indian as such could not be contained and disciplined by the discursive, legalistic and administrative framework, or by surveillance and punishment, then at least the *image* of the “Indian” would have to be so shaped. This focus on image rather than reality produced an interest, during the 1920s, in the textual and visual representation of the Indian as well as shaping and predetermining public response. Being unable to ignore completely the lack of cooperation on the part of Canada’s Native population in actualizing the discourse of disappearance, Scott was adamant, as the headline declared, that “Indians Step Beyond Role of Their Ancient Romance”.⁹⁴ Addressing the issue on the Prairies, he stated: “Sixty years brought a vast change in the lives of the Stony Indians. At Confederation they dominated the Western Prairies. Now they are shorn of most of their glory.” While the main part of the text, drawn from his annual report, detailed his vision of the benevolent and beneficial policies of the paternalistic federal government, he also used the opportunity to define a public and political perception of the current role of Native costumes, dances and culture within the larger context of Canadian culture .

It may be conceded that the typical Canadian Indian is the hunter and trapper, and, when one thinks of him, buckskins and beadwork and feathers are still cloaking him with a sort of romance. But these are rarely seen except in pageants and on holidays when the

⁹⁴Duncan Campbell Scott, “Indians Step Beyond Role of Their Ancient Romance. Many Government Wards Become Self-Supporting; last year they harvested nearly 1,000,000 bushels of wheat”, **Mail and Empire**, Toronto, July 1, 1927, p. 27.

superior race must be amused by glimpses of real savages in war-paint.⁹⁵

The implications of this statement of cultural hierarchy are staggering, but as Stan Dragland has stated, they embodied “[t]he attitude implicit almost everywhere in Scott’s prose on Indians”.⁹⁶ While such phrases could have been issued with confidence in the early stages of his career, and even uttered with a degree of confidence as late as 1920, by 1927 they carried more than a note of panic. His phrase “rarely seen” flew directly in the face of his own experience since he was well aware that these ceremonies were on the rise on and off the reserves. The irony invested in the phrase “real savages in war-paint” reduced to recreational and entertainment purposes as spectacle, is itself savage, and degrades and devalues any such ceremonies, nullifying their “cultural capital”. He saw traditional culture as “worthless” and the Indian, one way or the other, as inevitably disappearing into a larger mono-British-Canadian identity. Despite what he would have witnessed in 1922 and thereafter, Scott maintained his certainty that, in contradistinction to the diminishing number of those holding on to the old ways, those who had gone the route of assimilation and given up their identity, had demonstrated that they were “civilized” and thus had “proved their worth, [and] only need to develop and mature under protection until they, one and all, reach their desired goal, full British citizenship”.⁹⁷ He did not seem to see any difference between “their” and his goal since full civilization and citizenship, in his sense, meant also giving up any status and or distinction as Indian. His position that the best way to achieve this and to “protect” them was to repress all aspects of former, presumably uncivilized, Native culture, placed him in some conflict with Gibbon, the Stampede Board, those under his jurisdiction and with the evidence before his eyes. To the extent that, as Titley pointed out, Native dances were at that very moment increasing on the Prairies, both at fairs but especially on reserves, to which he was forced to turn a blind eye, in fact to blind himself, Scott’s

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Stan Dragland, *Floating Voices*, Concord, Ont.: Anansi, 1994, p. 123. Dragland’s study, which attempts to bring together both Scott’s administrative policies and his poetry, is written largely in response to Titley. Dragland notes that the passage quoted had occurred at least three other times in Scott’s writings since 1920. He also notes Scott’s continual cannibalizing of his own texts. Dragland, it should be said, is very sympathetic to Scott.

⁹⁷Scott, “Indians Step Beyond”, p. 27.

statements and his insistence on the success of his programs, represent a deep and anxious state of denial, one that he wanted his audiences to share.

Barbeau's companion piece supported Scott and added the weight of ethnographic and academic authority to the latter's bureaucratic representation of the end of Native culture and identity.⁹⁸ Together they formed a convincing image. In his article Barbeau outlined how contact had "corrupted the Natives" and led to a litany of problems including the "curse of war", "epidemics", "untold devastation", "feuds" and "ruin", "so that, years before the white settlers were ready to open up the country Indian wars and European diseases had already rid it of its former occupants". In explaining a common history he stated: "The lot of the West Coast Indians at the hands of their white conquerors was not unlike that of the plains and mountain tribes." In support of this he cited as an example how "warfare and massacre" had early on reduced the Tlingit. Pushing his theory on the Asian origins of these people he broadened his view to indicate that now, "[o]ne is apt to forget that our modern Indians bear little actual resemblance to their pre-Columbian ancestors The racial characteristics of our aborigines, their features, their bodies, their aptitudes, their intelligence - have, in the last centuries changed almost beyond recognition when they are not wholly a thing of the past." His final assessment was damning.

To conclude, we may say that the ethnologist is a fool who so far deceives himself as to believe that his field notes and specimens, gathered in the raw from half-breeds or decrepit survivors of a past age, still represent the unadulterated knowledge or crafts of the prehistoric races of America. When they actually do, it is only in part.

With a language again invested with a profound racism, if not utter contempt, Barbeau justified the denial of the evidence before him and foreclosed any possibility of the continuity of Native culture or group or individual identity.⁹⁹ Once more Natives were dispossessed of their culture and legitimacy. Both their material and non-material cultures were now in the possession of the museum. Barbeau would assert continuously that all material culture was now safely collected

⁹⁸Marius Barbeau, "Native[s] Have [Su]ffered Change", *Mail and Empire*, Toronto, July 1, 1927, p. 27. [Page torn.] Note the repetition of phrases from his 1923 *Arts and Decoration* article.

⁹⁹One only speculate on what Beynon thought of Barbeau's assessment of his position.

and out of the hands of the original owners. But the Indians no longer even owned themselves. As his possessive pronoun denotes, they were now “ours”, a possession of the “superior race”.

Barbeau was even more specific about the cultural significance of Banff Indian Days and the Calgary Stampede. By 1931, in an article entitled “Our Natives - Their Disappearance”, he spoke of the state of Native culture in terms of its relationship with fairs and exhibitions. Still arguing that the Indians as a race were on the verge of extinction through disease, mistreatment and miscegenation, he noticed that on the Plains the Indians

are known mostly for their casual appearance in stampedes and parades for the benefit of western fairs. Their war paint and regalia belong to the circus. Those responsible for their survival, and perhaps improvement, are the railways and tourists. . . . At present the indications point convincingly to the extinction of the race.¹⁰⁰

Ignoring all ceremonial activity on the reserves, and reducing Native involvement at exhibitions to little more than painted clowns, parodying their own former practices, Barbeau echoed Scott’s earlier claims. In so doing he again invoked the rhetoric of the devalued and degraded. Native culture, such as may exist, had a role for the Native only in the lowest forms of mass spectacle to be consumed by a non-Native audience who are instructed by Barbeau on the proper form of consumption. It had no other currency with “cultural capital”. Dispossession, as the pronouns of the title implied, was a categorical *fait accompli*. The sequence of phrases, “are known”, “belong to” and “those responsible” are equally telling. They indicate that the Indian had no subjectivity within this discursive framework. Lacking this, they are not known to themselves, having no identity either individually or collectively. Rather they are “known” only by a non-Native audience, who assumed the privileged position of ownership and spectatorship. Indian culture now existed only for the benefit of their gaze and “belonged” to them. In addition it is the non-Native audiences who were “responsible”, and thus implicated in, the Natives’ well-being, since they could not be responsible for themselves and were in need of paternal guidance. Barbeau placed “their survival, and . . . improvement” in the hands of the tourist and railways, rather than the Department of Indian Affairs.

¹⁰⁰Marius Barbeau, “Our Indians - Their Disappearance”, *Queen’s Quarterly*, Autumn, 1931, pp. 691 - 707.

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, the forceful denial of any evidence of continuity of Native culture and vitality as seen at Banff or elsewhere, combined with the insistence on degrading and devaluing any evidence that might come from informants or that may have been seen by non-specialists, was indicative of a deep anxiety arising from the continued presence not only of the Indian but of Native cultures and identities in Canada. By 1927 the premise of the disappearance must have seemed itself in danger of disintegrating in the face of the mounting evidence and resistance on many fronts which threatened to undermine and destabilize it. It would be further challenged by resistances in British Columbia.

Barbeau and Kihn: the Rupture Deepens, Framing some Pictures

Given the critical context that has been examined thus far in this chapter, several questions arise. Why was it possible, or even desirable, at the height of repressive activity in 1922, to have an artist paint and later publish images of the very people who were causing so many problems by refusing to give up their culture, defying the law and winning support for their case? Why would a government agent be involved in such a project? Would not these images have run the risk of being seen as emblematic of resistance and continuity and further expose the divisions and contradictions emerging from behind the official facade?

Part of the answer could lie with how such images would, at first, have been viewed and interpreted and then with how they were framed by the texts which surrounded them. Scott was not unfamiliar with projects to paint portraits of the Natives in traditional costumes. Nor did he oppose the practice, so long as the images could be used to further his, and the state's, own ends. In fact, he had already undertaken a similar venture when negotiating Treaty No. 9 in 1906 with the James Bay Indians. At that time Scott's friend, Edmund Morris, was commissioned by the Ontario government to accompany him and paint the images of the chiefs with whom Scott would be negotiating. Morris went on to pursue further work on the Prairies in 1907 and 1908.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹See illustration 21.

This led to the commissioning of further portraits by the governments of Saskatchewan and Alberta.¹⁰² These images, however, were seen at the time, both by Morris and his critical audience, as valuable to the extent that they preserved the last remnants and individuals of the culture. Morris said as much to the premier of Saskatchewan.

One point I wish to lay great stress on in connection with the work I propose doing for your government. The importance of losing no time as the last of the fighting Indians will soon be gone and then it will be impossible to get true records of the old type of those who held land before the coming of the whites.¹⁰³

The critical reception was equally explicit on the subject. A review of the work shown at the Canadian Art Club in 1909 stated:

There are paintings which are interesting as works of art, and others whose interest lies in their subject. The pictures recently exhibited in the Canadian Art Gallery by Mr. Edmund Morris possess both claims on public attention. They are a series of portraits of the most prominent living redmen in Canada, and both as pieces of portraiture and as the finest possible souvenirs of a race which will soon be no more than a tradition, they deserve every consideration.¹⁰⁴

Such assertions of imminent disappearance, which were in keeping with a critical response that went back as far as Paul Kane, would have formed the framework both for the production and reception of the work. Indeed, Morris might have been the logical choice for the project in the 1920s, had he not died in 1913. Morris' work, however, would have been the context in which Scott initially saw Kihn's projects. Given this experience, Scott would probably have welcomed the prospect, thinking it would lend support to his position. In the early twenties, moreover, there still seemed to be reason for confidence in the disappearance of the Indian, and the formulation of a unified Canadian identity, especially given the war, the new laws forbidding ceremonies, the rise of the Group of Seven and the efforts of several government agencies. The title and conclusions of the 1922 **Arts and Decoration** article on Kihn's work discussed

¹⁰²Jean McGill, "The Indian Portraits of Edmund Morris", *Beaver*, Summer, 1979, pp. 34 - 41.

¹⁰³Morris to Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan, cited in Michael Parke-Taylor, "Edmund Morris: the Government of Saskatchewan Portrait Commission", in Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, *Edmund Morris "Kyaiyii" 1871-1913*, 1984, p. 47. See illustration 21.

¹⁰⁴"A Painter of Indians", *Saturday Night*, April 24, 1909, p. 2.

previously, which preceded his presence in Canada and which referred explicitly to the disappearance of the Indian, would have confirmed that he was the ideal person to carry on this task.

At this early stage, Barbeau would not have sensed any conflict between his texts and Kihn's images. His main problem would have been negotiating between his and Scott's views on the status and role of Native culture, and the desires of Gibbon to flout the law and use Native ceremonies as a tourist draw in Banff.¹⁰⁵ The title of Barbeau's text, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, appears to acknowledge Gibbon's position but its content, to use an old cliché, gives the lie to its title.¹⁰⁶ The text is a hodgepodge constructed from bits and pieces, with no clear focus except to "visualize the advent of the white man into the northwest from the Indian standpoint", addressed, it would seem, to a popular audience whose vision of the Indian events would be shaped by the text.¹⁰⁷ Barbeau's attitude towards its subject was, in opposition to Gibbon's, largely retrospective and confirmed, if not surpassed, Scott's position.¹⁰⁸ In the brief introduction, phrases such as "the Indians have vanished out of sight, almost out of

¹⁰⁵Gibbon was aware that his position in support of Banff Indian Days placed him in conflict with Scott. This came to a head during the critical period of 1926 - 1927. Speaking of the 1926 ceremonies, he stated: "I am afraid that there might be some opposition from the Department of Indian Affairs if Indians were used for publicity, except the Stoneys, as these are not farmers." Gibbon to Barbeau, May 28, 1926, CMC Archives. By the following year and the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, Scott had decided to intervene directly in Indian Days as part of his program to bring such events under his control and limit their impact. See Gibbon to Barbeau, May 20, 1927, CMC Archives. Barbeau served as liaison between the two. Barbeau to Gibbon, June 10, 1927 and July 21, 1927, in which Barbeau stated, "Duncan Campbell Scott is undertaking the responsibility of securing the necessary Indians, whom I think he wishes to draw from the Blackfeet, the Bloods and the Peigans. The time at our disposal for Indian events will be limited, so I do not think we should go beyond this." What limited the Indian involvement was the attempt to transpose the ceremonies at Banff into a celebration of the country's Scottish heritage with a Highland Festival.

¹⁰⁶Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 8. The promotional material for the book claimed: "Volumes have been written on this period, but these have been all from the standpoint of the white conqueror; Mr. Barbeau has endeavoured to give us that conquest as seen through Indian eyes - and he has succeeded." The Macmillan Company to Kihn, n.d., Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁰⁸Gibbon was in fact somewhat ambivalent about the text. He wrote to Hugh Eayrs, the publisher at MacMillan Press, that "I read Barbeau's manuscript last night. It is somewhat different from what I expected, but at the same time is very original and interesting, and I think will serve the purpose." J. M. Gibbon to Eayrs, May 1, 1923, Coll. Barbeau, m. 1919-26, Gibbon Murray B. 197/19, CMC Archives.

existence”¹⁰⁹ abound. Barbeau did admit to some exceptions. He noted that “[p]icturesque stampedes take place every summer in the July celebrations at Banff, when the Stony warriors don their regalia, paint their faces, pitch their tipis [etc.] . . . These are the “Indian Days” as we now understand them, in which memory delves into ancient experiences, the experiences of the *real* Indian days that are no more.”¹¹⁰ Careful to distinguish the past “real”, which is divorced from the simulacra, in case there could be some error in apprehension by the tourist in Banff who saw these spectacles in the present tense, he stated: “The present-day Indians of the western prairies and the Rocky Mountains are no longer what they used to be. They have dwindled in numbers; their ancient customs are gone, their character is lost. They are a vanishing race.”¹¹¹ In the early 1920s, it could still be stated with confidence that neither the Native population nor its culture had any place within a modern Canadian culture and identity. Nonetheless, Barbeau noted that there could be some misapprehension in the popular mind which he must set right. “In the white man’s pageants or in silver screen views of the wild west, they may still appear to us, when garbed in buckskin and feathers, as spectacular personalities dwelling in a sphere apart from the rest of mankind; but when visited at home, on the reserves, they seldom live up to the fanciful expectations we derive from literature and pictorial art.”¹¹² He seems here to already be undermining both the vision of Indian Days and Kihn’s paintings.

Although Barbeau agreed with Scott on the disappearance of the Indian, he differed from him on one essential point. Referring to the Indians as “outsiders”, he declared: “It is clear that the Indian, with his inability to preserve his own culture or to assimilate ours, is bound to disappear as a race.”¹¹³ The text is definitive on the point that while disappearance, albeit still deferred to the future, is inevitable, if tragic; assimilation is not an option. Indeed, in a twist of logic, as “outsiders” the Native peoples of Canada are made alien rather than indigenous and have no

¹⁰⁹Barbeau, *Indian Days*, p. 3.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 5 - 6. My emphasis.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 6 - 7.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 7 - 8.

place within the country or its emerging national identity. The artist, however, was given an important role. “The only tragedies that leave any impression are those which are suitably staged by artists and poets, and even the obliteration of a score of human races arouses little attention if it remains obscure and unspectacular.”¹¹⁴ Here Barbeau proposed a new genre of Canadian art, a “tragic” mode that encompassed both the visual and the literary. Thus Scott’s poems, Barbeau’s texts, and Kihn’s paintings all played essential roles in formulating, validating, reproducing and distributing this “tragic” spectacle of racial “obliteration” as part of the story of the nation. Out of such events, nations were presumably born. Staged within these multiple venues, the narrative would become deeply embedded within the very fabric of the nation’s culture and identity. The unwary readers, with no broader experience, would easily accept this description as authoritative and use it to modify their perception of the Indian presence that they saw before them, adding a poignant and melancholy aspect to the ceremonies and privileging the position of the viewer as being among the last to witness such rare and disappearing events.

The remainder of the text offered different accounts of how various Native seers foresaw the coming of the White Man and the end of their way of life. “We have tried in the following chapters to visualize the advent of the white man into the northwest from the Indian standpoint.”¹¹⁵ This had the curious effect of not only implicating his Native subjects in, but also making them both prophetically foresee and then act out, their own inevitable, fated, and naturalized demise. The Stoney were not entirely co-operative, and Barbeau was forced to broaden his scope. The texts and tales which he assembled, in fact, came from a wide variety of sources and applied to a diverse range of peoples. The first chapter comes from the Carrier and Gitksan people of British Columbia.¹¹⁶ The Stoney only make their appearance in Chapter 4. If Gibbon had hoped for a book which would introduce his Banff audiences to this group and outline the specific aspects of their culture which would have illuminated aspects of Indian Days, he would have been disappointed, for Barbeau had another agenda in mind. In conflating the

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 207.

various groups within a homogenous framework he violated the aims of his scholarly writing, which was dedicated to defining precisely their unique characteristics. Yet for a popular audience, especially when he was emphasizing his message of disappearance, he frequently resorted to the non-differentiated concept of the essentialized “Indian” as a common race with a common history leading inexorably to a common, tragic conclusion of which they were all prophetically aware. This suppression of difference between Native peoples and their histories placed all Indians into a dualistic relationship with an equally homogeneous non-Native culture.

The second problem which directly confronted Barbeau, aside from the empirical evidence of the persistence and difference of the Native populations, was the problematic nature of Kihn’s images which tended to undercut his simple dualism through both their specificity and their ambiguity or hybridity. The answer for Barbeau lay in properly framing these representations within a critical construction that would enlist them in the services of a universalized discourse of disappearance rather than point to their potential as images of continuity, presence, and survival. Barbeau began this critical disciplining almost immediately, even before his book was published. He used the same venue as the “Immortalizing a Disappearing Race” article, i.e. **Arts and Decoration**. Barbeau’s article, “An Artist Among the Northwest Indians; Langdon Kihn Has Pictorially Recorded Some Types of a Little-Known Race”, appeared in May of 1923.¹¹⁷ The title is again misleading. The text actually had little to do with Kihn’s pictures. Here, again, his text splits in two. Barbeau began by clearly distinguishing between two of the peoples Kihn had painted: the Stoneys and the Nootka (now known as the Nuu-chah-nulth.). Although speaking in the past tense, he differentiated their respective village sites, landscape habitats, houses, hunting practices, diets, travel, rituals, and of course, physiognomies. This list of differences established the principle of unique peoples. It did not however lead to the assumption of unique histories. Indeed, he turned abruptly to a generalized account of the common history of all Native peoples after the advent of contact and the acquisition of firearms. Here he told a tale in which the various Native peoples, now seen as a homogenous mass, that is

¹¹⁷Marius Barbeau, “An Artist Among the Northwest Indians; Langdon Kihn Has Pictorially Recorded some Types of a Little-Known Race”, **Arts and Decoration**, Vol. 26 (May, 1923), pp. 20, 27 and 95.

as Indians, having gained the means of efficient destruction, turned against each other in a common act of self-annihilation. Reduced to a single collective, non-differentiated and essentialized pronoun,

they never thought of living in peace together, of offering a solid front to the real conquerors of their lands. Instead, they engaged in bloody feuds that were made more destructive through the introduction of improved weapons and facilities of transportation. They blindly used the advantages they derived from their white allies against their enemy kindred, without considering that a few years later the balance might turn against them, as it often did. As a result of these wars, native frontiers were violated, territories and hunting rounds invaded, traditional rights trampled upon, and deadly enmities engendered that could only cause the pendulum of blood revenge to swing both ways and lead to ultimate extermination.¹¹⁸

The word extermination was repeated over and over in the essay, and laid squarely at the feet of intertribal warfare. This continental “war of attrition was proceeding along its fatal course. Pestilence and small-pox, around 1840, were to do the rest, so that years before the white settlers were ready to open up the country, Indian wars and European diseases had nearly stripped it of its former occupants.”¹¹⁹ According to Barbeau’s vivid historical gloss, which he must have conceived as being part of his new Canadian genre of racial tragedy, the North American landscape was conveniently emptied of all Native peoples, which the title proclaimed to be a single race, before colonization began. The Group of Seven’s images of vacant lands were then accurate. The Canadian landscape was, it would appear, emptied, waiting to be claimed and re-territorialized. He never mentioned Native resistance to this occupation or any campaigns against the indigenous populations. To ensure the inclusion of all of the race within his construction, he extended this process across the continent. “The lot of the west coast Indians at the hands of their white conquerors seems not to have been unlike that of the plains and mountain tribes”, although he did concede that “the damaging contacts in most places were established rather late in the nineteenth century”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 95. Note the reuse of almost exactly this phrasing in his 1927 **Mail and Empire** article.

¹²⁰Ibid. Also recycled in the 1927 **Mail and Empire** article.

The text which literally framed Kihn's portraits established a context for reading them in which they became emblems of a single disappearing race, set within a simplified opposition to their collective conquerors, who were equally non-differentiated. Barbeau's constructed Indians were no longer, then, part of the narration of the nation, except insofar as their absence set the stage for its emergence. The next problem that arose here lay in reconciling this narrative of a Native extinction that had occurred at some point in the not recent past with the obvious presence of the sitters in Kihn's portraits. Barbeau accomplished this by recourse to the romantic notion of the artist as a person of superior, clairvoyant vision who could "penetrate under the surface, and give a clear, individual reading of human souls even at a time when they seem about to fade away from the material world".¹²¹ The individuality of the persons portrayed and their distinct characteristics were thus not part of their intrinsic identities. Nor did they attest to their presence. Rather the portraits represented the Euro-American artist's inspired ability to perceive and render that which was already gone, somewhat, one imagines, like looking at a pile of dead ashes and seeing the vibrant flames of a previous fire. This privileged the colonial gaze while at the same time denying that of the Native peoples.

The same problems were broached and broadened in the text of **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, where Barbeau followed up on the premises established in the **Arts and Decoration** article. Barbeau introduced Kihn's watercolour portraits to the readers of the book with yet another version of the superiority of the colonial gaze. He began with a repetition of the stock tale of superstitious Indians terrified of the power invested in examples of the Western mastery of realism. "Portraits like those of Mr. Kihn therefore might prove dreadful magic. It was only too easy for the artist, if he meant mischief, to draw a rope, an arrow, a long knife, or a tomahawk, and the evil was done. The days of another Indian were numbered."¹²² Apparently either photography had not reached the Native population in the last half century or the Indians were

¹²¹Ibid. Barbeau repeated this claim almost *verbatim* in a pair of identical articles published some years later, "The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies, A Theme for Modern Painters", **University of Toronto Quarterly**, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1931), pp. 197 - 206 and "The Canadian Northwest, Theme for Modern Painters", **American Magazine of Art**, Vol. 24 (May 1932), pp. 331 - 338.

¹²²Barbeau, **Indian Days**, p. 9.

still in a state of stupified shock at its powers. Thus Kihn's pictures could not only be made to point out Western cultural superiority, but also be made to predict, act out or be the agent for the demise of the Indian at their own hands, even if inadvertently. That it was actually the author of the book who was attempting this particular trick of using a represented image and ritualistic incantations of death in an attempt to kill off the subject was not mentioned.

Kihn's portraits, however, convey a different message than that of the texts with which Barbeau surrounded them, and did much to divert his "magic" act. In fact, the relationships between images and text are quite loose, if not in conflict. Kihn's images have a certain internal consistency which sets them apart, but above all they treat their subject in an entirely different manner than the text. Portraits of Kootenay and Cree individuals are added to those from the Stony reserve. In total, fifteen portraits are included with the text. The paintings are almost equally divided into seven women and eight men. The principle of gender equality extended to the systems of representation. Kihn eschewed popular conventions for picturing woman and particularly Native woman. He employed no suggestive glances or gestures, no décolleté, no subservient poses, in fact nothing to suggest a hierarchical arrangement between the sexes or a privileging of the male gaze. They all have similar titles. Each of the portraits bears a name, in English and, if known, the Native language, tribal affiliation, and in some instances, a social position, e.g. **George McLean, Walking-Buffalo or Tatanka-Mani, Stony Indian; Hector Crawler, Calf-child of Tatanka-Cinca, head medicine man of the Stony tribe, or Mary Isaacs Good Singer or Ksok-Kla-Klu-Uk, Kootenay Indian Woman.**¹²³ More so than in his Pueblo pictures, these identify the individuals as distinct people currently living within and taking their identity from the language and social structure of a particular group. They are not

¹²³Kihn chose and provided the titles. See Eayrs to Kihn, June 25, 1923; and Kihn to Eayrs, June 27, 1923, both Langdon Kihn Papers. Hector Crawler was an important figure for the Stoneys and Banff. Barbeau reported that not only was "his ability to cure diseases . . . nothing short of miraculous, we are told", but that he was famous internationally. Barbeau noted his resistance to assimilation and his conflicted relationship with non-Natives. "The white stranger is not a saviour, but an invader, a gaoler. He is the curse of the red man, the curse that means death and extinction." This, even though he also admits that many whites were coming to him for a life giving cure. *Ibid.*, pp. 10 - 11. In fact, contrary to the alienated and hostile image created by Barbeau, Crawler worked extensively with non-Native administrations and was instrumental in the establishment of Banff National Park. See illustration 25.

synecdoches for the race as a whole, nor traces perceived after its “extermination”.¹²⁴ On the contrary, both individual and tribal differences are pointed out as being very much of the present.

Yet Kihn’s pictures are not without equivocation and ambiguity.¹²⁵ In contrast to the careful divisions set up by the titles, they are again all rendered in a similar style, within a limited and repeated set of conventions. Like his earlier work, each individual is centrally placed, either frontal, three-quarters, or profile, and shown from the chest up. The heads are carefully drawn in three dimensions, showing a detailed recording of the distinct features of the sitter, who generally, but not necessarily, wears a traditional costume. Some wear contemporary western dress. This posed the possibility that the individuals portrayed could move between and negotiate their positions within each culture. It also avoided the romantic representation of what has become known as the “ethnographic present”. The costumes, including robes, shawls, shirts, hats and headdresses are, in contrast to the sitters, generally treated in a flat decorative manner, as graphic patterns without modelling or detail. Those portrayed are not placed in a picturesque landscape, or a setting of any type, but sit before a blank, flat background which tends to remove

¹²⁴This quality was noted at the time in a published assessment of Kihn’s work by Helen Comstock. “[I]t might be said that most artists have seen the Indians as a race, collectively, while Mr. Kihn sees them as individuals with all their differences of feature and character.” “Langdon Kihn, Indian Painter”, *International Studio*, October 1925, pp. 50 - 55. Jackson Rushing has commented on this construction of the “Indian” as a singular concept. “The ‘American Indian’ never existed, and there was no ‘Native American culture’ in a homogeneous sense, but rather, there were many indigenous cultures . . . with marked differences Thus, ‘The Indian’ was an abstraction of Euro-American creation, one based loosely on facts but mostly on preexisting ideas, themes, and motifs in Western culture. . . . By ignoring the specificity of culture(s), Euro-Americans had in ‘The Indian’ an actor without subjectivity, whose perceived identity was manufactured by the visual and verbal discourses of explorers, priests, politicians, soldiers, and, not least of all, social scientists and artists. The figurative Indian may be likened to a signifier without a signified, so that each generation of Euro-Americans could (and did) determine according to its particular needs, the meaning of the sign. Another analogy for the conceptualization and categorization of diverse native peoples is that of a malleable substance that could be shaped to any form/image and filled with any content desired by the politically dominant culture.” Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, p. 1. Rushing continues: “Euro-Americans were forever prevented from seeing the first Americans as real people. Calculated or not, this was the specific function of the Indian as idea or concept, as opposed to Indian as human, existing in a different but valid and historically produced culture.” *Ibid.*, p. 3. The emphasis on individuality within Kihn’s paintings tended to undermine this construction.

¹²⁵See illustrations 24, 25, 26 and 27.

them from any specific geographical or cultural context.¹²⁶ Conversely, as much as the white paper grounds decontextualize and exoticise the sitters, the flatness of both it and the costumes and accessories is a trope associated with modernism. It could thus be inferred that the new context was precisely that: the sitters are placed in and inhabit the generalized realm of the modern and contemporary, and negotiate their presence and specific identities within that space. Such ambiguous possibilities which oscillated between the general and the specific, and spoke of continuity and presence, were not however, noted by Barbeau. Indeed, as has been shown, it was precisely these qualities that had to be discounted through rigorous textual disciplining.

One additional picture done by Kihn was omitted from Barbeau's book, but was used later when he recycled the illustrations in **Indian Days on the Western Prairies**.¹²⁷ This was a landscape, titled **Indian Days at Banff Alberta**.¹²⁸ It merits discussion as something changed in Kihn's work when he turned from his portraits to approach this type of subject. The three part spatial divisions still occur, but in a different configuration. The elaborate composition, which places the viewer in a high vantage point in front of the scene, includes a group of tepees and Natives in the Banff valley, illustrating the grounds near the town site where Indian Days occurred. A large congregation of some fifty Native people stand inactively in the foreground and recede in a curve to the left margin. Unlike his portraits, none bear distinct features, although they are distinguished as young and old, male and female. Those whose faces are shown are little more than coarse caricatures. Most, however, turn away from the viewer. Many are wearing striped blankets as robes which tends to generalize their bodies. Several of the males sport feathered headdresses. The total population is, in fact, shown as a collective and somewhat

¹²⁶See Deborah Root, **Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference**, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1966. After viewing the proofs, Kihn had problems with the printing of the illustrations and disagreed with the use of the "glaring" white backgrounds, even though it was "true that the originals are white" and requested something less stark. The printing company was unable to accommodate him on the grounds that the alteration would add to the production costs. See Kihn to Eayrs, March 21, 1923 and Eayrs to Kihn, March 27, 1922, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹²⁷Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days on the Western Prairies**, Bulletin No. 163, Anthropological Series No. 46, Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, p. 5. See illustration 28.

¹²⁸See illustration 28.

undifferentiated mass, signifying Indianess rather than individuality. The eight tepees, which have been flattened to a series of regularly repeated triangular shapes receding through diminished scale to the right, occupy much of the middle ground. Their graphic treatment gives them the same qualities as the clothing of his single portraits. Both are decorated with bold, simplified, abstract, geometric and organic designs in rich colours, demonstrating a continuity between the modern and indigenous designs. The landscape forms yet another distinct range and features the distinctive rounded peak of Tunnel Mountain near Banff, rather than any of the more dramatic peaks in the area. Indeed, Kihn cut off the majestic peak of Cascade Mountain behind it. Although given some detail and texture, the landscape at the top third of the work has been reduced to a minor backdrop that is more decorative than picturesque, thus skirting all the ideology that the latter implies and focussing attention on the figures and structures. This landscape composition, however, presents other problems. Unlike the documentary portraits, it is transparently a fiction and a composite image and does much to render the Indian as a modern spectacle, staged and frozen for the elevated and distanced view of the tourist. It should not be surprising that the painting was used a poster advertising Banff Indian Days and may even have been so intended from its start.¹²⁹ The ambiguities of the paintings point to yet further ambivalences in his work.

This first round of work by Kihn for the railroad and Barbeau was a success for the artist at the level of both high and commercial art. His images were published in Barbeau's book, which appeared in September 1923, for widespread popular audiences.¹³⁰ In addition, although neither the government, through either Scott or others, nor the National Gallery, nor the Art Gallery of Toronto made purchases, the CPR acquired 18 portraits from the eighty-some works.¹³¹ His

¹²⁹The image itself was employed in a publicity poster in a slightly greater version than that illustrated in Barbeau, indicating that it may have been cropped in the publication. A detail of the foreground also re-appeared in an adapted poster, probably in the early 1930s. See illustration 29.

¹³⁰Eayrs to Kihn, September 21, 1923, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹³¹Kihn to Eayrs, September 26, 1923. It appears that the incentive to purchase some of Kihn's works for the National Gallery and the Art Gallery of Toronto lay with Sir Edmund Walker, who died while negotiations were underway. Eayrs to Kihn, April 4, 1924. For final confirmation that the National Gallery had refused purchase, see Eayrs to A. C. Kihn, July 25, 1924. A. C. Kihn was Langdon's father and was conducting his business while the latter was in the field. He referred to the National Gallery as "a bunch of pikers". A. C. Kihn to Kihn, July 28, 1924,

work was extremely versatile and was shown in art galleries, used as illustrations in popular publications (e.g. Barbeau's) and played a role in advertisements for the railway. They were displayed at the Arts and Letters Club in 1924 and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, both strongholds of the Group of Seven.¹³² Kihn also gave April 4 to 18, 1925 as the dates of an exhibition at the Arts Club in Montreal. He had previously shown his work at the Banff Springs Hotel, Chateau Lake Louise, Lake Windermere Camp, Ainslie Galleries, New York City, Thompson Memorial Fort Museum, Salons of America at the American Art Galleries, and Moyer Art Galleries, Hartford, Connecticut. As the railway had hoped, they received wide international exposure, enjoyed multiple audiences and found numerous purchasers, although the collection sold to the CPR ended up in an out of the way location: the new David Thompson Memorial Fort Museum in Windermere, B.C.¹³³ They were eventually deposited at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

Barbeau's text, it should be noted, met with some difficulty. A chapter devoted to the Kootenays had to be deleted, and was in fact censored, because of its potential for placing missionary activity in one region in a bad light.¹³⁴ Barbeau rapidly learned that one did not cross government or corporate policies in publications dependent on them for funds.

It appears in the end that Barbeau and Gibbon found they did not see eye to eye on the

all Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹³²Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 178, reports: "At the instigation of the book's publisher, Hugh Eayrs of the Macmillan Company of Canada, and through Lismer, the drawings were shown at the Arts and Letters Club in March 1924 and subsequently at the Art Gallery of Toronto." Kihn lists the dates for the two shows as February 1 to March 15 and April 1 to 30, 1924, respectively. "Exhibition of Pictures by W. Langdon Kihn", Langdon Kihn Papers. See also Eayrs to Kihn, September 21, 1923, Langdon Kihn Papers. Eayrs, however, says on March 1 that "We have had the pictures up at the Arts & Letters Club for nearly two weeks now." Eayrs to Kihn, March 1, 1924. Langdon Kihn Papers. Eayrs also mentions the probability of a exhibition at the National Gallery, but this did not come to pass. See "Dad" to Kihn, July 1, 1924, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹³³"Exhibition of Pictures by W Langdon Kihn", Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹³⁴J.M. Gibbon to Eayrs, May 1, 1923, "The religious criticism is rather questionable in a publication intended to have a popular appeal, and I should suggest omitting chapter 5 on that account. The chapter would give great offense to the Missions in the Kootenays, which as matter of fact have been doing excellent work." Coll. Barbeau, M., 1919-26, Gibbon, Murray, B - 197/19. CMC archives. By May 8, the book had, according to Gibbon, "a satisfactory ending" and he forwarded the \$400 payment. Gibbon to Barbeau, May 8, 1923, CMC Archives.

representation of the Indian and its role in the tourist trade or in Canadian culture. Although he would continue to work with Gibbon in Quebec on projects concerning the recognition of the continued vitality of French-Canadian culture, in Western Canada, and in the matter of Indians, Barbeau almost immediately switched railroads. He went over to the competition and began a correspondence with Gibbon's counterpart, C. K. Howard, the General Tourist Agent for the Canadian National Railway (CNR). Howard was not encumbered with Gibbon's pluralistic ideas of a Canadian mosaic. This relationship was also to prove extremely fruitful and harmonious. It lasted for the duration of the decade.

Identity and Ambiguity in Representations of the Gitksan

In the following years, Kihn and Barbeau, who by this time had apparently formed a close bond, left the CPR and the Eastern side of the Rockies in a move which would challenge Gibbon's Banff Indian Days as a tourist draw in Western Canada. Although Kihn was not in Canada in 1923, by 1924 they were in the field again when Barbeau resumed his study of the Gitksan and his collecting activities in the region of the Upper Skeena River of Northern British Columbia, a project which he had begun in 1914, and to which he had returned in 1923. This took them into the territory of the CNR.

The Upper Skeena River Valley and the Gitksan people who lived there became the focus of a complex array of interrelated government programs of which the railway was only one aspect. Barbeau's own work there led in 1929 to the publication of his scholarly study and inventory of the Gitksan poles, aimed at a specialized audience.¹³⁵ It corresponded to an undertaking taken up jointly by the National Museum, the CNR and the Department of Indian Affairs to restore the poles among the Gitksan villages, which were seen as both a valuable artistic heritage and a tourist attraction. The trip initiated a project Barbeau would subsequently develop to make the Gitksan villages and the Skeena Valley a site for Canadian artists painting a purely Canadian

¹³⁵Marius Barbeau, **Totem Poles of the Gitksan, Upper Skeena River, British Columbia**, Bulletin No. 61, Anthropological Series No.12. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1929.

subject matter. In addition, Barbeau produced another book pitched at a popular audience. **The Downfall of Temlaham**, which appeared in 1928, was loosely based on a selection of Gitksan stories and histories that he had collected in the field, again on the mythic/historic contact with non-Natives, but much reinterpreted.¹³⁶ Kihn was contracted to provide the design and the illustrations for the publication in what appeared at first to be a second happy collaboration among artist, author and railroad.¹³⁷ This is not how it would end.

Barbeau was aware of the value of his work, that of the Museum, and of artists such as Kihn, as beneficial advertising for the railways in the Skeena region. He frequently outlined the overlap between his ethnographic interests and those of the tourist industry, and the mutual benefit which might result from their collaboration. In Ottawa in the winter of 1925, it is reported that he declared that “much more use might be made from a tourist point of view of totem pole villages in British Columbia, as they proved a great attraction to those who knew of them. Already some of the Western Canadian cities [particularly the tourist town of Banff already mentioned] were adopting Indian Days as a means of advertisement.”¹³⁸ Totems, tepees and Natives in costumes would be the emblems of this tourist attraction. Totems, especially those among the Gitksan villages which flanked the railway in the Skeena Valley, would now, however, be uppermost in his mind. Individuals in regalia would fall away almost completely. Speaking on the subject of totem poles at the National Museum, Barbeau emphasized their importance to the railroad. “He considered them to be an economic asset to the country, in that they attract foreign tourists to patronize the railway.”¹³⁹ By the mid-twenties Barbeau saw the National Museum and the

¹³⁶Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1928. Hereafter, **Temlaham**.

¹³⁷The first mention of the project occurs in Barbeau to Kihn, June 27, 1923. See also Barbeau to Kihn, March 5, 1924, in which he invited Kihn and his wife to the Skeena the following summer, at the CNR's expense, to work on the illustrations for the book, which had taken a firm shape and had acquired a deadline of April 1925. This was also the first mention that Barbeau intended to “camp out with cook and interpreter at Kitwinkool for about a month.” For further details of the plan as it progressed, see Barbeau to Kihn, April 23, 1924. See Kihn to Barbeau, May 2, 1924 for confirmation. All Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹³⁸**Omineca Herald**, February 6, 1925, p. 1.

¹³⁹**Omineca Herald**, March 19, 1926, p. 2.

national railways as working jointly in an area of common interest, that is with the Indian population, who were in turn viewed as an exploitable resource and as subject matter for Canadian art.¹⁴⁰

By March 1924, working both through Barbeau and the railroad, Kihn was making arrangements to travel to the Skeena region.¹⁴¹ He negotiated through the National Museum with Howard to cover transportation and other living expenses for himself and his wife, and also requested some guarantee for the sale at the end of the enterprise “of the paintings and drawings I made in connection with your [sic] publication **The Downfall of Temlaham**”.¹⁴² Neither transportation from New York to Montreal, nor living expenses, nor the guarantee, nor, for that matter even access to the parlour car en route were forthcoming. Kihn was obliged to lay out a substantial amount of his own money for the trip with no certainty of a return.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, the opportunity was too good to pass up. Arriving in Terrace in June 1924, Kihn was obliged to mark time while he waited for Barbeau to proceed to the Gitksan villages.¹⁴⁴ Once there, he did portraits of the indigenous Gitksan people as he had in Alberta, albeit with some refinements. His output was substantial. “During his six months stay among the Gitksan tribes of the Skeena, he was associated with Mr. Barbeau in a thorough scrutiny of past Indian life, and produced an imposing collection of over sixty Indian portraits with carved headdresses and traditional costumes, and totem pole canvasses.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰Concomitantly, the railroad saw the value of Barbeau and Kihn to their advertising program. On issuing passes for Kihn and Barbeau, and their families, Howard clarified the relationship, “You will of course understand, that this transportation is issued in return for publicity that we shall receive, as per our conversation. . . .” Howard to Barbeau, coll. Marius Barbeau, 1924-27 - 1929-30, 1932, 1939. C.K. Howard, CMC Archives.

¹⁴¹Kihn to Edward Sapir, March 12, 1924, CMC Archives.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³See Barbeau to Kihn, April 23, 1924. See also Barbeau to Kihn, May 27, 1924, both Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁴⁴Helen Kihn to “Mother and Daddy Kihn”, June 26, 1924. She notes that “Barbeau’s temperment” was at the root of the delay. Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁴⁵[Marius Barbeau], “Public Spirit in Canada”, Langdon Kihn folder (1922-1953), Box B208 f. 42, CMC Archives. Barbeau’s use of “past” here is characteristic. Barbeau returned to Toronto in August for three weeks to attend British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting. Nowry, p. 118

It may be assumed that such an achievement depended on continued co-operation from his subjects. This may have had something to do with his attitude towards his subjects and his representations of them. As with his images of the Stoney, his paintings were extremely, if not overly, sympathetic to his sitters. The status of the portraits of the Gitksan *qua* portraits, accompanied by names, and careful depictions of traditional regalia, confirmed his subjects as individuals living, despite Barbeau's view, in the present. This is confirmed by the wealth of other ethnographic details which entered his pictures and began to modify his initial compositional configurations. The details of the costumes including traditional frontlets, robes and hats, to which he gave great attention, proclaim each sitter's status within a particular group occupying a particular place, and that they are entitled to display inherited crests and are still in possession of their culture. This is reconfirmed through the titles, which give, in some instances, their social position. In several instances, the positions these confirmed were emphasized by the regality of the sitter. Especially in his larger works, Kihn altered the placement of the sitter from his earlier formats. Now employing much more of the body, they were so placed, at times, so as to look down on the viewer.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the faces became more expressive than the blank masks of his earlier works. The identity of the sitters is, however, not without ambivalence. Neither Kihn nor Barbeau was entirely scrupulous in ensuring that the objects represented with certain people were in fact the crests of those individuals. These were, in a small number of cases, confused.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶See illustrations 31 and 32.

¹⁴⁷Dyck, p. 105, note 137 cites three instances in Kihn's Skeena works in which objects or names not belonging to the proper individuals were illustrated with them. In one of these, however, the only "error" seems to be that the frontlet worn by Tom Campbell is identified simply as an "old Tsimshian carving". This may require further study in that Campbell was one of the key figures in the resistance of the Gitksan to non-Native interference in their affairs and was also a carver of poles. It is highly unlikely that he would have "posed" a frontlet to which he did not have hereditary rights. Such an act would have caused grave offense, discredited his position within his own community, undermined his own objectives and violated the principles for which he stood, and for which the Indian Agents branded him as a trouble-maker and subversive. Although I have not seen the actual work, archival photographs of it show enough discrepancies between the frontlet and the head of the sitter to indicate that it may have been added to the portrait at a later date. It is not known if photographs of the work were among those circulated by the Museum within the Gitksan community. Barbeau to Kihn, June 28, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers.

Despite these errors, it can still be postulated that Kihn attempted to find conventions through which the “otherness” of the Gitksan could be preserved and represented positively, and primarily accurately. This now extended beyond their costumes and names and invaded the formerly blank backgrounds. Contra his careful detail and full volumetric rendering of the sitter, he still frequently resisted the use of an accompanying deep space. Instead of the blank white grounds of his Pueblo, Blackfeet and Stoney pictures, he, at times, flattened his background to a decorative field, sometimes using design motifs borrowed from the people he depicted.¹⁴⁸ One work for example, is called **Hanamuk or Sunbeams (Fanny Johnson), the cause of the Skeena River “Rebellions”, forty years ago. Her crests - the Stars, the Moon and the Rainbow**. The crest designs, in this case, are used by the artist to construct the flattened background motifs. In **Tseewa or Thick Thighs**, he carefully adapted the formline design from a screen that had been collected by Barbeau. While such usages might be seen as appropriation, which in fact it was, it was also affirmation and recognition of difference mediated through a modern sensibility. Indeed, the crest images are still in proper relationship to their owners, that is they are displayed with them. This is much different from the non-Native production of decorated plates for sale to tourists as was promoted at the time. Kihn’s works could, then, be interpreted as testimony to the continuity of the culture, its survival and its vital influence on modern conventions. One could say that they attempted to establish a link between traditional Gitksan culture and the modern and allowed for the possibility of the former finding a valid, vital and contributing place within the context and history of the latter.

As stated earlier, this approach to his subjects was in keeping with developments in American policy, especially in the Southwest, where he had worked and his ideas had initially been formed. Indeed, a new discursive framework for viewing Native culture was emerging there. But there were significant differences which separated the two national programs. The Santa Fe project was based on both the growing, if contested, recognition of the continuity of Native culture into the present and its integration into the fabric of a larger American culture, each of which was

¹⁴⁸See illustrations 59, 33 and 34. “Tseewa or Thick Thighs” is illustrated in W. Langdon Kihn, “The Gitksan on the Skeena”, **Scribner’s Magazine**, Vol. 79, No.13 (1927), p. 175.

supported by a group of powerful and influential individuals. In Canada, on the other hand, nothing short of the obliteration of Native culture and with it all traces of Native identity were the current goals of the federal government. Although, as has been seen, there were many non-Natives who sided with the indigenous populations on many issues, there was an almost complete absence of such powerful patrons with access to influential politicians as occurred in the American Southwest. Thus while any of the individuals Kihn portrayed appeared ready and able to take an active role in any performances similar to Banff Indian Days or those organized in New York City, this was not to happen. Given Scott's and Barbeau's views, and no one with sufficient power and a vested interest in the economic welfare of the province, no such activity could occur, no matter how much it would have enhanced the railroad's potential revenues.

As in Banff and on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Kihn did not restrict his output to portraits. He also did a series of landscapes with poles. One of these, **Gitwinkool Totem Poles**, is an oil in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.¹⁴⁹ The village had been presented by Barbeau to Kihn as a special attraction. In his unpublished memoirs, the artist reported on their camping excursion to this more remote village, which had a reputation for not welcoming non-Native intrusions and for maintaining claims to its traditional territories.¹⁵⁰ The two undertook negotiations to enter the region and arrived in September with the intention of a prolonged stay of several weeks during which Barbeau was intent on photographing the poles and collecting other material. Almost immediately they were told by the local people to cease their activities. They were, however, able to continue to draw and photograph "surreptitiously". "Often Beynon would stand lookout and warn us if anyone approached for if we were caught it would jeopardize our whole expedition and besides the Ind. [sic] might demand we destroy what he had already done."¹⁵¹ A series of meetings ensued in which both artist and ethnographer were asked to

¹⁴⁹See illustration 57.

¹⁵⁰For an expression of his clear understanding of the difficulties involved see Kihn to "Folks", August 26, 1924, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁵¹Langdon Kihn, "Memoirs", p. 29. In another typescript focussing on these events, of which several versions exist, some in fragmentary form, he added, "[b]ecause of the serious turn the council had taken the day before, we felt that the Indians might resent our stealing, or our assuming this right, so we did it in secrecy. Our intelligent interpreter stood guard on the bench above the tents to warn us of any approach. We worked fast and

explain their projects. The major problem seemed to be that the Kitwancool people would receive no benefit from this activity, but that the artist and ethnographer stood to profit handsomely. This was, however, not the only issue of concern.

They would gain nothing in the assistance of our obtaining such records. Our many reiterated statements as to the altruistic purposes and the effect of greater better understanding of them by good people and the big men in the east thru our propaganda work had but little affect. We had told them that recording them in writing and drawing painting [sic] them would create great interest among the people who were in control of their country and because these people would be able to see them in their true light and learn of their conditions ["traditions" in an earlier version of the manuscript], they would try and preserve them. They replied that they would prepare a history themselves when the need came. . . . Surveyors had already marked off their land. They felt that some fine day the time would come when they would even be compelled to defend their homes from the encroachment of land settlers. This they were prepared to do with their lives is [sic] necessary. If that time came they would then call a High Council of the tribes of the Tsimsian and the Nskai [sp?] their neighbors to the north the people of the Nass River. These brethern [sic] and freinds [sic] would witness that this was their land, the land of their fathers and the white man had no right to claim any part of it. Then would a history be prepared by them.

We were told that for more than thirty years the tribe had sent petitions regarding their land question to the government and much money had been spent.

Unable to overcome these arguments, even though Barbeau agreed "to lay their case before the proper authorities. . . so far as he was able", co-operation was not forthcoming. With no prospects that anything fruitful would develop despite some support within the village, in a state of anxiety over their deteriorating relationships with the Native population, and worried that "the existing situation might terminate in really serious consequences" it became apparent that the best course of action was to immediately return to Kitwanga.¹⁵²

Although Kihn later worked up this material for potential publication, **Gitwinkool Totem Poles**

happily for quite some time till suddenly a figure appeared on the crest of the slope. Mr Barbeau threw his camera in the brush and I ran into the tent and hid the sketch book in the maize [sic] of blankets. How like children we were. I felt quite like a thief." Langdon Kihn, "The Little Lhasa of America - The Forbidden Village", p. 4. Both Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 32.

records none of these problems.¹⁵³ It appears, like the earlier Banff landscape, to be a fantasy rather than a documentary image “done from life”. The painting shows a host of richly carved poles, all (except one which tilts slightly) standing rigidly upright. In addition, Kihn added brilliant reds, greens, yellows and blues to the poles which were not there in fact.¹⁵⁴ A small female figure with a baby on her back turns away from the viewer and wanders into the picture. A mountain, probably Rocher De Boule, not visible from Kitwancool to this extent, towers in the back, and despite its distance can be seen as a means of limiting and flattening the space. Seen earlier in his image at Banff of Indian Days, this trope would be repeated on several occasions. The image again is in strong contrast to the precision of his portraits and does much to render the Indian once more as spectacle and the landscape as malleable.

A second landscape with figures, titled **A Feast among the Skeena People** exhibits an even closer resemblance to his painting of Banff Indian Days.¹⁵⁵ It shows in the foreground a group of eleven people of various ages, from infants to elders dressed in an array of traditional costumes, including Chilkat and button blankets. They also wear masks and frontlets and are placed before a large old style dwelling. Between the figures and the house stands a large pole with a canoe attached, identifiable as a pole at the village of Kispiox. A killer whale figure at left also seems to come from Kispiox, but the house does not correspond to contemporary photographs of the buildings in the village, and may be a composite from the deserted Coast Tsimshian village of Kitselas in which Barbeau had a great interest. Again, a large mountain rises up and flattens the background space. It would appear that once again the figures, landscape and setting are largely a fantasy created more to render the Indian as a spectacular attraction to tourists than to document a specific incident or place.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence that the painting may have recorded part of a memory of a

¹⁵³Barbeau, conversely, never seems to have mentioned the experience, except elliptically.

¹⁵⁴This addition of colours may have been done under the influence of the totem pole restoration project which was going on concurrently and will be investigated in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁵See illustration 56.

specific event. In an article published in early 1926 in **Scribner's Magazine**, Kihn gave an account of his experiences in the Native villages in the Upper Skeena region.¹⁵⁶ This article is of some importance both as a record of the continuity of traditional cultural activity among the Gitksan in the mid-1920s and as a document of the discursive tensions which existed at the time. Kihn's text opens as a conventional travelogue in the picturesque tradition, describing the wonders of the landscape as a "paradise" and the attractions of the people and their art. After the preamble, however, it seems to be torn in two over the state of the Native culture which he was witnessing and recording. On the one hand, he recapitulated Barbeau's rhetoric on the state of the Indian as a generalized, non-differentiated race. Discussing the deleterious effects of contact, Kihn stated: "The Indians deteriorated into a race without any conscious social power. Their culture is gradually disappearing. Many of their old villages with their picturesque houses and totem-poles have been burned or abandoned." While this may have been true for other Northwest Coast groups with whom he did not have contact, it was not so with the Gitksan. Thus, when he became more specific his position changed. Disagreeing with Barbeau's assessment that all the Coastal peoples suffered the same common, tragic history as those east of the mountains, Kihn offered an alternative: "But here and there along the coast some of these tribes are still preserved. In remote localities one can see the old villages with their totem-poles still standing. And the Skeena is one of the last strongholds of this unique people."¹⁵⁷ Here he spoke from his own experience, rather than relying on a well rehearsed rhetoric about that which he had not seen. Kihn thus endowed the Gitksan with an exceptional strength rather than a common decrepitude, and gave them a separate history.

He then proceeded to supply a thorough inventory of aspects of the survival of traditional culture among the Gitksan. He adopted the present tense in speaking of the refinements of their art, and its role in their social structure, including the crest system. In this regard, the captions accompanying the five portrait illustrations are more detailed than in **Temlaham**. The captions

¹⁵⁶Langdon Kihn, "The Gitksan on the Skeena", **Scribner's Magazine**, Vol. LXXIX, No. 13 (1926), pp. 170 - 176. Kihn had written the article the previous year.

¹⁵⁷Kihn, "The Gitksan", p. 170.

for the illustrations add specifics about the relationships between the sitter and the paraphernalia in which they are attired: **“Lelt’ or Snake. A chief of the Raven phatry of Kitwanga. Head-dress-‘Mawdzeks,’ the carved image of a hawk with frogs. Cane - Images of Raven and Snake devouring a frog. Blanket - Button blanket. Represents the crest of the ‘People of the Copper Shield’”**.¹⁵⁸ This indicates that not only were the Gitksan still a “stronghold” in possession of their traditional material culture, aside from their poles, but that this material still played its traditional function in the social structure.

Most important in this regard, he reported that he had attended a week-long set of traditional ceremonies which may well have involved precisely the type of costumes and regalia seen in his painting.¹⁵⁹ Again, his position was torn and conflicted as he oscillated between received ideas and actual experience. He initially claimed: “These ceremonies are practically extinct now. The missionaries have discouraged them and the government prohibited them until, like the withered arm of a paralactic [sic], they are still a part of the body but have no function.” This allegorical image of amputation and decrepitude was, however, tempered. Here he did not have Barbeau’s hesitancy about reporting events that opposed the discourse of disappearance: “It was my extreme good fortune to be the invited spectator at one of these amazing ceremonies. The ceremony lasted about a week, and such a wealth of costumes, characters, and color I have never seen.”¹⁶⁰ The subsequent detail in which he described the proceedings, including the specifics of the costumes and dancing, is convincing and speaks to continuity even if Kihn ended his article by declaring that it had no future. As he stated, such traditional ceremonies ran contrary to the official government policies of that time which prohibited any such Native cultural activity, even

¹⁵⁸Kihn, “The Gitksan”, p. 173. See illustration 32.

¹⁵⁹See illustration 56.

¹⁶⁰Kihn, “The Gitksan”, p. 176. In his letters home, he was even more specific. “[T]his week we came to Hazelton to see the potlatch ceremony of the Carrier Indians. . . . The potlatch lasts a week and is nearly over. The Babines, the Gitksan, the Carriers and others - a whole slew of them from hundreds of miles around are in - and a wonderful sight it is. Have been going out to their Indian village (4 miles from here) every day and making portraits of the old chiefs with masks and ceremonial costumes that belong to the tribes north of here and that I won’t be able to see perhaps ever again because after the potlatch is over they all go back north.” Kihn to “Folks”, July 3, 1924, Langdon Kihn Papers.

though they could have been used to advantage as a summer time tourist draw.¹⁶¹ Certainly no such reports of continued ceremonial activity could be found in the Canadian literature of the time, either popularly or scholarly.¹⁶² Aside from Kihn's brief mention, such ceremonies went, for the most part, unrecorded in the country's history and its retellings. Only recently has this begun to change. Kihn's works then, in both his detailed portraits and his imaginary landscapes, serve as valuable documents in this crucial period in Gitksan history.

While the history of the potlatch ban and Gitksan resistance to it will be covered later, suffice it to say here that the Gitksan were among several groups who had preserved much of their traditional culture, and actively resisted and protested the legislation as an unwarranted and irrational interference into their traditional cultural prerogatives. What is interesting is that while Barbeau was in the field at precisely this time, there is no record in his ethnographic work of the continuity of these important ceremonies. Although he recorded ceremonial activity in his 1920/21 field trip, there was no followup nor did he publish his findings.¹⁶³ After the intensification of the ban on the potlatch in 1920, he must have chosen either to have judiciously turned a blind eye to them or not been present. A gap then opens up between Barbeau's account, or rather his absence of it, and Kihn's images in which the discursive framework within which the former had attempted to contain the image of the Indian threatened to disintegrate. Kihn's paintings and text can be cautiously viewed as a document of these activities. They serve as an index of Gitksan resistance to, if not defiance of, Scott's policies, and testimony to continuity within Gitksan culture into the present. Indeed, the existence of a full-scale ceremony, lasting days, occurring only shortly after the crackdown at the Cranmer potlatch among the Kwakwaka'

¹⁶¹See Chapter Four for a more complete discussion of this point.

¹⁶²There is evidence that the press was carefully scrutinized concerning any comments about the Gitksan. Self-policing of statements seems to have been expected. "If you give anything to newspaper people about our Skeena River friends, remember we must be very careful because they read those newspaper articles, and they go up in the air very easily. They were wild about something that was published about your work last summer." Harlan Smith to Kihn, February 5, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers. Smith's inability to fully articulate the problem left it undefined. It is unclear whether he is referring to Barbeau, Kihn, or any other writer, or what the Native response was. His excess of tact indicates the degree to which comments were expected to be circumspect.

¹⁶³See John Cove, *A Detailed Inventory of the Barbeau Northwest Coast Files*, Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1985, p. 59.

wakh on Village Island, must have caused grave concerns. Kihn's text, which appeared in 1926, and corresponded to the period of greatest anxiety for both Scott and Barbeau, would not have helped the situation. In the summer of 1924, however, his role was not yet seen as a problem.

Kihn remained in the Skeena region after Barbeau had left. In December, he went, at Barbeau's invitation, to Ottawa, arriving December 23.¹⁶⁴ At this time, his work was still seen as having great potential. Having been given his own office within the Museum, he stayed for several months, meeting officials and dignitaries, finishing his work and arranging for exhibitions and possible sales.¹⁶⁵

Kihn's Skeena oeuvre was substantial. He stated that he had produced forty-five portraits and several canvasses of various sizes featuring totem poles.¹⁶⁶ They initially met with some success, although at first more limited than that of his initial Canadian excursion. In January he was included in the annual exhibition of Canadian art at the National Gallery and the **Temlaham** project continued apace, as it would for the following year.¹⁶⁷ By March he was strapped for cash, but was able to secure a commission from Murray Gibbon for a poster for \$600, although this would not have been based on his Skeena excursion.¹⁶⁸ It was from the latter that the two works shown at Wembley were selected.¹⁶⁹ Several were also featured in March at the Museum.¹⁷⁰ This was followed by a larger exhibition at the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa and

¹⁶⁴Kihn to "Dad", December 26, 1924.

¹⁶⁵Barbeau promised a room in the museum in which to work. Kihn to "Folks", November 12, 1924. Wembley was also mooted at this point. See "Dad" to Kihn, December 3, 1924, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Barbeau to Kihn, February 21, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁶⁸Kihn to Dad and Mother, March 2, [1925], Langdon Kihn Papers.. (Although this letter is dated 1924 the references within it indicate that it was actually written in 1925.) This may have been the poster for Banff Indian Days.

¹⁶⁹It is still unclear who arranged for his inclusion within the exhibition. See Kihn to Dad, January 10, 1925, "Campbell, publicity manager of Nat'l Parks suggest a show at Wembley Fair, England", Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁷⁰Kihn to "Dad and Mother", March 2, [1925], Langdon Kihn Papers.

in April at the Art Club in Montreal.¹⁷¹ As stated at the beginning of the chapter, there was at the time also the prospect of a large exhibition in Paris, although this was not realized until 1930. His broad exposure was, however, countered by the fact that this time there were no corresponding exhibitions in Toronto. One can only speculate that Kihn's growing successes may not have sat well with the Group of Seven. Indeed, without access to Toronto, the exhibition record of the Skeena works was shorter than his previous Canadian production. Nor do any plans ever seem to have been formulated to show them in British Columbia.

Despite certain limitations on their exposure in Canada, by 1925 Kihn's paintings were generating precisely the type of publicity that the railways wanted on the international stage. In fact, they were probably exceeding all expectations. Barbeau had initiated the process by publishing his article on Kihn's work in **Arts and Decoration**, but the ethnologist was not alone. The artist was, unlike any of his counterparts at Wembley, singled out for individual recognition in a lengthy article devoted solely to his Canadian work which appeared in **Studio**.¹⁷² The author, Leonard Richmond, was an English artist/critic who specialized in pastel landscapes and wrote frequently for the journal. He had toured western Canada, possibly in connection with the CPR, in the spring of 1925, and met Kihn at the time.¹⁷³ His article contained seven small and four full-page illustrations, including one in colour. This was the type of international recognition of which most individual Canadian artists, including all of the members of the Group of Seven, could only dream. Still, even if the article did place Kihn in a better light than his

¹⁷¹"Exhibition of Pictures by W. Langdon Kihn". See also Kihn to "Dad and Mother", March 2, [1925]. Both Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁷²Leonard Richmond, "Indian Portraits of W. Langdon Kihn", **Studio**, Vol. 90 (1925), pp. 339 - 346. "I put the suggestion of another Canadian Wembley article before the editor, but I am afraid it is not among his ideas for this year, and must therefore be abandoned. I also showed him the photographs of the work by Kihn, which you were kind enough to bring in, and, as I anticipated, he was very interested in these, and would like to do an article on the artist as soon as space permits." Herbert B. Grimsditch to Leonard Richmond, June 9, 1925. "We hope to give considerable prominence to the article when the time comes, for we have a very high opinion of your work." Grimsditch to Kihn, July 3, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁷³"Mr. Leonard Richmond has been in town today, on his return from the West, and spoke of you in very appreciative terms. He tells me he did pretty well on his trip and sold fourteen of his European pictures. He worked pretty hard out West and did some fine pastels of the Rockies, of which we have secured three." Gibbon to Kihn, April 28, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers. Richmond also gave a series of lectures at the National Gallery. **National Gallery of Canada, Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 1924 - 1925**, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1925, p. 17.

Canadian co-exhibitors, the text was in keeping with Canadian policy. It reiterated the position that his Native subjects were on the edge of extinction. Richmond may well have obtained such views from his contact with the Canadian administration.

When other writers, working without such contact, approached Kihn's work, different interpretations arose. An article by Helen Comstock, cited earlier, appeared in October in **International Studio**.¹⁷⁴ It was Comstock who asserted that Kihn portrayed his figures as individuals rather than a race.¹⁷⁵ Comstock also commented extensively on the state of Gitksan culture:

Like all Indian tribes those of the Tsimsians and the Carriers are losing their native culture as a result of their contact with the white man. The members of the younger generation have little interest in the arts of their forefathers. They are not interested in the carving of totem poles, nor the elaborate headdresses of the chiefs, nor are so many blankets woven, now that they can get them at the Hudson Bay store, although one of their own weaving, a chilkat blanket, is worn by Semedeek, Eagle head chief of the Kitwanga tribe, in one of Kihn's portraits. There are only a few carvers, says Mr. Kihn, who are capable of doing the fine work on headdresses.¹⁷⁶

This is precisely the rhetorical phrasing that so often appeared in Barbeau's assessments and may well be attributed to his influence, coming through Kihn. Conversely, there is room for ambiguity within Comstock's text which Barbeau would not have allowed into his own utterings. Comstock implied that blankets and carved frontlets were still present, still made, still worn, just not in the same quantity. Any impression of cultural disruption that might have been conveyed was further modified when she went on to outline the continuing role such objects played in confirming the elaborate crest and social structures, all in the present tense. Statements such as "[e]ach family has a crest of its own, for instance there is the Wolf family, the Raven, the Grizzly, the Eagle, the Fireweed, and there is a chief for each family within the village and these families are connected with families in other villages who, of course also use the same crest", did little to reinforce the notion that Gitksan culture had disappeared. Comstock even gave an

¹⁷⁴Helen Comstock, pp. 50 - 55.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 53 - 54.

account of the potlatch as a ceremony with many positive aspects. She never once mentioned it as an evil that had to be eradicated or was under pressure.¹⁷⁷ She concluded, “to Mr. Kihn these members of an alien and incomprehensible race are of exceeding interest and his pictures of them recreate them for us.”¹⁷⁸ According to Comstock, Kihn’s works served an ambassadorial role which crossed the borders between the Gitksan and the broader world, and negotiated an understanding between them. Even though Comstock’s writing contained reiterations of cultural and racial decrepitude, as well as making Native peoples the subjects of a Euro/American discourse, other sections of her text, as would Kihn’s **Scribner’s** essay, produced ambiguous meanings within this discourse which were not necessarily in keeping with Canada’s official position. Aspects of Comstock’s essay could be taken to imply continuity and vitality, a reading which the accompanying paintings would only reinforce.

Attention to Kihn’s work was not limited to North America and England. It also spilled onto the continent. In October 1925, **L’Art et les Artistes** published an article on his entire Native output. Odette Arnaud’s introduction precisely paralleled that which appeared a year and a half later in Brown’s lead up article in the same publication for the *Jeu de Paume*. The resemblance between her claims for Kihn and Brown’s claims for Canadian art is uncanny. Although the subject was different, the terminology was the same. Arnaud began by giving a brief history of American painting from the 1700s, noting its dependence on European models, especially the French influence after the Revolution. Arnaud then reported the formation of “an autochthonous American art, representative of the genre and its country and its race” in the early twentieth century. In this context, Kihn was “a young independent who does not belong to any school and who has formed himself only by the profoundest roots of his country.” Arnaud’s subsequent statements, however, differed from what Brown would write later about Tom Thomson: “Like the artists of Taos, but in a different sense, he had made the Indians of America his subject in order to perpetuate that colored life of theirs, so full of tradition.” The suggestion of the continuity of these traditions, which was a part of the program of many of the Taos artists, was

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

developed as Arnaud went on to romantically extol Kihn's subjects and to place their existence and life in the present. "He was enamoured at once with the savage charm of that Montana reserve where the Blackfeet live like men of the primitive ages. . . . The friendship of their medicine men and of their chief being once acquired, the Indians ceased to be suspicious, and willingly came to pose, at the same time recounting their legends." Of the Pueblos, Arnaud said, "Their artistic sense is of millennial growth and unchanged by time." While this confirmed continuity to this point, the critic added that their art "is irretrievably disappearing from this world". The article conflated Kihn's modern, decorative style with essentialized notions of his subject matter. "His portraits, from first to last, constitute a double document; as much by the visage, painted with startling realism as by the costume, for which the artist shows himself as arbitrary as the natives themselves, and where he renders in full the decorative and elementary side of their love of colors and of simple forms." Arnaud summarized Kihn's Gitksan experience. "Yet again in company with the ethnologist Marius Barbeau, he ventures along the shores of the Skeena River, where the Kitwinkools detain them for judgment during three days before driving them from their territory." The description which placed Barbeau before the Kitwancool tribunal and under their power, and included the expulsion of the two from a domain described as still *in their possession* must have caused considerable concern for the ethnologist, who at no point ever published an acknowledgment either of the event or the existence of the article, although it undoubtedly came to his attention. Arnaud reiterated the notion that Kihn's work was ambassadorial. "Kihn bears witness for them, with all his power, and in a manner confers immortality upon them by the unforgettable interpretation that he has given of them."¹⁷⁹ Many of Arnaud's observations prefigured Kihn's **Scribner's** statements of early 1926. Although ambiguous, Arnaud, like Comstock, suggested the possibility of the continuity of Gitksan and other Native cultures. Between the two critics and the artist, an alternative image of the condition of Native culture in Canada and its link to national identities was opening up.

This raises several questions: was this sequence of articles which occurred in fairly rapid succession after Barbeau's initial publication viewed as an embarrassing excess of critical

¹⁷⁹Odette Arnaud, "An American Painter - W. Langdon Kihn", **L'Art et les Artistes**, Paris, October 1925, translated typescript from the French by Garrett P. Serviss, Langdon Kihn Papers.

success? Did Kihn's Canadian sponsors get more than they bargained for? Could this have been taken as evidence that the representation of the Indian was slipping out of their control? Although direct information is scant, it must be assumed that Kihn's growing international recognition posed serious problems. Insofar as the Group members did not receive this type of publicity abroad, it would begin to appear to the European, English and North American audiences of these five articles that Kihn, an American, had begun to represent not only the Indian but also Canada, and that the two were closely identified.¹⁸⁰ This was precisely the opposite of the position of the government and the Group of Seven and their supporters, as has been shown by the exclusion of Natives peoples and their arts from Wembley where the Group was put on centre stage. The point here is that not only did Kihn upstage the Group, but more importantly he also brought with him the unwanted Other. While this was tolerable and even desirable so long as his paintings were taken as emblematic of Native disappearance, when other ambiguous and oppositional views began to enter the arena, problems arose. These links begin to indicate why, by the spring of 1927, it was Kihn who was excluded from the *Jeu de Paume*.

Even with his growing recognition, or perhaps because of it, both the exhibition and disposal of the Skeena works in Canada proved more problematic than those of the Stoney. At first, sales were piecemeal. Early negotiations for a purchase by the government fell through.¹⁸¹ By May 1925, seven of the pictures had been sold for a total of \$600, about the price of one modest Group of Seven canvas at the time.¹⁸² These had been picked out by Barbeau, paid for by F. N. Southam and presented to the Montreal Art Association. Although this would have come nowhere close to covering Kihn's personal expenses for the Skeena venture, which were

¹⁸⁰This is not to say that the Group were not getting something of the same international exposure. 1925 was a banner year, since it included exhibitions not only at Wembley, but also at Ghent and Los Angeles. Conversely, 1926 featured many more exhibitions of their work in Canada than the previous year, but fewer outside the country, and none off the North American continent. Hill, *The Group of Seven*, p. 339. Nor was there anything approaching the critical response that Kihn received.

¹⁸¹Kihn to "Dad", n.d.; Sapir to Kihn, September 13, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁸²F. N. Southam to F. Cleveland Morgan, May 13, 1925; F. Cleveland Morgan to Barbeau, May 16, 1925; Morgan to Kihn, May 26, 1925; Morgan to Kihn, June 11, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers. In 1921 Jackson was asking \$800 for *October Morning, Algoma* while works like Lismer's *Pine Tree and Rocks* were listed between \$500 and \$600. The latter's *Isles of Spruce, Algoma* was priced in 1922 at \$750. See Hill, pp. 314 - 317.

considerable, the possibility of further purchases was also mooted. This did not happen immediately. Almost a year went by before four more "Indian Heads" were purchased by F. N. Southam in April of 1926 for \$250. The group was presented to Walter C. Nichol, who had just retired as Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.¹⁸³

In July the situation suddenly changed. What must have been a surprising letter from Cleveland Morgan arrived in New York while Kihn was in Montana. Morgan asked for the price of "all of his Canadian Indian Pictures. This would include both West Coast and Plains."¹⁸⁴ No explanation was given as to why the totality, rather than a representative selection, was required. It was hardly a matter of conscience since it was now known that Kihn was no longer short of buyers. He had recently come to the attention of Sir Henry Wellcome, in London, England, who, possibly inspired by Kihn's Wembley showings and Richmond's **Studio** article, was also purchasing substantial quantities of Kihn's production.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Kihn felt certain that Wellcome would open a museum which would feature his work and thus expose it to diverse audiences.¹⁸⁶ Canadian rivalry with the English collector also seems unlikely. It is more probable that the collected Canadian interests represented in the purchase and its distribution wished to control the placement and viewing of all of Kihn's Canadian images.

The negotiations for the purchase were complex and drawn out. It was not until late 1926 and early 1927 that arrangements were finalized for the acquisition of twenty-four pictures, paid for

¹⁸³Morgan to Kihn, April 30, 1926. Kihn called the offer "damn tight". Kihn to Dad, May 8, 1926. See also Kihn to Morgan, June 8, 1926, confirming the sale. Southam to A.C. Kihn, re: purpose of purchase, June 16, 1926. "Dad" to Kihn, asking for selection of works, June 16, 1926. Kihn to Morgan, June 30, 1926, listing works. Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁸⁴Morgan to Kihn, August 13, 1926. His emphasis. Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁸⁵Wellcome's patronage began about 1925 and continued into the next decade. The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine possess a substantial collection of his work. See Edwards and Edwards, p. 9.

¹⁸⁶Kihn to Mills, January 8, 1917, Langdon Kihn Papers.

by Southam, through F. Cleveland Morgan, for \$3,500.¹⁸⁷ This collection of works was then broken up and sent to various galleries and museums across Canada.

Even with the stress that this delay must have caused, it can be seen that in mid-1925 Kihn was working closely with Barbeau, with whom he now shared a close working relationship and was in constant communication. Barbeau even attempted to enlist him in his project to bring artists such as Lismer and Jackson to Quebec during that summer to paint French-Canadian images in and around the Île d'Orléans.¹⁸⁸ Despite Barbeau's inducement of all manner of picturesque subjects, Kihn declined.¹⁸⁹ He was included in Wembley, out of which he had received favourable attention. He was also moving in socially and politically elevated circles. While in Ottawa, he had been introduced to all the leading figures within Canada, including the heads of the railways, their agents at the highest levels, Duncan Campbell Scott, Eric Brown, Edward Sapir, Harlan Smith, various ministers and even the Prime Minister. Such lavish attention, which must have rivalled if not exceeded that given to the Group of Seven, indicated the perceived

¹⁸⁷“Dad” to Kihn, August 18, 1926, placing a value of \$10,650 on the works. A. C. Kihn to Morgan, August 27, 1926, giving a series of prices, depending on the selection. Morgan to Barbeau, instructing him to come to Montreal, expenses paid, to discuss the affair. Barbeau to Kihn, November 22, 1926, confirming the offer, but suggesting it was all destined for the “projected Art Gallery of Vancouver.” Southam to A. C. Kihn confirming receipt of a list of 46 works, including sizes and prices. Morgan to Kihn, December 9, 1926, suggesting he come to Montreal and a concession in price. Barbeau to Kihn, December 11, 1926, outlining various configurations, which he had selected, for various prices. Morgan to Kihn, December 16, 1926, naming December 30 for a meeting in Montreal. Morgan to Kihn, December 21, 1926, confirming sale of twenty-four pictures for \$3,500, including list of pictures and the museums to which they were to be distributed. Kihn to Morgan, December 27, 1926, requesting information on the whereabouts of the pictures from Wembley. Barbeau to Morgan, December 30, 1926, indicating that only two pictures were kept by the National Gallery for Wembley, including the portrait that was not hung, and that they were in his care, with one in the Director's room, and the other on display with the travelling Wembley exhibition. Kihn to Morgan, January 4, 1927, confirming shipping of twenty-two and sale of twenty-four pictures. Morgan to Kihn, January 22, 1927, on forwarding of cheque, and the distribution of pictures to Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. All Langdon Kihn Papers. Southam's total purchase, counting the first seven, was, then, thirty-five works of which thirty-one were distributed to galleries and museums. Hill, *The Group of Seven*, pp. 289 - 290, reports that “F.N. Southam of Montreal finally purchased twenty-seven of Kihn's Skeena works, which he donated to museums in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria.”

¹⁸⁸Barbeau to Kihn, June 8, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers. By late June Barbeau was beginning to mention unnamed “difficulties” which stood in the way, although he still stressed “the great wealth of picturesque material”. Barbeau to Kihn, June 28, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁸⁹Although his reasons for turning down the offer remain unclear, Kihn, whose sole interest was Indian subjects, must have been puzzled by Barbeau's inducements. Barbeau, as will be shown more fully in the last chapter, had other agendas in mind.

importance of his production within the Canadian administration. Indeed, it is testimony to the significance with which controlling the representation or image of the Indian was held. At the same time his Stoney and Gitksan works were attracting international critical attention and purchases. In early to mid-1925, Kihn could not have felt more included in the creation and distribution of a distinctly Canadian cultural national heritage through his representations of the Native peoples of the Dominion.¹⁹⁰ By the time the sale was completed in early 1927, the situation had begun to change. By the end of 1928 he could not have felt more neglected or excluded.

The reversal began slowly but accelerated after the final Southam purchase. The ensuing shift in Kihn's position within Canada may be attributed to the fact that his pictures, however popular, accessible and adaptable to posters and advertisements, and despite their international audiences and recognition, not only threatened to overshadow the Group, but contained a problematic and ambiguous message about their subject. Furthermore, this message was being articulated both in Kihn's own writings and in those of others commenting on his work, and was reaching many audiences. This message, which his pictures and experiences engendered, emerged precisely when Scott was having to concede defeat in his policies to eradicate Native culture and identity, both on the Prairies and on the Coast, and when the Allied Tribes were pressing their land claims with the most vigour. The entire discourse of disappearance was in danger of collapse as a direct result of resistance by the very subject of that discourse. I have argued that official attention then shifted to control of the image of the Indian. Barbeau felt confident that Kihn's works could be made to fit within this program. But his images also contained a dangerous ambiguity. Kihn's portraits and landscapes could also be taken as showing the Natives as individuals in possession of their culture, their regalia, their social structure, their traditions and their land. Critical texts surrounding these works, especially those produced outside of Canada, were beginning to back up this reading. The placement of the Native peoples of Western Canada and their cultures in the present, which worked to the advantage of the tourist trade, posed serious political problems for an administration, and its personnel, that was dedicated to demonstrating the opposite and for a

¹⁹⁰Barbeau to Kihn, July 18, 1925, Langdon Kihn Papers.

nationalist artistic discourse based on their disappearance. This became doubly so insofar as Kihn's images were now reaching much broader audiences. The situation reached critical mass by 1927 when, through a complex series of events, Kihn would find himself excluded.

Barbeau and Kihn: Excluding another Outsider

Kihn never returned to these subjects after his 1924 trip. Instead, by 1925, during a summer which Barbeau spent in Quebec, the ethnologist embarked on an expanded program to create a new Canadian subject matter based on what he saw as the remnants of a near moribund Native culture set in the picturesque landscape of the Skeena Valley.¹⁹¹ At first marginalizing and then discouraging Kihn, whom he nonetheless acknowledged as an important stepping stone, he now invited other artists to accompany him into the field, approaching A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer. Harris proved intractable, and Lismer ultimately deferred, but Jackson came accompanied by his good friend from Montreal, Edwin Holgate, in the summer of 1926 while Kihn was in Montana painting for the Great Northern Railroad. The Canadian artists, members of the Group one and all, were meant to usher in a new era in the area, one more in keeping with Canadian government policies. It could be assumed that they understood the necessity of and had a personal stake in representing the Indian as having long disappeared, and thus differed from the positions espoused by those affiliated with the Eastern Association of Indian Affairs in the United States, in which Kihn was also active.¹⁹²

Kihn's subsequent absences, as well as the artists chosen to replace him, suggests that, however

¹⁹¹Kihn's "pictures in time will help materially in spreading definite impressions of our picturesque North West Coast, of the wood carvings of the northern tribes and their totem poles that still constitute one of the most striking features of our continent. This, to the great benefit of all. For our national consciousness and character can develop to the full only through better knowledge of the highly diversified parts of our vast country, of its natural resources, and its wealth both artistic and spiritual." This untapped resource lay, however, in landscapes, not portraits. He continued, "For scenic grandeur the Canadian Rockies along both Canadian railways stand unsurpassed." He goes on to extol these in poetic terms. Marius Barbeau, "Public Spirit in Canada", undated typescript, CMC archives, Folder: Kihn, W. Langdon (1922-1953), Box B208 f. 42.

¹⁹²See Chapter Five for a discussion of these artists' activities in the area and an analysis of their production and Barbeau's use of it.

accomplished and critically recognized, his work was no longer considered appropriate for the programs of the government or the railway, or museum ethnographers. This is confirmed by the subsequent course of events. In February 1926, all seemed still in place when Barbeau wrote at length to Kihn. He stated that he had received the **Scribner's** piece and gave it modest praise, acknowledged Richmond's **Studio** article, asked for a painting, and reported the inclusion of Kihn's work at the annual exhibition of Canadian art at the National Gallery.¹⁹³ Most importantly, he indicated that he was arranging for the pictures for **Temlaham** to be paid for by the CNR who, he hoped, would "furnish them for free to Macmillan, having in mind their own publicity". He went on to name several pictures of interest, added the possibility that Kihn would produce more for the book and asked for an estimate of the cost. He also mentioned a trip to the Skeena, and the possibility that Jackson and Lismer as well as "some other members of the Seven" would attend, although he knew that Kihn was committed to Montana.¹⁹⁴ By November 1926, relationships were still pleasant, at least on the surface. Barbeau extended an invitation to join him and the other artists the following summer, although he began to make it plain that Kihn would no longer play the starring role. "We are planning for an interesting Southern exploration of the Nass River. If everything goes well, Jackson, Harris, Holgate (of Montreal) may join my party. And, although this is far ahead, we would like you to join us."¹⁹⁵

Shortly thereafter, the mass purchase and distribution of Kihn's Canadian works were finalized.¹⁹⁶ It would have been a logical extension for the Canadian institutions involved to promote and capitalize on this substantial investment by showing it off that spring in Paris, where Kihn's work had already received some attention. As has been shown, they did not. In fact, precisely the reverse occurred. The full scope of the anomaly of this exclusion, however, now becomes apparent, in that it went beyond the *Jeu de Paume* to include other venues and projects.

¹⁹³At this point his nationality does not seem to have been of major importance.

¹⁹⁴Barbeau to Kihn, Feb. 21, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁹⁵Barbeau to Kihn, November 22, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁹⁶Kihn was also invited to Quebec City for the festival of folk art and craft held there. Barbeau to Holgate, February 22, 1927, Holgate, Edwin, B204/19, CMC Archives.

Kihn explained that, unlike the paintings in the Wellcome collection, those purchased in Canada were now unavailable for any Parisian exhibitions, including the proposed show at the Charpentier Galleries.

After my Canadian sale of twenty-five (25) pictures, of which I have just written you, I have made another sale of sixteen (16) Blackfeet Indians of Glacier Park to a London client of mine. . . . This client was good enough to loan the pictures he purchased, for the exhibition at the Minneapolis Museum, January 11th. He also offered to loan them for the exhibition I may have in Charpentier's galleries in Paris. The Canadian pictures have been shipped to Canada and are now being distributed to various museums, so that these are not available for exhibition purposes. This means that if I have an exhibition in Paris, it will be practically all the work of the Blackfeet Indians of Glacier Park.¹⁹⁷

The strategy of the mass collection policy now becomes clear. It was not so much to ensure the visibility of Kihn's works to the widest possible audiences through their purchase and distribution, but rather the opposite. The acquisition of Kihn's images of Western Canadian Natives showing them in possession of their cultures and identities ensured that they would not be seen in Paris either in his own private exhibitions or at the Jeu de Paume. Their subsequent history bears this out. In the following decades, Kihn's Canadian pictures remained largely unexhibited either here or anywhere else.

By June of 1927, just after the completion of the sale and following the exclusion of his pictures from the Jeu de Paume exhibition, Barbeau's relationship with the artist began to show signs of a growing ambivalence.¹⁹⁸ It was no coincidence that this shift in his attitude closely followed the denial by the Special Joint Committee of the land claims in British Columbia put forward by the Allied Tribes. It based one of its six arguments, delivered the previous April, (just before the Jeu de Paume opened) on the lack of continuity among the Native peoples of British Columbia of any such traditions.¹⁹⁹ The report stated:

¹⁹⁷Kihn to Mills, January 8, 1927, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁹⁸A. C. Kihn had already inquired into the relationship between Langdon and Barbeau in November, 1926. See the hand-written note attached to the copy of the letter from Morgan to Barbeau which A. C. Kihn forwarded to Langdon, November 17, 1926. Perhaps sensing some duplicity on the part of Barbeau and referring to the prospective purchase of paintings, he asked "Can Barbeau queer you? Or have you his goodwill?" See also "Dad" to Kihn, November 26, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

¹⁹⁹Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: the Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849 - 1989*, Vancouver: UBC Press, pp. 104 - 113, but especially p. 110.

Tradition forms so large a part of Indian mentality that if in pre-Confederation days the Indians considered they had an aboriginal title to the lands of the Province, there would have been tribal records of such being transmitted from father to son, either by word of mouth or in some other customary way. But nothing of the kind was shown to exist.”²⁰⁰

Barbeau would have been well aware that the traditional regalia displayed by many of Kihn’s Gitksan portraits featured crests handed down through generations which were directly linked to the possession of land resources.²⁰¹ Even had he been called to testify to this, however, Barbeau’s position would have been clear. He had already implied publicly on many occasions that if such claims had, at one point, existed, they no longer did since all traditional culture had disappeared. The proof of this was that the Natives were no longer in possession of such material. Kihn’s paintings and the texts that were appearing around them, however, suggested otherwise.

Barbeau now withdrew his earlier invitation and wrote: “You might naturally like to join me on the Nass River if it were feasible. But I don’t think my plan this year would suit you very well.”²⁰² Holgate had received the same news over a month previously, but was instructed to “apply early for passes” if he wished to return to the Skeena, which Barbeau hoped he would.²⁰³ Two other artists, Anne Savage and Florence Wylie, had already received their passes by this time and were encouraged and assisted in their travels.²⁰⁴ Somewhat belatedly then, Barbeau offered vague, if not confusing, alternative possibilities for Kihn to go to Prince Rupert, Port Hazelton [sic] or even Banff, and suggested he could apply for passes if he wanted. He must have known, however, that it was too late in the season to cancel other plans and arrange new ones. Barbeau also informed Gibbon of his position. “I have written to Kihn today, telling him

²⁰⁰Cited in Tennant, p. 110.

²⁰¹For a succinct discussion based on Barbeau’s research of the relationships between crests, the erection of totem poles and the possession of territories among the Tsimshian and specifically the Gitksan, see “The Crest/Territory Relationship”, in Marjorie Halpin, “A Critique of the Boasian Paradigm for Northwest Coast Art”, *Culture*, XIV, 1, 1994, pp. 10 - 13.

²⁰²Barbeau to Kihn, June 16, 1927, CMC Archives.

²⁰³Barbeau to Holgate, May 12, 1927, Holgate, Edwin file, B204/19, CMC Archives.

²⁰⁴Jackson to Barbeau, June 13, [1927], CMC Archives.

about possibilities on the Nass and the Skeena and rather discouraging his coming there this year.”²⁰⁵ He continued, “I told him that what seemed to be more interesting this year was the possibility of your getting in touch with him and possibly inducing him to come to your part of the Rockies.” This clarified the situation. Given that Barbeau was actively soliciting other artists and arranging for their transportation to the Skeena, which he did not mention to Kihn, it appears as if his moves to hand Kihn back to Gibbon were motivated by a desire to keep the artist out of British Columbia and further work in the area. Alberta, on the other hand, was not subject to Native land claims. Thus while Kihn was still welcome in Canada, his presence in British Columbia was to be resisted, as were further collaborations with the ethnologist.

Barbeau also suggested in both the letters to Kihn and to Gibbon that he could loan the artist costumes for his portraits. While it is unclear if this referred to Plains or West Coast material, his proposal, in this context, was not just a generous gesture meant to entice the artist. As has been seen with the analysis of the addition of a frontlet to the Tom Campbell portrait, and as Barbeau would have been fully aware, if regalia was displayed by anyone other than those who had the right to wear it, (i.e. to someone to whom it had been “loaned”) then it could be claimed that the culture had been so severely disrupted that the significance of the crests had been lost. Through such “loans”, Barbeau could avoid more images of the Gitksan or the Nisga’a in their traditional costumes owned by the sitters which could be followed by further articles by the artist or other writers on his work suggesting the possibility of cultural continuity and territorial possession. Thus, Kihn could be welcome, but only if the works he now produced could be overtly used to demonstrate the discontinuity of Native cultures. Kihn did not take up the offer.

Barbeau also began the delicate process of begging off using Kihn to design **Temlaham** in its totality, and started to hint that Kihn’s work would play a somewhat smaller role than originally negotiated in terms of illustrations for the text. Barbeau laid the blame for these alterations on “Mr. Charlton of the C.N.R. and Mr. Eayrs”.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Barbeau to Gibbon, June 16/1927, coll. Barbeau, M., 1919-26, Gibbon, Murray, B-197-19, CMC Archives.

²⁰⁶Barbeau to Kihn, June 16, 1927, CMC Archives.

By November 1927, that is six months after the closing of *Jeu de Paume* exhibition, but a month before the opening of the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** show, relations cooled further. Barbeau had sent thirteen paintings by Kihn to MacMillan for reproduction.²⁰⁷ These included nine portraits and three or four landscapes. He also wrote to Kihn to confirm that sixteen of his “portraits and paintings will be reproduced in colour. . . . from the sets purchased by Mr. Southam for Montreal”. In the same letter Barbeau dropped the bombshell that A. Y. Jackson “will be asked to design the whole volume and the cover”, an arrangement that, despite his use of the future tense, had been in place at least since the previous May, that is prior to his last letter to Kihn. A specialist at deferring responsibility to another authority, and at using the *fait accompli*, Barbeau again cited Eayrs and Charlton as behind this change. Although he confirmed Kihn’s inclusion in the fall exhibition in Ottawa, which he described in detail, Barbeau now listed the Canadian artists who had occupied him into the field in the Skeena Valley since Kihn’s departure, but avoided speaking of his own role in bringing them in. He also looked forward to introducing Emily Carr, whom he now mentioned to Kihn for the first time as “a recent discovery of first magnitude. . . . whose work has remained entirely unknown till this year. . . . [but who] will be ranked among that of the best Canadian painters.”²⁰⁸ In addition, Barbeau noted that the exhibition would include “two or three primitives, whose work will also

²⁰⁷These included: **The Gitksan Village of Kitwancool, Feast among the Skeena, Hanamuk (Fanny Johnson), George Campbell, Paul Haidzemerks, Totem Pole Landscape Kispayaks, Agnes McDames, Mark Wegyet, Hanawden, Willian Ayles, Glengwah, Feast among the Gitksan** (listed twice) and **Tom Campbell**. Invoice - Shipping Record, from the National Gallery of Canada to Hugh S. Eayrs, The MacMillan Company, November 10, 1927, NGC Archives. The intent or the effect of using the Campbell portrait, which by this time would be sporting the misplaced frontlet, and would have been provocative, can only be surmised as it was ultimately eliminated along with many of the other works.

²⁰⁸ The date at which Barbeau and the National Gallery became aware of Carr has been a point of scholarly contention for some time. I would suggest that Barbeau had been aware of her paintings for years. In a letter to Eric Brown, Oct 3, 1927, Barbeau/Brown correspondence, CMC, he stated: “I saw a number of her paintings at Hazelton, which she had given to someone there fifteen years ago. They are certainly from a genuine artist.” He may well have been aware of them then since his first trip to the region in 1914. Given the time he spent in the town on his several trips, especially the one over the winter of 1921/1922, he could hardly have missed them. One wonders if they were in the possession of his cousin, with whom he stayed while in the area and who became Polly Sargent’s mother-in-law. Sargent was one of the driving forces in the non-Native community behind the establishment of the ‘Ksan museum in the 1950s. They could also have been in the possession of Constance Cox, an important figure in the community and a person who served as an informant and translator. If he had seen Carr’s work at this time, then he would have been holding her work in the wings waiting for precisely the most advantageous time to reveal it. 1927 was such an opportune moment. As has been shown, Barbeau was not beyond such machinations.

be exhibited". Barbeau was also adamant that Kihn send at least a photograph of a picture to one of the Natives in the Skeena area, Joe Brown of Gitsegyukla, whose portrait he had painted.

This is quite important for the reason that he has shown himself hostile last spring to the work of totem pole preservation in his village. As you know, Mr. Smith bungled the affair with him, but we should for that reason try and be especially nice to him so that he may not prove an obstacle in future attempts to resume the work there. At least write him some plausible explanation.²⁰⁹

The necessity of resorting to a "plausible" rather than a clear explanation bespeaks of a need for subterfuge. Sensitive problems which could not be spoken of openly were beginning to emerge in the area between ethnographers, archeologists and the institutions they represented, on the one hand, and the subjects of their studies, who were beginning to demonstrate a clear resistance which threatened the progress of the various programs. Kihn was placed in the middle and threatened to come down on the wrong side.

Events again moved against Kihn in the course of arranging the final form of the publication. By January 1928, Barbeau, working now closely with Jackson, had changed his plans for the illustrations, and reduced Kihn's contribution substantially. Barbeau wrote Eayrs that sixteen new pictures would be available for the book after the closing of the **Canadian West Coast Art** exhibition.²¹⁰ Rather than supplying all of the illustrations, only four were to be by Kihn. By February other artists to be included, such as Holgate, had been informed of their good fortune²¹¹. Conversely, some, like the "primitive" artist Fredrick Alexie, who had been slated for inclusion,

²⁰⁹Barbeau to Kihn, November 4, 1927, Langdon Kihn Papers. It is uncertain why Barbeau could not himself fulfil this function since the Museum had taken a complete photographic record of Kihn's works.

²¹⁰CMB [Charles Marius Barbeau] to H.S. Eayrs, Jan 23/1928, NGC archives, **West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, Exhibition 1927-28 file. What is unsaid here is that Barbeau had turned the book over to Jackson as early as May 1927 and that, at that point, Jackson had begun politicking to exclude Kihn entirely and have the illustrations based solely on his and Holgate's work. Jackson to Barbeau, June 13, [1927], Barbeau Correspondence, CMC.

²¹¹Barbeau to Holgate, Feb 1, 1928, CMC Archives.

were omitted as Jackson's choices shifted back and forth.²¹² The news that his contribution to the book was to be substantially reduced did not immediately reach Kihn, even though Barbeau continued to correspond with him on various related matters.²¹³ Finally, in March 1928 Barbeau wrote "in haste", thus avoiding elaborate explanations, that "[t]he plans for the illustrations have changed considerably. . . . It has been decided to use Skeena River pictures not only by yourself, but also of Jackson, Holgate, Miss Carr and Miss Savage, and the total number of pictures instead of being 16 will be 14."²¹⁴ The concept for the book and its illustrations had shifted and not in favour of portraits of living individuals who could testify to the continuity of their culture. In the end, of the four works by Kihn illustrated, only two were portraits, the others were landscapes. Among the ten illustrations by other artists, only one other portrait occurred, a drawing by Edwin Holgate.²¹⁵ This would be the last time Kihn would collaborate with Barbeau to paint for the National Museum or the railways.

By early 1928, then, Kihn's position had changed from one of close involvement in Canadian cultural production to one of almost total exclusion in which his pictures were no longer seen within the country and he was no longer welcome. His bewilderment must have been palpable, as he wondered what would have lead to this sudden reversal in his relations with Barbeau and with Canada and its culture in general, all of which remained unexplained. Although he expressed further interest in returning to the Skeena Valley to continue his work, his hints were never taken up.²¹⁶ As has been said, although widely collected and distributed, his works were buried within the storage racks and drawers of the Canadian museums and galleries they entered and were rarely seen again. One can only speculate that they may have been purchased precisely

²¹²Jackson to Barbeau, Jan. 30, 1928, CMC Archives. "Think the Alexee [sic] had better be left out. It will not have much bearing on the book and the C.N.R. may think less of the other work if it is included." Barbeau to Jackson, Feb. 1, 1928 confirms the decision.

²¹³Barbeau to Kihn, March 14, 1928, Langdon Kihn Papers, makes no mention of the reduction.

²¹⁴Barbeau to Kihn, March 17, 1928, Langdon Kihn Papers.

²¹⁵For an analysis of these works, see Chapter 5.

²¹⁶Kihn to Gibbon, August 28, 1931, Langdon Kihn Papers.

so that they could be taken out of circulation.²¹⁷ If they were all consigned to obscurity and no longer exhibited, and if no more were to be produced, then there would be no more independent articles suggesting unwanted messages to international audiences. This is precisely what occurred.

Other artists stepped into his place he had been obliged to vacate, but with substantial differences. Their work was more in keeping with the developing orthodox discourse on the representation of the Indian as absence and the Canadian landscape as picturesque. This corresponded to a marked diminution in the number of portraits while images of the poles and landscape, at times completely empty of people, proliferated as Canadian artists arrived on the scene, already primed by Barbeau concerning the decrepit state of Native culture, the disappearance of the Indian, and without ideas drawn from any American experience.²¹⁸

The dramatic shift in Kihn's position in Canada between 1926 and 1928 was made emblematic in the elaborate ruses used to justify Kihn's exclusion from the Paris exhibition, his marginalization within the **Temlaham** text, and the discouragement, which amounted to an effective denial, of access to his subject. The artist, who had met with national and international success and produced precisely the type of publicity both in the United States and in Europe that his railway sponsors were after, suddenly found himself unwelcome and excluded. Barbeau, who had worked hard on his behalf and who should have seen Kihn's triumphs as vindications of his own projects, no longer wished to continue the relationship but rather now wanted as little to do with him as possible. I have suggested three interrelated reasons for this turn of events. His subject, which initially was perceived as an advantage to the railways and ethnographer, became problematic to the latter and to the federal government when the Indians that he represented could be seen as being present rather than absent and in continuous possession of their culture and territories rather than having lost them. His success became problematic when his now

²¹⁷When Kihn's work was subsequently used in advertising to promote tourist travel into the Skeena region, the portraits were excluded, and again his limited repertoire of fantastic landscapes and images of poles were favoured.

²¹⁸See Chapter Five.

ambiguous images of the Indians threatened to become identified on the international stage with the representations of the emerging nation. Both of these became more problematic when Kihn's work began to overshadow the Group who, it will be recalled, based their claim to being native, indigenous and autochthonic, and the representatives of the nation's identity, on the grounds that their empty landscapes implied that the Native had disappeared. Any antagonism between the Kihn and the Group would probably not have emerged if he has remained somewhat in the shadows. But the international recognition of his Native images doubly transgressed their aims.

It is, however, difficult to assess the precise role played by any desire on the part of envious Canadian artists to steal a prime commission from an American usurper, move into his profitable turf and reclaim their rightful position as the representers of the nation. Although the sale of \$4,000 worth of work to Canadian patrons may have rankled, as would the critical recognition given to Kihn, money was hardly a motivating factor in the **Temlaham** commission, where this played out. Jackson had originally told Barbeau that he could have his work for the book for nothing, and having used the lure to gain the commission, he changed his mind and decided that \$25 per illustration would be an appropriate sum.²¹⁹ Although Barbeau was non-plussed by the presumption, the figure was little more than a token sum, less than the price of a sketch. As will be shown, exposure resulting from its publication was hardly a consideration either, since Jackson deliberately downplayed his own role in the production. Conversely, if the Group had seriously wanted to usurp Kihn's position in the Skeena projects, then they should have arrived en masse. As will be shown, however, many of them withdrew their support and declined to participate, which could have left the field wide open for the American. But most importantly, having little power at the administrative level, aside perhaps from choosing exhibitions in Toronto, they could only have worked behind the scenes. It was largely Barbeau who made the decisions concerning Kihn. He generally acted independently, following his own interests and advantages, which did not always coincide with those of the Group. Although one should never underestimate such competitions and jealousies, to focus on them too closely would be to miss

²¹⁹Jackson to Barbeau, June 15, [1928]. In total Jackson charged \$75 for the use of three of his paintings, and \$35 for the initials he produced. Barbeau got to keep the sketch of Port Essington. "[T]he sketch of Port Essington will belong to you because it is absurd paying for the right to use a sketch when five dollars more would have bought it." The sketch is visible behind Barbeau in a photograph taken July 6, 1956. Cove, p. 15.

the point of the matter, which was extremely complex. Much more was at stake, in fact, nothing less than the formulation of Canadian and Indian identity and the territories they claimed.

Kihn's marginalization and exclusion by Barbeau in 1927 and 1928 was only part of the solution to these complex problems. The message his production had promulgated also had to be contained and countered. Measures were now necessary to re-situate Kihn's work, just as they had been for the appearances of Native's at fairs and exhibitions, to forestall any suggestions of cultural continuity. Barbeau thus once again took an active hand in critically disciplining Kihn's work and presenting it to the public in such a manner that its initial message could be obscured and it could be used instead as evidence of discontinuity. He immediately began countering the claims Kihn had made in the **Scribner's** article, which had been reinforced in other publications on the artist's work. Barbeau used differing venues to reach the widest possible audiences.

By November 1926, Barbeau had already given a clear indication of the differences in viewpoint that were opening up between himself and Kihn, and anyone else who suggested cultural continuity and presence for the indigenous peoples of Western Canada. Barbeau began to explicate why the American painter's images were no longer acceptable. In that year he delivered a series of lectures at the University of British Columbia, where he was hopeful of receiving a chair in a proposed department of anthropology.²²⁰ Here he encountered Emily Carr, who had painted the Gitksan poles and people years earlier and whose work I have suggested he may already of known. Carr may well have been swayed by his rhetoric.²²¹ Again, Barbeau attempted to shape the state of Indian culture for his audience. He left little room for ambivalence or ambiguity in his public presentations. He indicated the need for immediate and urgent action in the area. "The population of British Columbia Indians is decreasingly rapidly'. . . In a few years, he said the field will be closed to study, as the last traces of Indian civilization

²²⁰Barbeau to Kihn, November 22, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

²²¹Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 190. In his November 22 letter, Barbeau withheld from Kihn any indication of his encounter with Carr.

were rapidly disappearing.”²²² In a second lecture he elaborated his position. Here he directly contradicted any impressions of cultural continuity that might have arisen from Kihn’s images of Native peoples dressed in traditional regalia. “The Indian, he explained, had adopted the dress, food and habit of the whites, and they had lost all their material culture.”²²³ Again, through the use of “lost” he stressed the total dispossession of the Native. In reference to the artistic traditions, he once more deployed the term. “The possibility of a revival among the Indians of former talent seems out of the question . . . They have long since lost the natural pride which makes possible great feats in the field of art. The best we can hope for now is to preserve the remnants within our borders”.²²⁴ Using the rhetorically loaded term “revival” indicated, of course, that the culture had already been lost and was now of the past. Although he did admit that there were still some “in possession of many of their old traditions” work had to be done soon to study them “before it passes away, with the extinction of the old Indian races”.²²⁵ Any indication of presence was, then, paradoxically and inextricably linked to disappearance. Similarly, Native art “flourished until the advent of the white man. Seeing no hope for the future, the Indians lost interest in their carving and painting and their art now is dead forever.”²²⁶ This presumed state of affairs, recognized, it would seem, some time ago by the Indians themselves, validated his own collecting for the National Museum and the totem pole restoration program. It also contradicted Comstock’s, Arnaud’s and Kihn’s claims that the culture and art was still ongoing, if in a diminished state. Furthermore, Barbeau’s categorical statements confirmed the inability of the Gitksan to represent themselves, or to possess their own culture. But above all it conformed to the federal government’s assimilationist policies, which by this point needed reinforcing and to their position on land claims.²²⁷ Their failure and oppressive

²²²**Province**, Vancouver, October 27, 1926, p. 2.

²²³**Province**, Vancouver, October 28, 1926, p. 2.

²²⁴**Province**, Vancouver, October 22, 1926, p. 15.

²²⁵**The Ubysey**, Vol. IX, No. 10 (October 29, 1926).

²²⁶**The Ubysey**, Vol. IX, No. 9 (October 26, 1926).

²²⁷Barbeau is reported to have repeated the state’s position on the disappearance of the Indian as the main points of his talks when he spoke in Vancouver and Toronto in the following years. **Province**, Vancouver, October 7, 1927 and **Prince Rupert Daily News**, Jan 23, 1928.

nature were becoming increasingly evident in the ever more Draconian measures that were being employed to ensure their success. Kihn's portraits and landscapes, on the other hand, as well as his writings, were beginning to look like firsthand, eyewitness testimony to continuity.

An article published in 1929 in the organ of the Canadian National Railway is probably Barbeau's most complete statement on the subject. Although he had expressed these views earlier, he again attempted to make Kihn's images correspond to the discourse of disappearance, but in a manner that exposed his other concerns. Barbeau's text attempted to control and predetermine both the history of the movement to bring artists to the Skeena region after Kihn's initial incursion, and the reception of their work. The title "Ancient Cultures Vignettes Past" already gives us some indication of the problem. Even though Kihn's portraits proclaimed the presentness of the sitters, and the continuity of their culture, the title placed the Indian always/already in a non-differentiated ahistorical "ancient" past. Barbeau's further comments bear this out. In constructing the history of the artistic activity in the region in the mid-1920s, he recounted his role in bringing artists to the region to paint the Gitksan under the auspices of the CNR.

After the artist Langdon Kihn had brought back and exhibited his brilliant *landscapes* [my emphasis] of totem poles and mountain crests, and his decorative Indian portraits, it was easy for me to induce other painters to invade our preserves. It had become clear to all that the Skeena and West Coast were a new country for Canadian art, so far unknown, unrevealed and full of promise . . . Gitksan and Tsimshian chiefs donned their regalia, perhaps for the last time, and courted the fame conferred by a stately portrait from an expert hand.²²⁸

²²⁸Marius Barbeau, "Ancient Culture Vignettes Past", **Canadian National Railways Magazine**, July 1929, p. 30. Barbeau's assertion echoes very closely a statement by the American artist, George Catlin which is worth quoting at length. "I have, for many years past, contemplated the noble races of red men who are now spread over these trackless forests and boundless prairies, melting away at the approach of civilization. Their rights invaded, their morals corrupted, their lands wrested from them, their customs changed, and therefore lost to the world; and they at last sunk into the earth, and the ploughshare turning the sod over their graves, and I have flown to their rescue - not of their lives or of their race (for they are "*doomed*" and must perish), but to the rescue of their looks and their modes, at which the acquisitive world may hurl their poison and every besom of destruction, and trample them down and crush them to death; yet, phoenix-like, they may rise from "the stain of the painter's palette," and live again upon canvass, and stand forth for centuries yet to come, the living monuments of a noble race." George Catlin, **Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians**, 2 vols. (London, 1841; reprint: New York: Dover, 1973), Vol. 1, p. 16, cited in William Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change", in Jules David Brown et al., **Discovered Lands Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, fn. 12. Cronon comments: "In short, the goal of the

Barbeau's reference to Kihn's output was filled with anxious reversals. Kihn did very few landscapes of poles and mountain crests, although two of these have been seen as of some importance despite their fantastic qualities. Conversely, he did many accurate portraits showing Native individuals displaying their own traditional regalia. Barbeau, however, downplayed these. He attempted to sway the reading of Kihn's pictures posed by writers such as the artist himself and Arnaud into the precise opposite through his use of the sentimental and urgent phrase "for the last time". This temporal reversal is symptomatic of his anxiety over the vitality of Gitksan culture that would only grow in the following years. This led to several astonishing anomalies in his professional writing in which he was forced to treat any evidence of cultural continuity among the Gitksan as its precise opposite, that is testimony to discontinuity. These will be investigated later, as they arise in various contexts. Some are, however, already visible here. His text proposed that the Skeena was pregnant with promise as a present and future site for non-Native, Anglo-Canadian artists producing a national art which spoke to a unified identity. At the same time, he depicted the subject of that art, the indigenous people of the Skeena region, who literally "court" the "stately" pictures, as having more than one foot in the grave, that is on the verge of disappearance.²²⁹ The life of the first was once again made contingent on the death of the other, and the occupation of the vacant spaces left behind. Within the context of Barbeau's abrupt reversals and prevarications, Kihn's portraits lost their guise as documents of living people within a vibrant culture demonstrating its continuity into the period of modernity and took on the role of death masks. The regality of the sitters then became a function of their willingness and even desire to be represented "for the last time" in the manner of Western artistic conventions, and did not arise from their position within their own ongoing social structure.

ethnographer's art - and Catlin's commercial project as a painter - was to preserve the memory of a "race" whose traditional way of life had supposedly been timeless and unchanging until the intrusion of Europeans precipitated its collapse. Such a vision did violence to the complex cultural histories of Indian peoples, but had great Romantic power." p. 50. Kihn on the other hand had already encountered the new discourse forming in the Southwest which countered this view.

²²⁹I have already noted Native resistance to government programs which contradicts the idea that they were soliciting the artists. The following chapters will demonstrate that the Native population did anything but "court" representations and either demanded payment or resisted the process entirely. It was, in fact, the artists who followed Kihn who were left begging. Barbeau was creating an elaborate fiction that reversed the actual events.

Indeed, having no culture and no voice, they were not in a position to represent or speak for themselves, but, being powerless and silent in this area, had to seek or “court” it elsewhere, i.e. within the context of a dominant Anglo-Canadian culture. Representation, and the desire for it, on the part of the Gitksan was equated with absorption and disappearance. Within the confines of Barbeau’s text, such portraits could only have functioned as dark mirrors in which the sitters could never see their reflections, but only their own imminent absence.

Barbeau’s textual disciplining of Kihn’s pictures, at odds with the artist’s own statements and with other interpretations, was part of a larger program. He first identified any and all locations where Native peoples could negotiate a validation of their own cultures or their contribution to Canadian culture. These sites could be at the Calgary Stampede, Banff Indian Days, local fairs, or on the reserves, within their own communities, through their own art, or through representations by non-Native artists, Native informants or ethnographers. He then provided an authoritative rhetorical framework which cut off any possibility of these instances being viewed as an indication of a vital and ongoing culture and identity. He used every media at his disposal, including popular publications, art journals, newspapers, magazines, scholarly publications, lectures and art exhibitions to insure that his message was addressed to the widest possible audiences, that is that it was endlessly reproduced and circulated as a discursive truth.²³⁰ His vision of Native decrepitude crossed institutional and disciplinary boundaries. It can be documented to have been held in common by Barbeau, Scott and the institutions with which they were associated: the state and its extension into museums, administration, capital, legislation, industry and art, all of whom assisted in disseminating the message. With such an apparatus in place it is small wonder that this remained the common view held throughout the country by those who had never encountered any of the Native populations directly, but only through their representations. Although neither Kihn nor the Gitksan seemed to share completely in the discourse, and although there were numerous other oppositional voices, including, as will be

²³⁰See also, Marius Barbeau, “The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies, a Theme for Modern Painters”, p. 198. “Not only was his [Kihn’s] work attractive and original, but it formed a record of Indian life at a moment when it was passing out of existence. Our collaboration . . . made it possible to resurrect many things now out of sight that otherwise would have gone down to oblivion.” Barbeau repeated this statement in “The Canadian Northwest, Theme for Modern Painters”, *American Magazine for Art*, Vol. 24 (May 1932), p. 331.

shown, important ones within the discipline of anthropology itself, their views on the matter were seldom heard, and either silenced, marginalized or deprived of cognitive authority and access to the media. By this time, in fact, Kihn was no longer on the scene to object to this reinterpretation and the opinion of the Gitksan was not solicited. Kihn's paintings were rarely seen again in Canada, although he continued his career with some success in the United States.

Within this context, Kihn's portraits and his position on them became untenable. Their ambiguous meanings destabilized the already threatened discourses. While his images at first served the advertising purposes of the railways and the discipline of ethnology, it soon became apparent that, in the larger scheme of things, their ambiguities did not fit within the overlapping and mutually reinforcing dualistic discursive frameworks of either the construction of a fixed, unified, Canadian identity, based on nationalistic landscapes, or the destruction of Indian identity and culture. In fact, they ran contrary to and tended to destabilize both. His images of real individuals, with distinct names and cultural attributes emphasized difference and continuity. Despite attempts to contain their problematic readings, as the railways and ethnologists became more deeply involved within these discourses in the course of the twenties, the discrepancy became too much to bear. By force of necessity, he had to be excluded from the picture. Coming from the area in the United States where concepts on the continuity rather than disappearance of Native culture were first forming, Kihn may never have been aware of his conflicted position within these frameworks, and never have considered adapting his production to their requirements. Indeed, he seems to have been unwittingly embedded within a discourse then forming in the American Southwest, where he first began his work, that saw the possibility for the inclusion of a vibrant Native culture as part of the larger American identity. While this was hardly without problems of its own, the alternative in Canada had already been made clear. The railways, ethnologists, artists and all of their audiences were directed to look at totem poles rather than people, and to see these images as emblems of a lost culture, as picturesque ruins on part of the Grand Tour within the landscapes of western Canada. But even here, meanings were ambiguous and in need of stabilization.

Chapter IV
Propping up and Repainting a Discursive Ruin
Part I, The Skeena Totem Pole Restoration Project

Giving the Gitksan Poles a new Slant

As we have seen, one of the primary sites where the discourses of disappearance and Canadian national identity came into conflict with the reality of First Nations cultural continuity during this period was in the Upper Skeena River Valley of British Columbia. These contestations centred around the Gitksan people, their poles, the territories they claimed, and the representations of all of these by white artists. The first of these was the American, Langdon Kihn who depicted them in a manner which could imply that they were present and in control and possession of their culture and lands. He was subsequently replaced by Canadian artists who re-territorialized the landscape for Canada by portraying the area as largely unpopulated. Absent Indians have no claim to cultural continuity or possession of the land. The poles became picturesque ruins, melancholic remnants of a disappearing race. This artistic production and its political context will be examined in the next chapter. Here, however, I will investigate a contemporaneous and overlapping program which involved the same issues, personnel and institutions: the Skeena totem pole restoration project.

Aldona Jonaitis has recently demonstrated that by the beginning of the twentieth century totem poles were seen as icons of Indianness by tourists travelling to the Pacific Northwest, and by inference by the non-Native North American population in general.¹ This goes some way in explaining why the Gitksan poles were of such primary importance at this time. It does not, however, explain why these particular poles were given such priority by the Canadian government and why such extraordinary attempts were taken to save them while others were left

¹Aldona Jonaitis, "Northwest Coast Totem Poles", in Phillips and Steiner, pp. 104 - 121.

to decay. What I propose here is that the Gitksan poles were important not only because they lay on the tourist routes, and because of their concentration and number, but also because they belonged to a people that still claimed continuity with traditional culture and maintained their land claims. As the state, ethnology and the Gitksan knew, the poles were testimony to their own territorialization of the region.

The possible meanings of their poles were then highly ambivalent. They could be seen not only as generalized images of the Indian but also as manifestations of presence and as icons of resistance to the government's policy to eradicate that culture and its land claims. If the discourses of disappearance and of Canadian identity were to be preserved, it was essential that, as with Kihn's paintings, these ambiguous possible significations had to be either erased or redefined. If properly placed within a discursive framework which cast the poles as non-renewable images of "decay", i.e. on their last legs and in need of restoration by caring outside agencies if they were to be preserved for the future, this imputed state, and thus the poles themselves, could act as countervailing metaphors for the "decrepit" condition of that culture. By reversing and stabilizing their meanings, Canadian, and specifically Gitksan poles could become not only emblems of "Indianness" but also of the absence of the Indian. Placing the poles in stasis by restoring them thus also meant fixing their dangerously ambiguous meanings.

The very visibility of the Gitksan poles and the fact they lay within inhabited village sites necessitated a different strategy than that employed with regard to the continuation of ceremonial dances on the Prairies. The restoration program, despite being inherently linked to Scott's reinforced and punitive potlatch ban, was part of this new approach, one of co-operation, consultation, and concern for an endangered cultural heritage together with a professed respect for Gitksan ownership of the poles. Behind this benevolent public facade, however, the program was based on the same firm belief in the imminent disappearance of the Native population and the same intent to appropriate Native culture and redefine it as part of a Canadian monoculture. As will be seen, Gitksan cultural vitality and political perspicacity prevented the program from proceeding as envisioned as well as revealing the real, but erroneous, premises on which it was founded. That the program was not simply a disinterested attempt to restore poles for the benefit

of the Gitksan is nowhere more evident than in the co-ordinated efforts made by various agencies to shape and define the public perception of the context and meaning of the poles, one which portrayed the Gitksan as no longer competent to produce, or even appreciate, the value of their own art as cultural capital. The creation and education of a newly competent non-Native audience, which could consume and possess the poles as part of their national identity, and the territory they represented as part of Canada, must be seen as an integral part of the process, as was the attempt to depict the restored poles as museum artifacts or art.

This transference of meanings and the production of new competent audiences for the Gitksan poles was not a simple matter. It was undoubtedly assisted and validated by the growing tendency in North America pointed out by Jonaitis to view all poles as signs of generic "Indianness". But specific conditions within Canada also had to be accommodated, since more than just "Indianness" was at stake here. Ensuring that this generic racial meaning was joined to a message of decrepitude and disappearance, as well as to national identity and its expansion into this region, necessitated the joint and co-ordinated interventions of the Ethnographic and Archeological divisions of the National Museum and of the Department of Indian Affairs, with the active co-operation of the Canadian National Railway (CNR) and concurrently, the tourist. Later it included the artistic community and the National Gallery, or what Bourdieu calls the "art world". It also involved the mass media and the publishing industry. The distribution of these redefinitions to the broadest possible public occurred through a wide variety of means including museum and gallery exhibitions, magazine articles, advertising, and books and their illustrations. These were all essential aspects of the education process which reinforced the idea that while the Native work could be elevated to the position of a national "art", the people and culture that produced it were degraded to a state of "non-existence", no longer able to produce or appreciate it, or possess either the work or that which it might represent. This left a gap in the meaning and ownership of the objects which could be filled in by those who now claimed that the poles and lands were "ours". In short, the entire project to reposition the Gitksan poles within the secular Canadian state was extremely complex and conflicted, and formed another important stage in the formation of a Canadian identity, the validation of the discourse of disappearance and the

territorialization of the country.²

The totem pole restoration project has already been admirably researched and narrated twice over by the historians Douglas Cole and David Darling.³ Their researches have been supplemented by Ron Hawker, who added many pertinent details.⁴ Although I agree with most of these texts, still more additional material that has become available in the interim shows that the implications of the restoration program can be seen to go further than their analysis allowed at that time. Darling and Cole, in fact, admitted to being bewildered by the conflicts which dogged the program. They had trouble explaining the internal scheming and intrigues within the ranks of the various government personnel, as well as the Gitksan resistance to the project. In terms of the first, they were obliged to theorize that the various disputes that arose between Scott, Barbeau and Jenness on the one hand, and Smith and Sapir on the other, were based largely on petty professional and personal jealousies rather than on major issues.⁵ Cole attributed the same motivations to the Gitksan resistance, offering the possibility that it might have come down to something as simple as the renting of the wrong house by government agents. This, I think, underrates conflicts and divisions which point to much more important issues that had a profound impact on the success and failure of the restoration project. Later research and subsequent publications have shed new light on other aspects of the undertaking, particularly its relationships with the potlatch ban, the prohibitions on dancing, the attempts to eliminate any

²These arguments rely heavily on the links between the formation of a programmatic, official nationalism produced by the state, restored ruins, museums, the tourist, surveillance and print that have been established by Anderson, pp. 178 - 186. I agree with Anderson that "museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political." p. 175.

³David Darling and Douglas Cole, "Totem Pole Restoration on the Skeena, 1925 - 30: An Early Exercise in Heritage Conservation", *BC Studies*, No. 47 (Autumn 1980), pp. 29 - 48. Douglas Cole, **Captured Heritage: the Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts**, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver: 1985, pp. 271 - 277. Although the latter provided more of a context for the project, it lacks many of the detailed footnotes to the extensive archival sources which appear in the first. The first also details many of the interpersonal conflicts which plagued the project. These were edited out of the book. Jonaitis, "Northwest Coast Totem Poles", has recapitulated and summarized Cole.

⁴Ron Hawker, "Accumulated Labours: First Nations Art in British Columbia, 1922 - 1961", PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1998, pp. 106 - 121.

⁵Darling and Cole, p. 49. They do mention "contrasting views of the potlatch law" as a point of contention but do not elaborate on what they were or who held them.

Native economy, and the need to invalidate Native land claims, all of which were primary concerns of the Department of Indian Affairs in British Columbia at that time.⁶ There were, in addition, divisions within the government departments that countered and undermined Scott's policies and Barbeau's practices. As indications of the growing disruptions within the discourse, they need to be outlined. In addition, I would like to relate the restoration project and its underlying assumptions more closely to the series of artists who came through the region specifically to paint the results of the project as part of the construction of a Canadian culture and identity. It is at this point that Native resistance to these projects, and to the federal government's initiatives as a whole, begins to emerge most clearly. In fact, the Native presence would lead to the failure of both programs and to the final stage in the crisis that emerged concerning their representation and disappearance.

The restoration project had part of its origins in the construction by the Grand Trunk Railway of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR) line from Jasper to Prince Rupert in 1912. It was the first road of any type into the remote Upper Skeena valley, the home of the Gitksan, which until that time had been extremely isolated. Until the 1870s, the inland region was only accessible by steamboat part way up the Skeena River and then required slogging miles through the dense brush on foot or with pack horses. Few made the trip. The area had little settlement, aside from a small trading post at Hazelton which was first established in 1866 but was unsuccessful and abandoned almost immediately.⁷ That year also saw the beginning of work on the Collins Overland Telegraph and is given by McDonald and Joseph as the important demarcation when "the first Non-Aboriginals [were] seen by many Gitksan", that is a full century after contact had occurred on the West Coast.⁸ The telegraph line was rendered obsolete almost immediately and

⁶It should be noted that although Cole brought these issues up, he did so only to dismiss them, and never paid them any further attention.

⁷The history of the Gitksan is now beginning to receive attention, and has begun to be sketched out in James A. McDonald and Jennifer Joseph, "Key Events in the Gitksan Encounter with the Colonial World", in M. Anderson and M. Halpin, *Potlatch at Gitsegukla*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000, pp. 193 - 214. See also, Leslie Dawn, "'Ksan: Museum, Cultural and Artistic Activity Among the Gitksan Indians of the Upper Skeena, 1920 - 1973", MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1976.

⁸McDonald and Joseph, p. 201.

economic activity in the region declined until the brief flutter surrounding the Omenica gold rush in 1871. Posts were re-established in the area in the early 1870s, but these too were not productive. By the 1880s the population of Hazelton, the only non-Native community in the area, was 200, about one eighth of the Native population. A stockade had been built out of fear of the dominant Native population who by the 1880s were noted for resistance to occupation of their lands, a resistance that would last effectively into the next century. Full-scale missionary activity also arrived later and was less intense than on the coast. The disruptions caused by extensive and prolonged contact, which had occurred in other areas, were not as evident here. Under these unique geographic and historic circumstances the Gitksan preserved their culture and identity into the twentieth century, although not without modifications.

The GTPR line which penetrated the region and brought increased contact during World War I, especially to the two villages along the tracks, was, however, financially unsound from the start. Ultimately the company failed financially and went into receivership in 1919. By 1923, two years before the restoration project was begun, it became part of the CNR, an amalgamation of five railways under federal government ownership. Since expected revenues from ore shipments did not materialize, tourist traffic was seen as one way to make up for the shortfall. There were major and unique attractions along the route, including the picturesque mountain scenery and the poles of the Gitksan villages. Poles had been established as a ready draw since the 1880s in Alaska and on the West Coast of Canada but this was the only site where they were visible in their original locations to the Canadian railroad tourist.⁹ In order to increase their distribution beyond their traditional locations, the GTPR had already moved Haida poles from the Queen Charlotte Islands and Nisga'a poles from the Nass River close to their railway stations at both Jasper and Prince Rupert, and had begun the process of making the poles a trademark for the route. The CNR continued this campaign to entice passengers on its Triangle Tour, which included land and sea transportation between Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Prince George.¹⁰

⁹Jonaitis, "Northwest Coast Totem Poles", *passim*.

¹⁰"The CNR subsequently developed a proprietary attitude towards all totem poles, and used several obtained through Barbeau and other agents as gifts to various institutions around the world." Dawn, "'Ksan'", p. 22.

While Haida and Nass poles, taken from deserted villages, seemed open to appropriation and redistribution, Gitksan poles were not. Firstly, they were located in inhabited village sites. Secondly, the Gitksan by and large, although there were some dissensions here, refused to part with the poles and maintained their authority over and ownership of them. They were noted as being extremely conservative in their ways, highly suspicious of government interventions and capable of effective opposition.¹¹ Consequently, the initial plans of purchasing the poles and removing them had to be abandoned. Barbeau reported in his initial investigations that it would not be advisable to follow the early plan in that this would create immediate opposition to the project. "His recommendation was therefore to leave the Indians as owners of the poles, yet persuade them to allow the government to preserve them *in situ*."¹² Here they could serve as tourist attractions for the railroad.

A problem existed, however. Many of the totem poles in the Upper Skeena villages were deteriorating. There was nothing unusual in this itself, as traditionally old poles were allowed to decay and fall to be replaced by new ones as the occasion demanded. The process was interrupted, however, when the Department of Indian Affairs moved to enforce the "potlatch" ban in the early 1920s. Included in the ban were the traditional ceremonies which had to accompany the raising of a new pole, if it were to have any significance and validity.¹³

The enforcement of the ban was, then, central to the restoration project. The very need for the restoration program was posited on the belief that no new poles were ever to be erected. The project was presented to the public in terms which elaborated extensively on the assumed disappearance of Native culture in general, while only briefly, if ever, mentioning the law itself. The validity or intent of the legislation went unquestioned. It was never phrased in terms of active repression of Native culture. The direct relationship of the potlatch ban to the project was thus obscured. A brief overview of its historical development, particularly in relationship to the Gitksan and including research which has occurred since Cole and Darling, will clarify its role in

¹¹Darling and Cole, p. 33.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Dawn, "Ksan", p. 22.

the restoration project and the divisions it caused within the Canadian ethnographic community.¹⁴

The Irrepressible Potlatch

The ban was officially enacted in 1884 but was, as initially written, largely unenforceable.¹⁵ Part of the problem lay in the term itself. Christopher Bracken has explored the evolution of its meaning and significance since it first appeared in Chinook jargon as a word meant to signify any ceremony at which a gift was given.¹⁶ It was, from its origins in this polyglot, pidgin trade language, inherently ambiguous, general and universalized. Individual groups had more specific words in their respective languages for ceremonies which might be subsumed under this category. Yet it gained currency as a term signifying a universal practice among the First Nations of The Pacific Northwest.¹⁷

¹⁴The history of the ban has received extensive attention in the last thirty years. See: Forrest La Violette, **The Struggle for Survival**, 2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973; Cole and Chaikin. Christopher Bracken, **The Potlatch Papers**, adds yet more archival research. These are only three among a vast, diverse, and growing literature. The latter two will be used in combination since each adds elements missing in the other.

¹⁵Douglas Cole indicates that there are certain problems with dating the beginnings of the repression of the potlatch. "The dates are sometimes confused in the literature. In June 1883 the cabinet passed an order-in-council requesting the Indians to abandon the custom; on 7 July the Governor General issued a proclamation to "enjoin, recommend, and earnestly urge" Indians to abandon the potlatch. On 19 April 1884, an amendment to the Indian Act, effective 1 January 1885, made anyone engaging or assisting in a potlatch ceremony guilty of a misdemeanour." Douglas Cole, "The History of the Kwakiutl Potlatch", in Aldona Jonaitis, ed., **Chiefly Feasts: the Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch**, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1991, fn. 3, p. 285.

¹⁶Bracken.

¹⁷Perhaps the best short description of this problem occurs in Wayne Suttles, "Streams of Property, Armor of Wealth", in Jonaitis, **Chiefly Feasts**, p. 284, fn. 6. Suttles opts in the end for a universal Northwest Coast definition. "One might reasonably question whether the term 'potlatch' actually refers throughout the region to the same kind of event. However, descriptions of these events suggest that in fact from one end of the region to the other what are called potlatches do have a number of features in common But the common features seem to justify identifying the potlatch as a single, region wide-institution. Explaining this institution has become a major concern in anthropological work in the region and a minor industry in anthropology in general". And, one might add, for English professors as well. Bracken counters: "When the law borrows these Chinook terms to name acts that have different names and take different forms in different communities, it reduces the diversity of the coastal First Nations to an unbroken sameness. It is as if, to the Euro-Canadian gaze, aboriginal societies were all in the last analysis the same - despite the differences that separate them from each other and divide them within themselves." Bracken, p. 112.

Bracken theorizes that the concept of the “potlatch” as it circulated within the legal and administrative system of Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s was an invention and construction of an Anglo-Canadian discourse that had little to do with the actual traditional practices associated with the term. The discourse absorbed the term and gave it its own meaning to suit its own ends. Thus, as with the term “Indian”, vastly different, if not contradictory meanings could exist simultaneously, which could be employed with great flexibility depending on the use to which it was to be put. As the term circulated within the discourse, it came to define its object, rather than the other way around.¹⁸

The meaning remained purposefully ambiguous. In particular, it could not be decided by Anglo-Canadian officials if it denoted a gift without a corresponding counter-gift, that is an act of sheer expenditure without hope of return, or whether it meant a gift in which a return, and a profit, could be expected and was obligatory. The difference was crucial. The first was seen as reprehensible waste by many colonial observers, placing the potlatch outside of the limits of bourgeois culture, and in opposition to the ethics of capitalism, thus making it an inherent vice which defined the indigenous population as savages. In this sense the potlatch stood as an obstacle in the way of civilizing the primitives. A moral imperative existed to see it eradicated. On the other hand, the latter definition, which oscillated within the same early texts on the subject as the first meaning, corresponded to Western economic principles and would have positioned the potlatch within the limits of European practices and civilization. Seen thusly, it would have rendered the Indian as civilized, by European standards, before contact. This, however, was unthinkable, and so the first definition, as erroneous as it was, prevailed. When challenged, the issue of waste became paramount, and the exaggerated narratives of wholesale destruction of property which were said to accompany the ritual were pointed out as the ceremony’s primary feature and as defining its “evil” nature.

Early resistance to the ban was widespread and came from various levels and communities. “In the winter of 1890 Captain Napoleon Fitzstubbbs, the stipendiary magistrate at Hazelton, and

¹⁸Bracken. pp. 114 - 115.

C.W.D. Clifford, a Hudson's Bay Company manager on the upper Skeena, wrote the attorney general of British Columbia to condemn the logic behind the suppression of the potlatch.¹⁹ It could be theorized, although Bracken does not point this out, that such support from the non-Native community in the area directly affected was due to the economic benefit to the trading post of the increased business related to the ceremonies, and the concomitant losses it would incur with their suppression. That the resistance to the ban was backed up by the local magistrate indicates divisions within officialdom on the issue and that the Gitksan were not suffering under the imposition of the law at this time.

Initially aided by internal government squabbling over who would pay for the cost of enforcement, resistance was successful throughout the province.²⁰ The first ban was struck down almost immediately. Initial prosecutions were unsuccessful and the law was revised in 1895. The terms of reference were defined more broadly, but also more specifically, if not in more draconian fashion. The law, as it was restated, prohibited

“Every Indian or other person [note that the law continued to distinguish between ‘Indian’ and ‘persons’] who engages in, or assists in celebrating or encouraging either directly or indirectly another to celebrate, any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at, or after the celebration of the same.”²¹

The total effect of this law has only recently been recognized. Bracken has been the only one to date to point out that, if enforced as written and “taken literally”, the statute would appear to outlaw and prohibit all economic exchange of any type within any Native community, “[f]or it bans all economy . . . Every conceivable exchange, every possible circulation of ‘money, goods or articles,’ is prohibited.”²² He postulates that the law was thus designed to undermine all

¹⁹Ibid., p. 114.

²⁰Ibid., p. 116.

²¹Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 118 - 119. His editorial insert.

²²Ibid., p. 119. “One exception to the prohibition on any exchange occurred. Though it forbids anything that could possibly qualify as an instance of ‘giving away,’ the law does not address itself to the ‘civilized’ pursuit of agriculture. It therefore closes with a ‘but’ introducing a qualifying clause: ‘but nothing in this section shall be

Native economy and culture. Total repression was the goal, not the elimination of a single reprehensible part of that culture or economy. There could be no economy or culture outside of capital, cash, Christianity and Canada.

Even in its rewritten state, the law was not enforced with any rigour, nor was there a shortage of ways around it. Under the direction of the Deputy Superintendents of Indian Affairs prior to Duncan Campbell Scott, that is up to 1913, dissent existed within the government ranks and the law was enforced with discretion. Few arrests and fewer convictions occurred. The eminent anthropologist Franz Boas entered the fray in 1897 with a letter published in a local Victoria paper condemning prosecutions of the potlatch and attempting to educate the non-Native readership of the value on the ceremonies.²³ It had some effect, including focussing public attention from this point onwards on the Kwakwak'wakw and their particular ceremonies, an outcome enhanced by his further studies.²⁴

There were no trials between 1897 and 1913. The prevailing belief was that the potlatch would not need to be killed, but would die of its own accord. Faith still remained strong in the inexorable forces of assimilation, and if that did not work, there was the steady decline in the Native population which confirmed the inevitable.

For almost three decades federal administrators were content to vilify the potlatch while doing little to keep it from happening. The policy of nonenforcement did not end until the fall of 1913 when the Department of Indian Affairs began its only sustained attempt to put the potlatch to death. The new strategy was to last for the next ten years.²⁵

The continued vitality of ceremonial activity produced the rather paradoxical situation, just prior to World War I, whereby administrators were compelled "to repeat over and over that the

construed to prevent the holding of any agricultural show or exhibition or giving of prizes for exhibits thereat." Ibid., p. 120.

²³Ibid., pp. 136 - 139.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 131 - 156. As will be shown, Boas's stance on the matter would continue with his student, Edward Sapir, which would cause a split in the ranks of ethnographic practice in Canada.

²⁵Ibid., p. 186.

potlatch was nearing extinction. But there was also a drive toward life because, even as they were consigning the potlatch to its grave, the same administrators were nevertheless compelled to admit that it had been resurrected - or that it had never died in the first place."²⁶

The vanishing tradition had refused to die on schedule. Some officials were unable to admit their predictions had been wrong, however, so they suggested that the potlatch had indeed passed away but then returned from the dead. In May 1912 former missionary A.E. Green, now employed as an Indian school inspector, reported that "[t]he Indians are becoming demoralized by the revival of the old 'Potlatch'" in British Columbia. A year later he warned "it is spreading (14 May 1913)". In winter 1914 T. Ferrier, the national superintendent of Methodist schools and hospitals, advised the department that "[s]omething should be done . . . in the stamping out of the revival of the old heathen feast of the Pot Latch." . . . But there was no reason to conclude that the reviving potlatch had ever died.²⁷

It is now clear that with Duncan Campbell Scott's ascension to the role of Deputy Superintendent, traditional ceremonies, now subsumed under the term "potlatch", had not disappeared and were on the increase. Scott set out immediately to rectify this situation. 1914 saw the first potlatch trial in almost two decades. The new crackdown met with renewed protests, including representations to the government from various groups on the West Coast. These voices gained some support within official circles.²⁸ Decisive action was required to head this off. Scott needed to rally support. In early 1915 he requested a report on the topic from Edward Sapir, who since 1910 had been the head of the Division of Anthropology within the Geological Survey of Canada, but the results were not what he expected.²⁹ Sapir advised him to read Boas' accounts, which were undoubtedly a sore point for Scott. If this was not sufficient, Sapir added that "[i]t seems to me high time that white men realized that they are not doing the Indians much of a favour by converting them into inferior replicas of themselves."³⁰ Sapir went

²⁶Ibid., p. 179.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 180 - 181.

²⁸Ibid., p. 218.

²⁹This division was under the Geological Survey of Canada, but in 1920 became part of the Victoria Memorial Museum, later known as the National Museum of Canada. Regna Darnell, "The Sapir Years at the National Museum, Ottawa", in **Canadian Ethnology Society, Proceedings No. 3**, 1976, pp. 100 - 102. .

³⁰Bracken, p. 219.

further and solicited the opinions of his colleagues. “On 1 March he sent Scott letters from James Teit, Harlan Smith, Charles F. Newcombe, Charles Hill-Tout, John Swanton, and Franz Boas. They all advised against enforcing the law.”³¹ Significantly, Barbeau’s name is missing from this list. Although he was among those directly asked for support, since he knew the situation among the Tsimshian, who were “disturbed about the present potlatch law”, he contributed nothing to Sapir’s campaign to demonstrate to Scott “reasons for considering it unjust and unwise to abolish the potlatch.”³² In the following years however, as seen, Scott ignored Sapir and the others and redoubled his efforts and had the law amended yet again.

In 1919, in order to reassert his position of authority in the face of opposition from within as well as without, as well as to respond to demands that he fulfil his commitment to conduct an inquiry into the potlatch, Scott claimed he had a report by Barbeau which supported his position of authority on the matter. His choice of allies in the matter is significant. He stated “the facts are already available in this Department and in the anthropological division of the Geological Survey and lately a complete survey of all our papers on the subject was made by Mr. [Marius] Barbeau of that division As a matter of fact we probably know more about the aboriginal custom of the potlatch than do the Indians themselves.”³³ Although Barbeau remained neutral on the issue of the potlatch, and the report fell into line with Sapir’s position and supported repeal of the laws, Scott’s claim indicated that he was aware of internal divisions on the matter of Native culture in general within the administration at this time, and who he could rely on publically. Recognizing the division within the ethnographic community, and even government institutions, over this fundamental issue, and aware of the growing body of empirical evidence of cultural continuity and expansion within the Native groups both on the Prairies and the West Coast, it was Barbeau

³¹Ibid. Harlan Smith’s letter must have been particularly galling: “Those who have caused all the trouble of thus persecuting these Indians, . . . dragging them many miles before the courts and imprisoning them, so far as I have ever been able to find out, knew little or nothing about Indians.” Ibid.

³²Sapir to Barbeau[?], uncited letter, quoted in Nowry, p. 161. Nowry’s uncritical biography assumes that Barbeau contributed to this defense, but admits that “his reply is not on record”. Ibid. Although he has done much archival research, he provides no notes for his sources.

³³Cited in *ibid.*, p. 220.

rather than Sapir to whom Scott turned.³⁴ In 1920 he issued an edict to his Agents instructing them to begin rigorous enforcement of the ban.

Both Bracken's and Cole's accounts suggest but do not make explicit what appear to be growing divisions within the ranks of ethnographers, archeologists and administrators on the issues of the continuity of Native culture and the policies of assimilation and repression. It now seems that Sapir and Smith were on one side, Barbeau, Diamond Jenness and Scott on the other. The divisions are telling. Sapir and Smith were both students of Boas, who in turn had advocated a theory of cultural relativism which placed cultures on a level playing field rather than in a hierarchy. Such considerations led Sapir to resist the principle of cultural suppression, even if he believed Native culture was on the wane.³⁵ Barbeau, although French-Canadian, had read anthropology at Oxford at the same time as Jenness and would have developed a different perspective, one that would have been more in keeping with Scott's hierarchical and evolutionary notions which saw the inevitable destruction of Native cultures through assimilation as something to be actively striven for since it would raise the savages or primitives to the level of a superior western civilization.³⁶

In any case, Sapir was now aware of the usefulness of Anthropology to the state, and to Scott and his policies. Not only could the discipline be called upon to support cultural repression, the denial of land claims and so on, but it could serve as a form of government surveillance to keep

³⁴In 1921 and 1922 demands were made in the House for the release of the report. Scott, however, lied about its contents and his minister went so far as to prevaricate about his knowledge of its existence to the House. They refused to release it and in the end it was suppressed. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁵Nowry, p. 197 describes Sapir as "a fervent partisan of native [sic] rights and traditions and had inveighed against outlawing the potlatch. His outrage of course included the damaging anthropological implications, but he was perhaps more sensitive to the hurt and unhappiness visited on inoffensive people." Nowry's assessment patronizes both Sapir and the Natives and misses the main issues at stake here.

³⁶"Recent work on the history of British anthropology has shown, as with the French, that in order to acquire establishment recognition, research often strayed a long way from any objective basis in order to support predominant views in imperial circles on the degeneracy of non-white races." Greenhalgh, p. 96. See also Annie Coombes, "'For God and for England': Contributions to an image of Africa in the first decades of the twentieth century", *Art History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 1985), pp. 453 - 466. For the conjunction between ethnographic practice and the interests of the state in Canada, especially concerning Jenness, see: Peter Kulchyski, "Anthropology in the Service of the State", pp. 21 - 50.

an eye on and report back any potentially troubling or subversive activities. Sapir expressed his concern on the matter directly when he wrote,

once more to make it perfectly clear that there are to be no communications touching Indian affairs sent to the Department of Indian Affairs without the consent of the proper authorities within the Geological Survey, nor is any money to be accepted for incidental work [Otherwise] we will find ourselves fitting into the position of genteel spies for the Department of Indian Affairs. We cannot afford to be misunderstood by any Indians in Canada.³⁷

Douglas and Cole are both more and less precise on the matter. In 1920, “Sapir forbade Barbeau to communicate with Indian Affairs without department consent since he feared department identification with Indian administration.”³⁸ Although they indicate that the message was directed at Barbeau, who may have been in the pay of Scott for “incidental work”, they do not elaborate on why this would be a problem. No one, however, mentions that this confrontation between Sapir and Barbeau over the latter’s relationships with Scott occurred precisely at the moment that Barbeau was in the field in the winter of 1920/21 researching the persistence of the potlatch among the Gitksan. Nor does anyone connect Barbeau’s researches to Scott’s edict to the Indian Agents to finally stamp out the potlatch which also went out during these months. Nor is it mentioned that Barbeau was on the selection committee for Indian Agents at this time. Yet these conjunctions seem more than coincidental. They point to the possibility that Barbeau may have been working for two masters. It was plain whose views he preferred. Henceforth relationships between Sapir and Barbeau remained troubled until after Sapir left the Museum in 1925.³⁹ He was replaced as head by Diamond Jenness who was more in sympathy with the

³⁷Sapir to [Barbeau], [1920] uncited letter in Nowry, p. 197.

³⁸Douglas and Cole, p. 47.

³⁹Nowry hints at a certain bitterness on Barbeau’s part towards Sapir but provides nothing by way of explanation for its precise source. It seems, however, that Barbeau was vocal about it. Kihn expressed sympathy to Barbeau concerning the latter’s “feelings” towards Sapir. Kihn to Barbeau, March 4, 1924, CMC archives. In 1925 Sapir published “Are Nordics a Superior Race?”, *Canadian Forum*, Vol. V, No. 57 (June 1925), pp. 265 - 266. The issues raised in this scathing, yet prescient, attack on hierarchical notions of English-speaking racial superiority may have been at the heart of the matter. He concluded with the invocation: “It is too much to expect the average man to be entirely free from racial prejudices. Tolerance of any kind comes hard. But, at least, let no ‘scientists’ bolster up the prejudices of the laity with unproven and dangerous dogmas. It should never be forgotten that ‘science’, like unsound statistics can be made to pander to every kind of ill-will that humanity is heir to.”

state's position.⁴⁰ As we have seen, after this point Barbeau and Scott were free to collaborate openly again. Barbeau also became less guarded in his statements on Sapir. Discussing the possibility of a hall featuring Native art with Langdon Kihn, Barbeau indicated that “[a]s you know it was always precarious with Sapir, on account of his jealousies and pettiness, and he always tried to discredit the affair with the director. But now we are all breathing more easily, and are making interesting plans for the work of the Division in the future. I’ve never realized until the moment he left what a nuisance he was in every way.”⁴¹ Barbeau was probably unaware that Kihn was also in communication with Sapir at that moment.⁴²

How, then, did these divisions and conflicts within the government departments and agencies, which began to open up cracks in the structure of the discourse of disappearance within the discipline of ethnology, play out in the field with the people who were the subjects of this wrangling? It appeared at first that Scott got the upper hand. Ignoring Sapir’s advice, along with those whose views Sapir forwarded, and relying on Barbeau, Scott had the law revised yet again in 1918, using the war as an excuse to validate the end to the “wasteful” practice.⁴³ In the two years immediately after the War, persecutions began in earnest. Although much attention has been focussed on the Cranmer potlatch on Village Island, they also included the Cowichan area of southern Vancouver Island and the Gitksan of the Upper Skeena River. Among the latter, traditional ceremonies, up to this time, had been going on more or less uninterrupted, a fact not officially acknowledged.

Also in 1920 the department received a secondhand report from a missionary complaining about the “revival” of the potlatch in Gitksan communities on the upper Skeena. He described the rebirth as a fall from whiteness. “At first it began in a small way by having small feasts of the dead and conducted in a half Christian manner,” he writes, but “[y]ear after year the evil increased until today they potlatch as if they were

⁴⁰Jeness’s promotion over Barbeau also produced problems. They apparently seldom spoke again for the duration of their long careers.

⁴¹Barbeau to Kihn, February 21, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁴²Sapir to Kihn, March 1, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

⁴³Cole and Chaikin, pp. 107 - 109.

heathen.”⁴⁴

Once again those who saw their purpose as civilizing the primitive savages were unable to recognize the continuity of the Native traditions, being obliged to report that they had died and then had been miraculously reborn and were increasing in number. Equally, the “relapse” had to be dealt with firmly. By late December 1920, at the time when Barbeau was on his extended field trip in the area, the retiring Indian Agent, Loring, had posted notices indicating that the RCMP were now prepared to enforce the newly revised law.

Loring was preparing to retire from his post as an agent in charge of the Babine Agency, but he posted notices warning that the RCMP was already to enforce the law (NA, vol. 3630, file 6244-4, pt. 1, Loring to McLean, 22 December 1920). Ironically, more than twenty years earlier he had argued that it would be better to repeal the statute than to enforce it because, he said, the winter dances had already died and the potlatch was about to follow them (NA, vol. 3629, file 6244-2, 15 July 1897).⁴⁵

But even here ambiguity was present. Evidence exists that Loring may not have interpreted the new legislation as extremely as other Indian agents, such as William Halliday, or as Scott had intended. Although Bracken does not note it, the local papers gave a modified version of his announcement:

The order was issued recently, signed by Indian Agent Loring, forbidding the holding of potlatches. This is only to enforce an act that has long been on the statute books. The Indians, however, are very indignant that their ancient custom should be thus abolished by the white man, and the first of the week a meeting of chiefs of many tribes from various parts of the interior was held in Hazelton, to protest against the order The Indians are to send a petition to the government protesting against the order. There seems to be a little misunderstanding on the part of the Indians in regard to the order. They had an idea that all feasting was to be stopped, as well as the potlatch which is not the case.⁴⁶

The Gitksan protests appear to have been ineffective despite Loring’s declaration of leniency. Indeed, appealing to Ottawa was probably the worst possible move. Alerting federal authorities, particularly Scott, to continued resistance could only have resulted in yet more disciplinary

⁴⁴Cited in Bracken, p. 181.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 181 - 182.

⁴⁶**Omineca Herald**, January 7, 1921, p.1. This was one of Loring’s last acts as Indian Agent; he would shortly thereafter resign and become the Justice of the Peace of the region.

actions, increased surveillance and more severe punishments. On the other hand, since Barbeau had been sent into the area in the winter of 1920/21, the Department of Indian Affairs would have been aware of continuing ceremonies anyway, that is if Barbeau found a way around Sapir's instructions. Insofar as any reports of such activities would be of interest to Scott, Barbeau's field notes of the extensive ceremonies that season took on a political cast.⁴⁷

No local legal moves against the potlatch appear to have been taken while Barbeau was in the field. He attended the large Hagwilget potlatch in the summer which went on unimpeded.⁴⁸ The first confrontation came in late 1921 and early 1922 when four individuals "from Kispiox were charged with taking part in a 'giving away celebration.'"⁴⁹ This action, which resulted in suspended sentences, seems to have been the height of the persecutions in the Upper Skeena area. The local population soon learned to operate within the loophole created by Loring, i.e. a narrow interpretation of what constituted a potlatch. "Potlatches" of some scale were reported at nearby Hagwilget in the summers of 1922 and 1923, although the local newspapers stated of the first that "[t]he natives had a good enough time, but they were not able to get away with much of the old time stuff."⁵⁰ This may, however, have been little more than hopeful editorializing. By the following year it was conceded that the ceremony was "to be one of the biggest affairs held for years".⁵¹ In early 1925 the local papers noted that "Johnson Alexander . . . the new chief. . . adopted his new official name . . . [that] of the first chieftess of the tribe. The ceremony . . . took place during the potlatch in Hazelton during the holiday season and which was attended by

⁴⁷If he was not actively working on surveillance for Scott at the time, certain of the Native population took him as a spy. He was asked to leave ceremonies at Kitwancool in August, 1920. Nowry, pp. 201 - 202.

⁴⁸Nowry, p. 197.

⁴⁹Bracken, p. 213. See also Cole and Chaikin, pp. 124 - 125. McDonald and Joseph, p. 208, state, "In 1921 Agent Hyde brought charges against Edward Saxsmith, Robert Wilson, and John M. Morrison for participating in a feast. They received suspended sentences from Agent/Justice of the Peace Loring." McDonald and Joseph omit Peter Wilson's name, mentioned in Cole and Chaikin.

⁵⁰**Omineca Herald**, July 7, 1922. Cole and Chaikin use this citation as evidence of a strong degree of suppression in the area. Further research, however, in the same sources indicate this was not the case. Barbeau attended the second and took photographs but does not seem to have taken field notes, hence depriving history of an important ethnographic record.

⁵¹**Omineca Herald**, July 13, 1923.

Indians from far and near . . . [with] presentations . . . made by chiefs of all the tribes along the Skeena River.”⁵² Kihn’s report cited in the previous chapter also documented extensive ceremonies from later in 1925 which constituted an open and flagrant disregard for the law and contradicts pronouncements such as those by Halliday that the potlatch was now dead.⁵³ The local paper confirmed the continuity of Gitksan culture in 1926 when it stated, “Although the white man’s ways are being rapidly adopted the Indians are still carrying on their old practices.”⁵⁴

McDonald and Joseph report that “[i]n 1927, Agent Hyde brought charges against Silas Johnson and Sam Disk under the potlatch law. They received a warning and a lecture.”⁵⁵ In comparison with what had occurred under Halliday, this was small punishment indeed, little more than a slap on the wrist and spoke more of an open complicity than persecution or enforcement. Such carefully circumscribed responses certainly did not curtail ceremonial activity. Nor were they designed to. Contrary to many assessments of the period, such as that given by Barbeau in 1929 that Gitksan culture had experienced a “total collapse”, and claims by others that it had died and later been reborn, a growing body of evidence now exists that the traditional life of the Gitksan had not ceased, but was ongoing up until the early 1920s, when the prosecutions began, and continued throughout the decade into the present.⁵⁶

It was into this situation then, that those involved with the totem pole restoration project, one predicated on a fading Native presence, stepped. Although not discussed by Cole or Jonaitis, the

⁵²*Omineca Herald*, January 9, 1925.

⁵³*Ibid.* Bracken reports similar instances among the Kwakwaka’wakw. Despite the fact that Halliday had stated that the potlatch had died, he then stated that it had come to life again in 1923. By 1927 full scale potlatching was reported in the area. Bracken pp. 215 - 216.

⁵⁴*Omineca Herald*, March 19, 1926.

⁵⁵McDonald and Joseph, p. 208. See also Cole and Chaikin, p. 125.

⁵⁶See Cole and Chaikin, p. 125, citing Dawn, “Ksan”; McDonald and Joseph, *passim* for a partial account; and Dawn, “The Pre-History of ‘Ksan: a Case for Gitksan Cultural Continuity”, paper delivered at the “Boundaries in the Art of the Northwest Coast of America” conference, British Museum, May, 2000, which documents the flourishing cultural activity among the Gitksan in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

history of Scott's Indian policy and its failure is germane to the situation here, particularly since it reached its height in the 1920s and formed much of the discourse on the Indian at that time. The simultaneous return of Barbeau to the field on his collecting and study trips, the presence of white artists and tourists, and the announcement of the restoration program at the same time as federal government attempts to enforce the ban on all traditional ceremonial activity, caused understandable suspicion and anxiety among the Native population. Nonetheless, the project went ahead. Hill gives the most succinct version of its initiation.

In June 1924, a "Totem Pole Preservation Committee" was established, composed of Duncan Campbell Scott, the deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs, J.B. Harkin of Parks, and Edward Sapir and Marius Barbeau of the Victoria Memorial Museum. The Department of Indian Affairs would finance and supervise the restoration of the poles in the villages (with the permission of the owners), siting them so as to be visible to tourists, and the C.N.R. would provide free transportation for the men and materials plus the services of one of their engineers.⁵⁷

Although noted in passing as "owners", no Gitksan representatives were included on the committee. Privilege of place went to Scott whose department was to oversee the project. It is impossible to divorce, then, his recent policy of potlatch prohibition from the project, especially since the Village Island/Cranmer Potlatch arrests and confiscations. Much of the latter benefited the collection of the National Museum and some remained in Scott's personal possession and on display in his office, visible to anyone who paid him an official visit.

As we have seen, it is within the context of this ban that there is a significant difference between the Canadian restoration program and the American program for employing Native cultures as tourist draws. The latter, at least in Sante Fe, included tours to performances of traditional rituals and dances on the reservations. These were seen as alive and as ongoing manifestations of traditional cultures. Given the ban on dancing in Canada, and the program of systematic cultural suppression, no such practice could be suggested, although it would have substantially enhanced the CNR's program, as Indian Days at Banff, the success of the Stampede, and later events at the Indian museum of 'Ksan in Hazelton proved after the ban was eventually dropped in the early 1950s. At this point, in the Skeena Valley, Scott and Barbeau were directing events although

⁵⁷Hill, *The Group of Seven*, p. 189.

neither was in direct control of the project in the field.

Supporting a Collapsing Discourse

The project was active in the field in 1925 under the direction of Harlan Smith who, as Cole points out, was an odd choice given that it was Barbeau's initiative that got things started and that he had done the actual ground work. Cole identifies Smith's long experience in the field in dealing with Natives as probably the greatest consideration for this choice.⁵⁸ As well, Barbeau's close affiliation with Scott, and the similarity of their views, might have disqualified him from delicate negotiations with the Gitksan.

The tasks that lay ahead were not simple. First permission had to be obtained from the owners of the poles. This seems to have been a crucial sticking point, as this deference is insisted on again and again in the correspondence and reports of the program. The chiefs of the Gitksan villages of Kitwanga, Kitsegucla, Kitwancool, Kispiox and Kitanmax, as well as the nearby Carrier village of Hagwilget and the Coast Tsimshian village of Kitselas all received a letter written by Smith explaining the program. Although lengthy, the letter should be cited in full because it does much to clarify the federal position, as presented to the Natives, and it has not been previously published. It is also as important for what it leaves out as for what it states.

To All Whom it May concern,

Mr. Barbeau, who was at Kispiox, Skeena Crossing, Hazelton and Hagwilget, as well as Kitwanga last year, went to Ottawa, where he lives, and told many of the good white people, members of Parliament and Dominion Government officials, about the Indians. There are a few other men who go to all parts of Canada to find out about the Indians, the way they live and the things they make, also to find out about the trees, rocks, stones, flowers, fish, animals and birds. These men return to Ottawa and teach people free of charge about these things as they are working all the time for the Dominion Government.

The men who study the Indians all come to be good friends of the Indians. For many years these men have tried to get justice and help in sickness for all the Indians. It is the very same in the United States. It is very hard work, as some white people will not

⁵⁸Darling and Cole, p. 35.

believe them. The bad people who want the Indian lands, or to get his furs too cheap, or to get him drunk and rob him, do not like these men and try to make trouble for them.

At last these men have succeeded in a small way a little bit. So there is now a Dominion Government committee at Ottawa which is trying to help save the totem poles and help the Indians keep the totem poles on the places where they were [sic] where the Indians' children and their children's children can always see them and remember their fathers and the old customs.

These white people also want to see the poles, learn how well the Indians could carve and paint, hear the stories and know of the honour of the chiefs.

As I have worked among the Indians since 1897 (twenty-eight years), am known by all the Bella Coola Indians, Mr. Andrew Paul and the Rev. Peter Kelly, I was sent by the Dominion Government to see if the chiefs wished me to help.

I was given money for this work and have put it in the Hazelton bank. This I am to use if I can pay the people for their labour and to buy cement, oil and such things, to try and fix the poles so they will not fall down and be rotted by the rain and weather.

First I must get permission from the chiefs. I will not touch a pole until I have permission to do so. Then I am to fix it below the ground so it will not rot. For this, cement and tar or paint will be used, but not so that it will show above the ground. Then I am to oil the pole like the one at Prince Rupert, so that it will not rot, and put colour where it should be, but not much colour.

Nothing must be done that the chiefs do not want. If anyone does wrong, come and tell me.

The newspaper in which Smith's letter was cited added a significant editorial comment:

It will be remembered that the Indians in the district about Kitwanga and Kitwancool have shown a disposition to resent any persons going through their domains, and last year several parties were turned back from the Kitwancool Valley. Dr. Smith is endeavouring to educate these people to the value of their own artistic monuments and is seeking their co-operation in the work.⁵⁹

The patronizing and parental tone of the letter, which speaks down to its recipients, is evident throughout. It contrasts strongly with the erudition of the journalistic addition which is addressed to a different readership. But beyond that there is a blatant attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the Native readers. In going out of its way to convince the chiefs of the good intentions and offices of the benevolent paternal government of which they are wards, it fails to mention anything about the potlatch ban, which constituted in turn a ban on raising poles, since no pole could be erected without the attendant ceremonies to validate it. Although Duncan Campbell

⁵⁹Daily Province, Vancouver, June 28, 1925, mag. sec. p. 2.

Scott himself was on the committee, and was known to the Gitksan, his name is not mentioned, nor are the other members of the committee. It may be assumed that Smith was aware that Scott's involvement would produce immediate resistance and suspicion. Instead, the letter diverts attention to unrelated matters of health and trade, and the simplistic trope of good white versus bad white people, with all government agents, of course, being cast as the former. Nor does it outline the "death of the Indian" or the extinction of their culture or any attempt to arrest its final decay and place it into an embalmed hypostasis. Yet these were the underlying *raisons d'être* for the project, and were clearly explained in Barbeau's addresses to white audiences encountered in the previous chapter. Indeed, where Barbeau stated that the Natives had forgotten almost all their past culture, Smith attempted to sell them on the idea that the restoration program would be a cause for remembrance into the distant future. Smith also successfully skirted any mention of the tourist or the future profits anticipated by the railway on the successful completion of the project. Sharing in this was presumed not to be of interest to the Gitksan, whose gratitude for government assistance and benevolence would blind them to their exploitation.

But above all, the letter fails to mention that the poles would change their significance forever once they became part of the program. Although ownership was stated as residing with the chiefs, authority over the poles would be transferred to the institutions and discourse of an Anglo-Canadian culture. The poles would lose their traditional significance within Gitksan culture. Under the panoptic gaze of the railroad, the tourist, the administrator, the anthropologist and the artists, all of whom who would be properly educated in how to look at them, the poles would gain significance as static emblems of the death of Gitksan culture, and as artifacts to be preserved and used as tourist and artistic attractions for Anglo-Canadian audiences. The Gitksan were denied competence as viewers of their own art. The **Province** deemed them unable to see "the value of their own artistic monuments". Such assumptions excluded them from authority over their own culture and placed the proper viewership for the productions of that culture in the newly competent non-Native audiences. The implications did not escape the Gitksan. Nor, as the **Province** and Smith himself suggested, were they blind to land claims, maintaining control and possession of their own traditional territories to which they had never ceded title. Indeed, it

seems that the Gitksan were (in)famous among the populace of Canada and the readers of the popular press at that very moment for more than their poles.

Shortly before Smith's letter appeared, a lengthy article was published in **Saturday Night**.⁶⁰ The lurid headline read "Halt! Red Men Bar Whites from B.C. Lands - Surveyors Taken Prisoners and Tried by Indian Tribunal for Trespassing in Kitwancool Valley - Ceremony Grotesque, Pathetic and Impressive - Allied Tribes Lay Claim to all Lands in Province and Ask Pay for Alienation." The first part of the article outlined the substance of the land claims put forward by the Allied Tribes, as well as the federal government's duplicity and stonewalling on the matter, including breaking the promise of consultation before ratifying the report of the Indian Affairs Commission "without the knowledge of the parties chiefly interested. The question of aboriginal title is apparently disposed of by this document, though the Allied Tribes contend the powers of the commission were practically limited to defining the boundaries of Indian reserves."⁶¹ This along with the potlatch ban were the major disputes brewing at the time.

The article, meant for a national Canadian audience, contains numerous errors of fact. Some are simply careless misidentifications. But in certain instances, they seem suspiciously close to deliberate misrepresentations and reveal an underlying duplicity, and even anxiety, in treating its subject. In this context, the article at first goes out of its way to portray and represent the people of Kitwancool as completely assimilated. "They have razed their painted houses, chopped up most of their totem poles for firewood, and listened to the exhortation of the missionary, but they remain sincerely unfriendly towards their pale-faced brother." It seems odd that a national publication should authorize such a statement at the very moment when the federal government, or at least its Indian Department, railway and museum, were trying to promote the area on precisely the opposite terms. Indeed, it is exactly at this time that it was becoming public knowledge that the Gitksan, and most assuredly the Kitwancool, had kept their poles intact, as

⁶⁰P.W. Luce, "Halt! Red Men Bar Whites from B. C. Lands", **Saturday Night**, June 27, 1925, n.p. A copy of this article was found in the Harlan Smith papers in the Royal British Columbia Museum. He had kept the article in his personal possession until his death.

⁶¹Ibid.

Kihn's painting would testify and as Barbeau's book would soon document. The point here, of course, was to cast doubt on their cultural continuity and thereby undermine their land claims.

But the major part of the article is a free interpretation of a confrontation between Mr. A. P. Horne, a forestry engineer of Hazelton, and James Bennett, an assistant, and the residents of the remotest of the Gitksan villages, Kitwancool, in which the two cedar surveyors were put through a mock trial, sentenced for trespassing and then expelled. In this second, more elaborate narrative, in which anxiety is cloaked with humour, the familiar tropes for representing the Native which we have seen used by Scott and Barbeau are deployed once more. One new aspect, however, is the denial of language. The Indian is literally deprived of speech on more than one occasion. In a passage exploited for its comic potential, the Kitwancool sentinel is reported to have forgotten the word for halt, and having remembered it, asks, "What do you want in um valley?" One of the chiefs is later reduced to "inarticulate cries of rage". Lacking the ability to articulate ideas, the Indian was thus denied any cognitive authority within the discourse which defined and represented them. The appearance of the "Big Chiefs" wearing ceremonial regalia is said to have "looked ludicrous" in what is described as their "gaudy finery". There is more in this vein. The racial opposition of "Redman versus Whites" in the headline and the contradiction inherent in the term "pale-faced brother" in which absolute difference and family resemblance are presented simultaneously is a case in which the dangerous slippage that occurs between colonialists and colonized peoples is at once presented and concealed.

Towards the end, the story steps out of its tragicomic mode and becomes deadly serious. The significance of the occasion, for all of its "grotesque", "child-like" and "pathetic" appearances, was recognized as being of great importance historically. "For possibly the first time in Canadian history, white men were being brought to trial before an Indian tribunal, charged with trespassing on aboriginal territory." This was described as an "uncanny experience". Indeed, Freud's definition of the uncanny as a doubling is more than pertinent here, for the anxiety produced by the experience of a trial which mimicked the forms used in prosecuting the Gitksan for potlatching, or for protesting the expropriation of their lands, is palpable throughout the article. British, or now Canadian, justice and law, as well as prerogatives to the land, are being

usurped and even ridiculed by those who were aware of legitimate prior claims. The Gitksan, or more specifically the Kitwancool, were representing themselves in the legal sense, and placing themselves in a position of power and authority over their territories.⁶²

In the final paragraphs, the article reverses itself and gives credit and erudition to the Gitksan speakers. It quotes at length a declaration reported to have been delivered at the trial by a Gitksan spokesperson:

“We, the Indian residents of the Kitwancool Valley of the Skeena River district of British Columbia, in solemn meeting assembled, here and now declare that it was the wish of our ancestors, as it is our wish, that all the products of that area north of the nine-mile post in this valley, and for a distance in that direction of 115 miles by 60 miles east and west, are and shall remain ours.

“When we effect a settlement with the government, we will dispose of the said products on a royalty basis, but until that time no white man shall enter there. You are therefore requested to return to the place whence you came, and there be about your business.

“God made land, God made salmon, God made cedar, God made animals, for everybody, Indian as well as white man. Much he gave to the white man, and a little he gave to the Indian. This territory he gave to the Kitwancool Indians, and what we have we hold.”⁶³

From this public declaration of title to their lands it now becomes evident that much more was at stake in the elaborate plans and undertakings of the federal government than simply the poles, and their preservation, or their redefinition and representation. The landscape being represented by the “invasion” (Barbeau’s term) of technicians and artists was itself contested. And the position of the Other was shifting. That which had been thought to be contained, confined and was, if Barbeau and others are to be believed, condemned to extinction was itself threatening to break out of the borders of the discourse in which it had been enclosed. The disappearing Other was threatening to return. Continuity and its denial, the poles and their “preservation”, the

⁶²They did not relinquish this position. Some thirty years later, before a British Columbia Provincial Museum sponsored restoration program could proceed, a formal statement on Kitwancool territorial claims and cultural continuity had to be published. Wilson Duff, **Histories, Territories, and Laws of the Kitwancool**, Anthropology in British Columbia Memoir No. 4, Victoria: Provincial Museum, 1959.

⁶³**Saturday Night**, June 27, 1925. The source of this remarkable quote which freely mixes legal jargon and specific land claims statements with rhetoric stated in stereotypical Native patois was not given in the article.

representation of the land as well as the claim to that territory now all become inextricably linked in a complex discourse around the representation of the Indian. Given that which was now at stake, the borders of this discourse, which were now in danger of imminent collapse, had to be carefully patrolled. Artists, ethnologists, archeologists, tourists, railway officials and functionaries of the Department of Indian Affairs were sent in to do the job.

What ensued both at Kitwancool and within the text that represented the story, can now be viewed as an ironic inversion of what Bhabha terms “colonial mimicry”, in which colonized peoples are only partly reformed and represented as subjects within the identity of colonizers through a “flawed colonial mimesis”. Bhabha states that this desire to partially transform the Other in an exercise of colonial power produces a dangerous ambivalence in the subject, or what Bhabha terms the “mimic man”, which tends to deny “presence” and fracture the discourses of colonialism and the singularity of the differences on which it depends.⁶⁴ Here, however, the situation is reversed. The people of Kitwancool, who consistently resisted representation by the colonizing peoples, flaunted the role of partially assimilated subjects, which they recognized as the desire of the colonizers, through the willful mimicry of an appropriated colonial power and judicial practice in which they performed a parody of “whiteness” specifically to display their “Indianness” and maintain sovereignty over their own lands and culture. It is, in fact, the surveyors, who represented the scopic drive of colonial power and its desire to possess, regulate and discipline, who became the observed in a “process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and ‘partial’ representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence.”⁶⁵ At the time, the article missed the irony and masked and concealed the anxiety which it created and the ruptures that it exposed by repeatedly devaluing the proceedings as a “pathetic” attempt at

⁶⁴See Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, **October**, no. 28 (1984), pp. 125 - 133, reproduced in Annette Michelson et. al., **October: the First Decade, 1976 - 1986**, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987, pp. 317 - 325. Bhabha defines the mimic as “almost the same but not quite.” p. 322.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 321. His emphasis.

dispensing Western style justice in a “slavish copy”.⁶⁶

It was precisely at this anxious moment then, that the restoration project got underway, although any mention of these issues in Smith’s letter to the chiefs (or in later accounts) was carefully avoided. Native views on this aspect of the discourse were not welcome. Permission was initially obtained for most of the villages, but especially the communities of Kispiox and Kitsegucla. Work began, however, in Kitwanga, where the poles were clearly visible from the tracks.⁶⁷ In July Smith issued a preliminary report on the progress of the project.⁶⁸ The situation looked promising.

Although Cole has written a detailed account of Smith’s activities and tribulations, I would like to recapitulate Smith’s report. Smith indicated that he had permission to work on ten poles near the railroad. He listed the Natives whom he preferred to employ, and “one white foreman who lives on the reservation married to an Indian of influence”. In addition he mentioned the engineers of the CNR. Questions arose about the amount the company was willing to underwrite and the portion that would have to be paid through National Museum expenses. Although no poles had been “finished” at this time, he had to admit it was costing \$250 a pole. “This is probably more than was expected but we have no apologies to make for this job. The last month was largely making inspection, getting permission and awaiting gear. It is a more expensive and difficult job than appeared at first but we are all to the lowest Indian labourer proud of it.” Some poles had been repaired, painted, and were being re-erected. He was also recording the progress, albeit with some difficulty due to lack of time, with both still and movie shots. He noted that his work was a “[b]enefit to R.R. passengers who twice a day walk through and to Indians who live here.”

⁶⁶On colonial mimicry occurring at the points of interdiction which are known but must be concealed, see *ibid.*, p. 322.

⁶⁷See illustration 36.

⁶⁸Harlan Smith papers, RBCM Library.

The project continued in 1926 at Kitwanga, restoring eighteen poles and two figures.⁶⁹ Although two poles which the owner refused permission for the restoration crew to touch remained a sensitive issue, in 1927 the crew was ready to move onward. Gitsegukla, which was also along the track, became the next focus of the restoration team. But here things started to go amiss. The carefully solicited co-operation of the Native population evaporated. The restoration crew was denied the right to work on or 'restore' any of the poles in the village.⁷⁰ The village chiefs had even gone so far as to obtain legal counsel to ensure that their rights over their property would not be disturbed. That is, they were, as they had in the past, using the legal system and institutions of Anglo-Canadian society against its own actions. But opposition to the program was not confined to this one village. Resistance was spreading and vigorous. Permission was also denied to the restoration crew to repair a pole at Hazelton that had been knocked down by a truck in that year.⁷¹ It seems that by 1927 the Gitskan of the Skeena were no longer amenable to having their culture and its physical manifestations or themselves appropriated by the national institutions of the CNR, the National Museum and the Department of Indian Affairs, nor to being declared the last remnants of an almost dead culture, without meaning, and awaiting the new significance to be placed on them from without. They were rapidly realizing the hidden meanings of the restoration assistance program, which had been withheld from or misrepresented to them, and were taking a vital role in resisting it. Indeed, they now demanded that if the poles were to be taken down and/or put up for the interests of the CNR or National Museum, then appropriate ceremonies and payments must be made, i.e. the potlatch ban had to be lifted. They were thus insisting on representing themselves, as in only that way could they declare and negotiate the vitality of their culture and assert their authority over it in the face of attempts, both veiled and overt, to negate that vitality and possession.

⁶⁹See illustration 37.

⁷⁰Smith, referring to himself in the third person, reported to Scott that: "The Indians had been advised in the fall of 1926, and had approved. Now some of them raised objections, so that for two weeks Smith could do nothing. He then moved to Usk, obtained the goodwill of the Indians who owned the poles at Kitselas Canyon, and worked at these poles throughout the summer." Smith, Memorandum to Dr. Campbell Scott, Dec. 5, 1927, Harlan Smith box, CMC Archives.

⁷¹*Prince Rupert Daily News*, May 20, 1927, p. 1. Cole may offer a different version of this incident. p. 274.

The restoration program sputtered on for two more years at Kitselas, a deserted Coast Tsimshian village site that was visible from the tracks, but did not return to the occupied townsites, which had been reclaimed by the Gitksan, who had again thrown out the white intruders. Even at Kitselas, the issues of ownership and authority over the poles became a tricky problem. Both Chiefs Mark McKay and Walter Wright insisted on their proprietary rights over their poles and that Smith not commence work until they had arrived to supervise it. McKay also dictated whom he thought would be the best carver to replace the Eagle at the top of his pole: William Brown from Hazelton, whom he claimed was a good totem pole carver. Smith was obliged in June of 1927 to issue a statement to the "Indians of Kitselas" stating "I hereby agree that I will not change the ownership of your Totem Poles *or your lands* in any way."⁷² The statement makes it apparent that both the Gitksan and the government agents understood the links between authority over the poles, the vitality of the Gitksan culture and the validity of their land claims. In fact, at that very moment, Scott was fighting the last battle to keep the Allied Tribes from reaching the Privy Council; here he won, but only by passing the most draconian measures yet. He was obliged, against all tenets of democracy, to forbid the exchange of money over the issue of land claims so that unless lawyers were willing to work *pro bono*, legal challenges virtually ceased. In any case, accepting land claims as the price of the restoration project was too high for the government and the project ended. Smith's involvement with it terminated in 1928, with Scott issuing a statement thanking him for his work.⁷³ It staggered on for two more years under Campbell, the engineer who had directed the actual work, but made no headway.

One other aspect of the program under Smith needs to be mentioned. Smith noted in his 1925 report, in shorthand form, that: "Souvenirs badly needed for sale at Kitwanga. Only postcards are sold by Mission. Everyone should sell larger pictures and models of totem poles (good ones not fakes) bracelets, earrings, etc. as an ad. for Ry."⁷⁴ He was probably recalling the enormously

⁷²My emphasis. Smith to the Indians of Kitselas: June 27, 1927, Folder W. Harlan Smith file, CMC Archives.

⁷³Darling and Cole, p. 43.

⁷⁴Letter from Harlan Smith, to unknown person, from Kitwanga, B.C., July 22, 1925, RBCM.

successful precedent of the Sante Fe Railway and the popularity of pottery, silver work and weaving by Natives of the American Southwest, where, it will be recalled, he had spent time. It appears that Smith may have been thinking of a similar “revival” of Northwest Coast art, albeit no longer for traditional purposes, but specifically to enhance the tourist trade. Several mentions of such a revival have already been noted. Eric Brown touched on the subject in his **L’Art et Les Artistes** article, but gave no source for the idea, although it was joined with his notice of the totem pole restoration program under Smith’s direction. One of the French critics picked up the ideas as well. Barbeau, however, as we have seen, adamantly opposed any such notion, but Smith seems to have been undeterred. The CMC Archives contains a 1927 letter from J.H. Ticehurst to Smith that lists the names of local Indians who can do carving and weaving. The list is extensive and is worth citing in full. From Hazelton, it lists: “William Brown, age 64, woodcarver, Totem poles. Mask. etc. ; Tom Campbell, age 55, wood carver, and canoes, baby’s [sic] cradles; Abel Oaks, age 50 wood carver and silver and makes bracelets. Mrs. James White, age 40 weaves pack straps, almost anything in the weaving line; Sam Green, age 40, makes fish traps, canoes, spoons, etc.” From Kispiox: “James Green, age 69, carves totem poles, makes canoes etc., Saloman Johnson, age 69, carves totem poles, masks.” From Glen Vowell: “Nathan Brown, who makes spoons and masks, age 50; Jennie Dick, age 25, weaving of any kind and makes snow shoes, and Charlie Sampson, age 30, wood carver and makes masks.” Ticehurst notes “I did not get any Kitwanga Indians names [,] I thought you would have them your self [sic].” Nor are there any from Kitwancool. The evidence of such a list, which goes well beyond naming only those who would be suitable for lending a hand to the restoration program itself, and which gives assurances that all those listed “are firstclass workmen” indicates Smith’s interest in organizing a revival of Native work rather than just soliciting names to help him with the restoration project. On the other hand, the length of the list places into question the concept itself. Why would a “revival” be necessary if all of these people still practised their arts? Was, and is, the term still used to sustain the view that Native culture had died?

Despite Smith’s continued insistence on the necessity of Native arts as a part of the program, it was never incorporated into the restoration project. Such a move would after all, even if they were only produced for the benefit of the Railway as he suggested, have validated the production

of Native art and culture in the present and provided a point at which the Gitksan could have negotiated a valid, intercultural relationship, even if based on commodified, transcultural objects.⁷⁵ As Barbeau stated repeatedly, “no hope of a revival” of the “lost arts” was possible given the absence of “racial stamina”. Scott as well would have resisted any such plan. Darling and Cole indicate that Barbeau, who had the backing of Scott, worked extensively behind the scenes to discredit everything Smith did, to the extent that Jenness, who sided with Smith, had Barbeau removed from the restoration committee.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, his strategy succeeded. Smith would have to wait some decades for a so-called “revival” to occur, and then only after the discourse of the Indian had again gone through a major shift.⁷⁷

Nonetheless, Smith had one more opportunity to place his views before the public. He wrote an article for the **London Illustrated News** reporting on the restoration program.⁷⁸ The profusely illustrated article is notable in that it is written entirely in the present tense. It makes no attempt place Gitksan culture in the past, nor does it mention the death of the race. He stated, for example, that “totem poles are not gods or idols. . . . They *are* made. . . . These are the emblems of brotherhoods, clans, and families. . . . They illustrate. . . . A carver on the father’s side of the family *is* employed” and so on.⁷⁹ Smith also wrote that, “In recent years some of the Indians have been using tombstones bought from white men”, not only in place of but also in addition to totem poles. While noting the presence of Euro-Canadian influences, he also gave a clear

⁷⁵See Ruth Phillips, “Nuns, Ladies and the ‘Queen of the Huron’”, in Phillips and Steiner, pp. 33 - 50. The idea of a “revival”, like most of the terms we have dealt with, had various meanings during the 1920s. It could either refer to a renewal of the production of traditional objects which it was held had stopped, or it could mean the production of objects using Native motifs by non-Native industry. Smith would use it both of its meanings.

⁷⁶Darling and Cole, pp. 41 - 42.

⁷⁷Hill, **The Group of Seven**, conveys the impression that the issue of the revival of arts in the area was brought up only at the beginning of the program and then never mentioned again. Smith’s letter indicates that it continued to be discussed well into the execution of the program itself. Indeed, it became something of a sore point between Barbeau and Smith, and is repeated continuously in Smith’s reports. Smith, however, does not figure in Hill’s research. His name is absent from the index.

⁷⁸Harlan Smith, “Preserving a ‘Westminster Abbey’ of Canadian Indians: Remarkable Totem Poles now under Government Care”, **London Illustrated News**, May 21, 1927, pp. 900 - 901.

⁷⁹My emphasis.

indication that carving was still ongoing; it was these influences that were assimilated not vice versa. In addition, he underlined the current value of the poles to the Gitksan and their resistance to having their meanings and audiences change: "I quickly discovered that the owners of these poles had objections to our touching them . . . One young man said: 'These poles are monuments like grave-stones, and we do not want a show made of them for white people to stare at.'" Smith's claim that the youth was interested in preserving the traditional meaning of the poles flies in the face of the repeated claims that it was the young who were most active in abandoning that culture and identity. Simultaneously, the insistence on the resistance to the panoptical gaze of the new non-Native audiences who were recognized as turning the Gitksan into a contained and static spectacle speaks to a clear understanding of those aspects of the program which had remained underarticulated by Smith himself when he first wrote to the chiefs.

In contrast, an article which had appeared two years earlier in the same publication took an entirely different viewpoint.⁸⁰ Ostensibly a review of Charles Harrison's **Ancient Warriors of the North Pacific: the Haidas, their Laws, Customs, and Legends; with Some Historical Account of the Queen Charlotte Islands**, published in 1925, it was accompanied by many illustrations supplied by the National Museum of Canada which, by adding Kwakwak'wakw material to the Haida, ensured that the conclusions drawn could be applied across the region. The opening column rehearsed the jargon of disappearance: "once a powerful tribe. . . the people are gone. . . decaying and disappearing. . . all that are left . . . The villages are in ruins . . . Those who occupied them are now all dead . . . remnants . . . of this decaying nation . . . inability of the North American Indian race to survive in contact with European civilization. . . beginning of the end" and so on. Not one instance of this liberal assortment of terms which circulated widely and prefaced so much of the writing on the Indian can be found in the Smith article. But Smith was not the only one attempting to shape public opinion.

⁸⁰Anonymous, "The Inlet People: Clansmen of a Dying Race", **London Illustrated News**, April 18, 1925, pp. 684 - 685.

Barbeau was also adamant that the restoration project be perceived in a singular and non-ambiguous manner. He took every opportunity to express his view in both his popular and scholarly writings. In his 1929 published report on the Gitksan, dedicated to academic audiences, he again placed them into a retrospective past. "Totem poles were once a characteristic form of [Indian] plastic art. . . . This art now belongs to the past. Ancient customs and racial stamina are on the wane everywhere, even in their former strongholds Totem poles are no long made."⁸¹ He offered conclusive proof of this claim. "Only one of them among the Gitksan has been cut down and disposed of to a museum, a few years ago; and this forfeiture could happen only after the total collapse of the ancient customs and memoirs."⁸² He then noted that the owner had to repay the relatives for the initial cost of the pole. But does not both this transaction, and that odd "only" which opens the sentence, especially in the context of the voracious appetite among various international collection agencies for such poles, reasonably lead to precisely the opposite conclusion?

The fact that only one pole was sold and compensation had to be paid, and that poles were still being raised while Barbeau was doing field work, [although he omits mention of this fact] would indicate that the Gitksan were still in possession of their traditional culture, and the poles still retained their social significance. The Gitksan had not reached the point of the Nass River natives who had been persuaded to burn their poles, and sell the rest, or of the Haida, who stopped raising them [in the 1880s] and similarly, destroyed others.⁸³

I have suggested that such authoritative, simple oracular statements, backed up by little evidence, as made by Barbeau, are symptomatic of his response to the fracturing of the discursive framework. As on the Prairies, it becomes increasingly clear that by the late twenties, Barbeau found it necessary to cite every instance of continuity among the Gitksan as its opposite. Any sign of cultural continuity was conflated with collapse. Anxiety centred largely on the poles, whose ambiguities became emblems of this conflict, and could only be overcome by taking

⁸¹Barbeau, *Totem Poles of the Gitksan*, p. 1. Note Barbeau's repetition of Kihn's term "stronghold" and his reassessment of the cultural continuity.

⁸²Ibid., p. 7.

⁸³Dawn, "'Ksan", p. 33.

possession of them, redefining them and re-presenting them. He made a double and mirrored claim that the Gitksan poles were no longer being raised and that the culture which supported them was moribund or next to it. The poles, in his eyes, consequently lost their original meaning and significance as direct representations of Gitksan culture, which no longer existed except in his own records. The poles became quite literally either decaying emblems of Native decrepitude or empty signifiers waiting the imposition of a new and stable meaning and the arrival of new audiences. Barbeau, the CNR and the artists who would come under his direction filled the vacuum that was created. Insofar as the poles could be disconnected from or invalidated in terms of their original social and cultural significance, and now be seen as emblems of the death of that culture, they could successfully be appropriated by Anglo-Canadian artists working under the auspices of several institutions, such as the National Museum, National Gallery, National Railway, and the Department of Indian Affairs as well as the disciplines of ethnology, and the popular and high arts and the tourist industry. The representation of the Indian could become an image that was purely and nationally Canadian, since it no longer needed to be recognized as distinctly Other. Indeed, the very representation of the poles reassuringly declared the disappearance of the ambivalent Other that had produced them. By successfully using the poles as the token of the death of the Other, they could be incorporated and absorbed as a sign of a living Anglo-Canadian culture, "our" culture, as it was called. The anxiety of the hybrid could be overcome as long as this definition could successfully shape and contain the discourse around the poles. But given that the Indian Other refused to die on schedule, and the variations in viewpoints within the discipline of ethnology, gaps began to open within the normalized knowledges. Indeed, the irony was that it was not so much the Gitksan poles that needed propping up and supporting, but the discourse by which they were known.

Chapter V

Propping Up and Repainting a Discursive Ruin:

Part II, Re-presenting and Re-possessing the Picturesque Skeena Valley

The restored Gitksan poles, or potentially restorable poles, and the village sites which contained them, as well as the contested landscape of the Skeena Valley formed the subject for the next group of artists who arrived in the area under the guidance of Barbeau and the auspices of the Canadian National Railway in the summers of 1926, 1927 and 1928. In the same article in which he framed a meaning for Kihn's pictures within the discourse of disappearance, Barbeau listed a number of Canadian artists whom he later enticed

to invade our preserves. It had become clear to all that the Skeena [was] . . . a new country for Canadian art. . . Thus I became acquainted with Alex Jackson and Edwin Holgate, . . . Miss Florence Wyle, . . . Miss Ann Savage. . . Miss Emily Carr. . . George Pepper and Peg Nichol.¹

Barbeau's summary statement is, while succinct, imprecise, misleading and omits much. It is uncertain precisely when he first conceived of the second phase of his project for an artistic record of the area but it was in place by the spring of 1926, that is the year after Wembley closed and the year before the *Jeu de Paume* exhibition opened. It was also the year after the start of field work on the totem pole restoration project under Harlan Smith, in which it was becoming increasingly evident that Gitksan resistance to federal policies was growing in the area and that the Native population was not disappearing as anticipated by the state. During the 1920s the Canadian Native population had turned a critical corner and was now, for the first time in

¹ Marius Barbeau. "Ancient Culture Vignettes Past", p. 30. Hill, *Group of Seven*, p. 191, reports that "The number of artists was further expanded when Barbeau obtained railway passes for Peg Nicol of Ottawa to work on the Stoney reserve at Morley, Alberta, and for Anne Savage and Florence Wyle to work on the Upper Skeena." Hill's phrasing could be misleading insofar as Pegi Nicol also went to the Skeena. Dyck, pp. 2 and 20, has pointed out that George Pepper, Lowrie Warrener and John Byers also made trips to the region, although Warner produced little of note and Byer's trip is undocumented.

decades, on the rise.² In addition, groups on the West Coast were becoming increasingly well organized and vocal in pressing for recognition of their rights, especially in the matter of land claims.³ Both empirical evidence and the rise of an oppositional voice challenged the discourse of disappearance. Reaction was prompt. The situation led in the following year to even more draconian and coercive federal legislation which outlawed the hiring of legal counsel to pursue land claims. It was combined with an increase throughout the decade in the enforced placement of Native children in residential schools, thereby destroying families and, it was hoped, any remaining cultural continuity.⁴

Within this contradictory and conflicted context, Barbeau's plans had grown beyond his initial encounter with Kihn and had become extremely ambitious. His "invasion" of artists who would capture, take possession of and re-territorialize this "new country for Canada" with their paintings, and give it a new meaning, involved nothing less than enlisting the major members of the Group of Seven and redirecting their practice to the sites of the region. In a move that could be interpreted as further usurping Brown's and the Group's prerogatives in creating a new Canadian visual identity, Barbeau appropriated the terms already used by the National Gallery. The overlap here was important, but again, not necessarily harmonious. Despite Barbeau's claim, not "all" were equally convinced by his project, but one ally was secure: Duncan Campbell Scott. In addition to adding to and modifying the visual identity of Canada, Barbeau's project must also be seen in terms of its role in furthering his and Scott's imperative for representing, or rather denying Native identity and presence within the context of the discourse of disappearance, which both knew, at this moment, was in danger of disappearing itself, threatened

²See Anatole Romaniuc, "Aboriginal Population of Canada: Growth Dynamics Under Conditions of Encounter of Civilizations", *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 1. 2000, pp. 95 - 138. "The process of depopulation reached its nadir at the turn of the 20th Century and a slow journey towards demographic recovery began thereafter." p. 108. Romaniuc gives the total Aboriginal population in 1901 as 106.9 (thousand), in 1921, as 120.7 (thousand). This is a rise of over ten percent. By 1931, the number rose by another ten percent, a roughly 25% increase since the turn of the century. Obviously any claim that the Native population was on the verge of extinction by this time was stated in the face of clear statistics to the contrary.

³Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990, pp. 96 - 113.

⁴*Ibid.*, n. 14, p. 259 and pp. 79 - 85.

by Native resistance both on the Prairies and the Coast and by alternative ethnographic practices.

Letters between Jackson and Barbeau indicate that not only Jackson, but also Harris, MacDonald and Lismer were approached. Casson, Carmichael and Varley seem to have been left out, although Varley was now resident in Vancouver. Negotiations were begun through Jackson to have those chosen come to the Skeena to follow in Kihn's footsteps and redo his subjects. Barbeau must have initially anticipated that this would be an easy matter, given his earlier work with Jackson and Lismer in Quebec, the manner in which he draped the invitation in the garb of nationalist identity, the free passes offered by the railway, the fact all were already doing extensive painting elsewhere in British Columbia, the prospect of a major exhibition, and the picturesque attractions of the Skeena Valley landscape and its Native villages and poles. At first, the outlook appeared promising. As time progressed, however, for one reason or another, Harris, MacDonald and Lismer made their excuses for not participating, although the first two still took part in the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition.⁵

This repeated resistance on the part of all of the other Group members whom Jackson and Barbeau attempted to enlist on several occasions has never been sufficiently accounted for and the reasons for it remain obscure. In the face of such powerful incentives and attractions the polite excuses that were offered for declining the invitation, such as pressing family matters and loyalty to the CPR, hardly seem convincing. Could it be possible that the other members responded negatively to the invitations and solicitations at least in part because they sensed, but

⁵ CMC, Coll. Marius Barbeau. Initially, Jackson reported success. "Harris is very anxious to put in a few weeks on the Skeena and it sounds very interesting to me. I spoke about an exhibition of Indian masks to the ex. Committee of the Art Gallery and they think it will be fine for the autumn." Jackson to Barbeau, Feb. 25, [1926], A.Y. Jackson file, NCG. As cited earlier, Barbeau also wrote Kihn in early 1926 indicating that he had the cooperation of Jackson and Harris and "possibly some others of the Seven". Barbeau to Kihn, February 21, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers. Jackson eventually had to report that Group support had diminished, "Harris and MacDonald seem definitely committed to the CPR country while Lismer cannot get away from his family." Jackson to Barbeau, [1926], CMC Archives. Nonetheless, Barbeau was still reporting to Kihn in November 1926 that he expected Jackson, Harris, [and] Holgate to join him the following summer, i.e. 1927. None of them did. Barbeau to Kihn, Nov. 22, 1926, Langdon Kihn Papers.

Both Lismer and Harris went on to paint extensively in British Columbia throughout their careers, with Harris moving to the province after his return from the American Southwest in 1940. Neither ever approached Native subject matter although other artists with similar interests had, including Jock Macdonald.

could not say, that the direct confrontation of the Native subject matter with their own carefully constructed myth embedded in the “empty landscape” would endanger the latter?

In the first summer of the project, the reluctance or even resistance on the part of the other members of the Group to Barbeau’s initiatives left only Jackson and his friend from Montreal, Edwin Holgate, who had recently returned from study in Paris and specialized in portraits and woodcuts. Barbeau wrote to Holgate: “Mr. Jackson recently told me in Toronto that he hoped to induce you to visit the Skeena River, northern B.C., this summer with him. . . . In the course of several lengthy visits I have had ample opportunity to become acquainted with . . . this mountainous and picturesque district.” Aside from the attractions of the “picturesque” landscape, Barbeau added the draw of “the possibility of some exhibitions in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, of Indian carvings (masks and totem poles in miniature) and interpretative paintings of Kihn and, if you come with Jackson, of yourself and others available. This would be next winter or spring.”⁶

The Success and Failure of A.Y. Jackson

Jackson, on the other hand, needed no introduction. He was already acquainted with Barbeau, was the only member of the Group from Montreal, and had previously travelled with him and Lismer on the Île d’Orléans. But a prior connection with the railroad also formed an important history which would have added a precedent for the project. It has been pointed out that the interaction between railways and painters had been one of the primary sites for representing the nation since the 1880s. This had, however, fallen into disuse by the turn of the century. It is no coincidence, then, that at the same time as the nascent Group was forming with the agenda of creating a new landscape art for Canada, that is in 1913- 1914, this relationship would be taken up again. Jackson had already come West with J. W. Beatty in 1914, as far as an Jasper, on a

⁶Barbeau to Holgate, May 26, 1926, CMC, Coll. Marius Barbeau B204/19, 1926-29, 1931, 1934, 1940, Holgate, Edwin. The precise dates of the exhibition do not seem to have been set at this time and would not be solidified until the following year.

trip underwritten by the Canadian Northern Railway with the intent that “[t]he paintings would be used in an advertising campaign”.⁷ Jackson, however, was dissatisfied with much of his work on this trip and destroyed most of it. The railway went bankrupt shortly thereafter and never completed the commission for the work.⁸

More successful was the next collaboration with the Algoma Central, arranged by fellow Group member Lawren Harris, who fully understood the importance of the relationship between the railways, nationalism and painting in Canada. He had the social and business connections as well as the wealth and power to negotiate a deal to have a boxcar outfitted as a “bunkhouse” and shunted from place to place in the region north of Lake Superior. These trips became mythologized in the history of the Group as a confrontation with the raw wilderness of “Northern” Canada and with their ability to draw a direct unmediated inspiration from it in order to produce images which expressed the nation’s national identity. Recently, the Algoma excursions have been critically examined as being much more than was originally proclaimed. Allan Fletcher has pointed out the close connection between the interests of large-scale capital, the creation of the myth of the wilderness, and the fictions underlying its depiction and reception in the Group’s work from this period. His conclusions that much more was going on than a simple direct and unmediated response to the landscape are of some consequence here.⁹

Jackson repeated his trip west in 1924, going as far as Alberta with Lawren Harris, “as we

⁷Dorothy M. Farr, *J. W. Beatty, 1869 - 1941*, Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1981, p. 28. This first excursion carried with it the history and what could now be called the tradition of railways employing artists to travel to Western Canada and paint the picturesque and sublime beauty of the Rockies to be used as promotion for tourism and colonization. I have already mentioned that this collaboration, or what would now be termed “partnership between art and industry”, had begun as early as 1886, that is when the railway to the west coast was first completed. See Dennis Reid, *Our Own Country, Canada*, and Jessup, “Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and ‘The Business of Becoming a Nation’.”

⁸The Canadian Northern subsequently became part of the Canadian National Railway.

⁹Allan Fletcher, “Industrial Algoma and the Myth of Wilderness: Algoma Landscapes and the Emergence of the Group of Seven”. Fletcher’s thesis seems to have become something of a concealed landmark in recent reassessments of the Group of Seven. Both Hill, *The Group of Seven* and Jessup, in her critical assessment of Hill’s catalogue, make references to it although neither actually cites the author, who remains in both instances unnamed.

planned to do some work for the Canadian National Railways".¹⁰ Although he recognized himself at this point again as an agent of the railway, the two artists did not go as far as the Skeena that summer. It took Barbeau's intervention to arrange this.

Jackson published an account of his trip to the Skeena for popular consumption in two places. In December 1927 his article in **Maclean's Magazine** appeared concurrently with the opening of the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition.¹¹ The article is illustrated with a drawing of a large image of a central totem pole, inserted over a village scene, with mountains in the background.¹² The pole is literally placed within the viewer's space. This conjunction of his picturesque landscape drawing, overlaid with the representation of Native art, in a format addressed to a popular Canadian audience, supporting government programs and enhancing the railroad tourist industry makes this one of the prime sites in which the complex interplay of the various parties and interests are made apparent. Decades later he followed this up in his memoirs with a second recitation. In the latter he reported that in "1926 Marius Barbeau went West again and arranged that Edwin Holgate and I should accompany him to the Skeena River. He was particularly anxious to investigate the state of the Indian totem poles, for he had been instrumental in having Mr. T. B. Campbell, a C.N.R. engineer, sent out to make an effort to preserve them."¹³ This (mis)accreditation is a case of selective memory and extended loyalty. Jackson was well aware that Harlan Smith was in charge of the project, as he had stated earlier in the article in **MacLean's Magazine**. In his memoirs, however, Jackson omits any overt mention of Harlan Smith, but does add an oblique disparaging assessment of the results:

The restoration of the colours was absurd. The Indians had only a few earth colours, quiet and dignified. The government official [i.e. Smith] in charge of the job got a

¹⁰A. Y. Jackson, **A Painter's Country: the Autobiography of A. Y. Jackson**, Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1958, p. 86.

¹¹A. Y. Jackson, "Rescuing Our Tottering Totems, something about a primitive art, revealing the past history of a vanishing race", **MacLean's Magazine**, December 15, 1927, pp. 23 and 37.

¹²See illustration 38.

¹³Jackson, **A Painter's Country**, p. 89. Hill, **The Group of Seven**, reports that "Barbeau arranged for Jackson and Holgate to visit the Skeena on passes provided by the C.N.R. in the summer of 1926." Hill, p. 190.

complete line of garish colours from Vancouver and asked the Indians which should be used. The Indians, of course, advised the use of yellow, blue, red, and the poles were made to look ridiculous. The Indians were suspicious of the project and the people in charge of it, and they had good reason to be. The building of the Grand Trunk Pacific to Prince Rupert had ended their isolation and the white man was crowding in to their country.¹⁴

Conversely, in the 1927 article Jackson recounted the care taken in the restoration program: “The whole pole is soaked in linseed oil, painted as far [as] possible in its original color and re-erected on a concrete foundation. . . . In some cases, the restoring is so perfectly done that there is no visible evidence of it, and yet the pole has been given another hundred years lease of life.”¹⁵ Jackson seems however to have sided with Barbeau in the dispute which arose between the two men.

Jackson’s identification with Barbeau’s position extended beyond these minor modifications and exclusions in his texts. In his memoirs Jackson recited Barbeau’s theories on both the history and contemporary situation of the poles. “The poles were not ancient in origin, having been made possible only when the white man’s tools became available to the Indians. When we were in the area they were no longer being made, but the few remaining totem poles kept alive the memory of days when tribes were numerous and powerful.”¹⁶ He thus exaggerated both their lack of numbers and their death. Conversely, he inflated their original importance so that “[t]heir arts, Barbeau believes, kept twenty per cent of their people occupied. But the big powerful tribes, Tsimsyans [i.e. Gitksan], Tlingits, and Haidas, have dwindled to a mere shadow of their former greatness. They produce little to-day in the way of art.”¹⁷ Thus, as much as the poles were an expression of Native culture, they both began and ended under non-Native auspices, that is both their genesis and demise, as well as their subsequent preservation were

¹⁴Jackson, *A Painter’s Country*, p. 89. See illustration 37.

¹⁵Jackson, “Rescuing Our Tottering Totems”, p. 23.

¹⁶Jackson, *A Painter’s Country*, p. 89.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 90.

attributed to European contact.¹⁸ In this sense their role as icons of Indianness became both ambiguous and advantageous. The slippage between Native and non-Native inherent in this history, regardless of its accuracy, allowed for an easy passage into Canadian culture and identity.

The 1927 article also testified to the extent to which Barbeau had been instrumental in educating Jackson's vision of the poles as objects that had lost their initial cultural significance and were awaiting the imposition of a new meaning. In this process the ancient objects were dispossessed from Native ownership and became re-situated within the purview of Canada's newfound identity or as Jackson's title put it, they became "Our" poles. But here the matter became complicated and extended beyond simple dualities of us and Other. These complexities were to become increasingly problematic for Jackson as he tried to negotiate his way among them. In so doing, he had to serve more than one master and to reconcile Barbeau's varying views on Quebec and Native culture with the Group's already established agenda. Jackson, however, recognized the necessity of this difficult task.

Barbeau seems to have convinced Jackson through his persuasive rhetoric that post-contact Canada lacked an ancient *volk*, and the attendant folklore and attachment to the land on which to lay its claims to nationhood and national identity. Jackson credits Barbeau with filling in this gap by "giving the country a background", using both French-Canadian (*Canadien* in Barbeau's terms) and Native culture, specifically in the Skeena Valley, as a plenitude which could give presence to that which was absent in the history of English colonization. The Skeena, Jackson noted, could supply "a history of invasion and conquest, adventures, myths and legends old enough for history and legend to become one". This collapse of history into myth and both into a national identity could be effected and given currency through "these poles [which] stand on the banks of the Skeena [as] a monument to a vanishing race".¹⁹ Herein lay the difference which

¹⁸Marius Barbeau, "Totem Poles: a Recent Native Art of the Northwest Coast of America", *Geographical Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1930), pp. 258 - 272.

¹⁹Jackson, "Rescuing Our Tottering Totems", p. 23.

separated the role of French Canada and the Indian, which were now in danger of being confused and conflated into a single “background”. Indian art, culture and identity could have a role in the construction of a greater Canadian identity only if, unlike and different from French-Canadian culture and peoples, it was represented as staging its own disappearance and being supplanted by the Group of Seven and other Anglo-Canadian painters who took on the task of appropriating and representing it. This vanishing act, followed by a reappearance in a new guise, announced in the title of Jackson’s essay and extended in the body of his text, was re-presented, reproduced and distributed by non-Native ethnologists and artists working for the state to the broadest possible audience through the auspices of a national media under cover of tourist, museum and artistic appreciation. Conversely, French-Canadian culture, again through Barbeau’s initiatives, was seen as vibrant and ongoing, and capable of being foregrounded in the present.²⁰ Maintaining this difference was not, however, such an easy matter.²¹

At the same time as these confident assertions were being made about the decrepitude of the Gitksan, implicitly in contrast with French-Canadian culture, unavoidable problems concerning the precise relationships between Native Canadian art and Canadian *native* art arose. Unsettling challenges appeared which could not be ignored. Jackson noted that an American critic claimed that only Native art was “truly Canadian”.²² This was a substantial charge and one that arose directly and unavoidably from the act of appropriation and transposition of Native culture into the mythic history of Canadian national culture. Given that the Group had claimed this position as their own, the issue needed to be addressed. After assuring the audience that the attack came from without, through an unnamed “American”, Jackson countered with two points. He avoided discussing the complex mechanisms within which his own work was situated. Instead, he denied

²⁰Barbeau was extremely supportive of Jackson’s Quebec works. He both arranged for the sale of the work to a host of clients and encouraged the artist to further production, telling him to paint multiple images to meet the high demand. Barbeau to Jackson, June 4, 1926 and February 1, 1928, CMC Archives.

²¹Jackson could conflate the two in word as well as image. In 1927 he was also to say, “The picturesque side of Quebec is rapidly disappearing” and “one regrets the passing of the habitant”. A. Y. Jackson, “Winter Sketching”, *McGill News*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (June 1927), np. Cited in Dyck, p. 83.

²²Jackson, “Rescuing Our Tottering Totems”, p. 23.

competency to the American viewer. He pointed out that Canada's neighbouring national Other could not recognize the real new *native* art of Canada, i.e. Group painting, which had supplanted Native art, because American art still followed old European colonial models, which according to the Group myth, had been abandoned in Canada. But, while turning the argument back on the inquirer, Jackson's evasion did little to explicate or justify the precise relationships in Canada. Unable to marshal any followup arguments as to why Native art should not be seen as the authentic indigenous art of Canada, except that it was disappearing and had been replaced, Jackson truncated and fragmented his response. Some paragraphs later he inserted the phrase, "[a]s to whether the totem pole is the only native art in Canada there is room for controversy".²³ This was a tacit admission that the subject was still open to contestation and a clear indication that a rivalry existed between Native and *native* Canadian art. Unable to deny that the conflict existed he was unable to resolve it. His usual confidence and bluster were here overcome and shaken by doubts raised in the direct confrontations between his own work and his subject, and of course the reviews from Paris which by this time had already reached him.

But other voices were also raising objections. Jackson reported that there was already resistance and suspicion among the Natives concerning both the restoration project and his own appropriation of the Gitksan poles as subject matter. The disputes centred on Barbeau.

The writer, [i.e. Jackson] when sketching totem poles in one village, noticed the local chiefs looking unkindly at him. Finally, one came up and said the chiefs did not want anything done to the poles. He explained that: 'white man always make money out of Indian, Indian get nothing. One man write big book full of pictures sell that book fifty cents. Indian get nothing.' He was no doubt referring to Marius Barbeau's 'Indian Days'.²⁴

Jackson's paragraph is eloquent. By attributing Native resistance to the combined projects to simpleminded greed for a share of the "fifty cents" from book sales, Jackson trivialized the far

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid. The dropping of articles, verb agreement and abbreviated and colloquial phrasing were common tropes for rendering a parody of "Indian" speech at the time. Jackson does not mention that Barbeau and he were in the midst of producing a second such book. For further evidence from Jackson that "'the Indians were not too friendly when I was there'", see Dyck, p. 57.

more profound issues that were at stake. Furthermore, by testifying to the successful completion of the project, Jackson implied that such protests had been without effect and that the chiefs were powerless to stop it. Similarly, by deploying the trope of rendering the Indian as not yet in command of the language and thus without a voice, his Native speakers, as represented in his text, lacked the ability to articulate the other pressing problems.²⁵ Jackson carried this lack of language into a loss of identity. He reported that “[t]he younger Indian is inclined to belittle his ancestry, ignore his history and legends and often even his native tongue; as one Indian said to me regretfully: ‘We are no longer Indians and we are not white men, I dunno what we are.’”²⁶ The Gitskan are then not only without voice or language but without identity, neither Gitskan nor Canadian. Ironically, it was precisely this confrontation between artist and Native subject which would throw the construction of Canadian identity into question. Moreover it was actually Jackson who remained mute, and policed his own speech by failing to mention that the people of Gitsegukla had not only resisted the pole restoration program but had successfully halted it. Nor did he mention the delegations sent to Ottawa to articulate Native land claims or opposition to the potlatch ban. Indeed, at that very moment the Gitskan were becoming increasingly vocal, but reporting such a voice would have had the effect of disrupting the carefully constructed, but now increasingly precarious, construction of Canadian identity and consequently had to be denigrated or silenced.

The problems facing Jackson were, then, manifold. It was not simply a matter of assimilating and re-territorializing a new landscape and linking it to the Canadian national image. Rather Jackson also had to confront another art form and a people who were resistant to his project. Furthermore, he had to represent this art form and these people in a manner that could link them to Barbeau’s *Canadiens* as “background” for Canada, yet at the same time proclaim them as distinct and disappearing. This was no easy task. The doubts that can be seen emerging in Jackson’s text are also visible in his production during the trip and thereafter. Jackson and

²⁵For an example in which the Gitskan had been silenced in attempting to deliver their land claims to the bureaucracy, see Tennant, p. 97.

²⁶Jackson, “Rescuing Our Tottering Totems”, p. 23.

Holgate arrived in the Skeena Valley in early July 1926. While Holgate stayed until late September, Jackson remained until October.²⁷ Although his four month stay demonstrated a commitment to see the project through, at some point he began to realize that he had made an error and that this confrontation between Gitksan art and that of the Group was not going to be as fruitful as initially anticipated. It is uncertain when misgivings may have crept in. It could have been that the reviews from Paris which would have begun to arrive the following spring may have disheartened him, but it is more probable that problems arose earlier. In any case, despite his initial enthusiasm, and although he supported the totem pole restoration program, he seems to have become uncomfortable in the region and with the project to create a new Canadian subject matter based on the Indian villages and poles and the landscape of the Skeena.

Jackson's discomfiture and doubt may be discerned first in both qualitative and quantitative discrepancies between the drawings done on site and the final paintings done largely after his return to Ontario. While in the area, Jackson sketched prolifically. Over 100 sketches from the Skeena region which remained in the artist's possession until late in his life have recently been published by the National Gallery.²⁸ Such a trove attests to his initial enthusiasm. It should have given rise to a major period of production. It did not. Even with a major exhibition and the publication of **The Downfall of Temlaham** in front of him, Jackson took little initiative in working up the sketches. The resulting paintings are extremely few in number: Hill counts only six.²⁹ But other differences than the simply numerical also separate the sketches from the paintings. The sketches are, as Hill has noted, more documentary than the conventionalized

²⁷Dyck, p. 53.

²⁸Landry, pp. 200 - 222, 17449 - 17522, and page 234, 17456 - 17457. The publication of the sketches, acquired by purchase from the artist in 1973, allows for a clearer tracing of his creative process.

²⁹Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 86, reports "A. Y. Jackson painted at least six canvases from studies made during his trip to the Skeena River in 1926. Jackson exhibited **Gitsegukla Village** (McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1968.8.27), **Totem Poles, Hazelton** (collection unknown), and **Kispayaks Village . . .** He lists **Night, Skeena River** in a Montreal collection in 1933. In 1941 he painted a work titled **Souvenir of Kispayaks** (collection unknown)." p. 327. A small study, **Rocher de Boule**, in the Edmonton Art Gallery, may be one of the "collection unknown" works. **Skeena Crossing**, also known as **Village of Gitseguklas** or **Skeena River**, is a watercolour in the Robert McLaughlin Gallery. An image entitled **Spekshu or Port Essington, a Mission Village, at the mouth of the Skeena** is reproduced in **The Downfall of Temlaham**. A sketch on panel showing two poles and a Victorian style house is in the collection of the Hamilton Art Gallery.

paintings. The drawings concentrate less on the picturesque possibilities of the landscape than on the distinctive features of their primary subjects: the unique poles and grave houses of the Gitksan villages. These are rendered in a detail, fidelity, and proximity that make the act of drawing more a process of recording than of creating. Jackson did not attempt in a primitivizing fashion to adapt or appropriate the sculptural style as had previously occurred within avant-garde practice in Europe and would later occur in the United States.³⁰ His literal relationship between the monumental sculpture and drawing, however, reduced the latter to a secondary importance. Indeed, the presence of the poles threatened to overwhelm the drawings. This may, then have been another cause for his misgivings at the forthcoming exhibition proposed by Barbeau. It must have become apparent that neither drawing nor painting could successfully contain the monumental, public sculpture, and that, if placed next to each other, even in a carefully controlled museum setting, the paintings, with their smaller format and potential audiences, would suffer by the comparison. Jackson redressed this problem when he composed his drawings into finished paintings done back in the studio. As will be shown, the poles, when present, consistently lost their uniqueness, scale and presence and were reduced to generalized images in a landscape, with little detail or distinction. In fact, all the subsequent paintings done off site, in direct contrast to the drawings executed in the Skeena Valley, demonstrate little interest in the Native art work. Poles were relegated to the background or simply placed outside the picture.

This may, however, be part of the reason why statements by Jackson indicate that he was less than entirely satisfied with his painting production in terms of either quality or quantity. In January of 1928 he wrote to Barbeau in reference to the use of his paintings in the **Temlaham** project. "I think you would do well to use none of the other stuff [of mine] in your book. Mine is rather a fizzle. . . . I would just as soon keep it out of the book. I might make a[n] illustration

³⁰The one instance where this might be the case is in his rendition of capital letters for **The Downfall of Temlaham**. See Landry 17456, "Studies for Illuminated Letters for 'The Downfall of Temlaham'", and 17487, "Study for Illuminated Letter for 'The Downfall of Temlaham'", p. 234. But even here, in the published versions, the solid black Roman letters remain separate from the Native motifs which form their backdrops.

of Gitseguklas from across the river. I have a pencil drawing which has possibilities.”³¹ On the matter of the limited production of paintings from his excursion he was later to comment:

We stayed at Usk, Port Essington, and other places on the Skeena. Holgate painted a couple of bold totem-pole canvases and made a number of studies of Indians. I made many drawings and sketches, but I worked up few canvases of this country. The most successful one, now owned by Isabel McLaughlin, was **Indian House**.³²

Despite Jackson’s personal assessment of **Indian House** (or **Indian Home**), critical opinion is divided on the achievement of the work. It seems an odd choice as his “most successful” canvas.³³ Indeed, it is an odd designation, in that it implies the other works were either less successful or failures. It is, however, worthy of close examination since his evaluation of its position in his suite of Skeena works demonstrates how he conceived of his task, the manner in which he thought it was best accomplished, and defined what he saw as “success”. Worked up later from sketches done at the coastal village of Port Essington, well away from Gitksan territory, **Indian House** depicts a small European dwelling, complete with a bit of English carpenter Gothic trim at the gable.³⁴ Except for a puff of smoke coming from the chimney, echoing the mist and storm clouds in the background, it looks uninhabited or uninhabitable.

³¹Jackson to Barbeau, January 15, 1928, CMC Archives.

³²Jackson, **A Painter’s Country**, p. 90. It is true that this statement occurred well after the fact in his memoirs, but it is confirmed by the scarcity of paintings that he did work up on the subject. See illustration 39.

³³Joan Murray reports: “Indian Home was one of Jackson’s favourite paintings. He considered it one of his best Skeena River subjects, and liked to include it in shows, as his niece, Naomi Jackson Groves, recalled.” Joan Murray, **Northern Lights: Masterpieces of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven**, Etobicoke: Prospero Books, 1994, p. 162. Hill, **The Group of Seven**, p. 327, states that although the work was not shown at the **Canadian West Coast Art** exhibition, it had an extensive exhibition history. He lists: “Group, 1928, no. 39; London, 1928, no.117 **Indian Home (British Columbia)**; AAM Canadian 1928, no. 31; NGC 1929, no. 79, \$400; AFA (2) 1930, no. cat. no. **Indian House**, \$300; Roerich 1932, no. 31; Group 1936, no. 125, **Indian Home** (incorrectly listed as property of the artist).” It seems none of Jackson’s limited production of paintings from the trip ever entered the collection of the National Gallery, although it now holds a large number of sketches acquired in the 1970s. Landry, pp. 200 - 222. The scandals and protests surrounding what was considered favouritism by the National Gallery of Canada for the Group of Seven which rose at this time and focussed on the “Wembley controversy” may have made the gallery shy of making its regular purchases from the Group, but the change in subject would seem to warrant at least a modest acquisition. It may, however, be a comment on the quality of the work, especially as perceived by the artist himself. Or it may be taken to be evidence of a less than positive response by Eric Brown to the project.

³⁴A painted oil on panel sketch also exists, **Indian Home Port Essington**, 1926, in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. See illustration 40.

Given its sagging roof, missing shingles and ornamental trim, it is undoubtedly an updated variation of the familiar picturesque Gothic ruin transposed to a Canadian setting.³⁵ It sits, isolated and surrounded by even more decrepit outbuildings, in the middle of the brush with giant skunk cabbage plants and scrub spruce blocking out the foreground and restricting entry to the viewer. The structures have every appearance of being absorbed by the rampant vegetation. Were it not for the title, the viewer could assume it to be an abandoned miner's shack or the last remains of a failed or failing farmstead or derelict mining community.³⁶ In short, the house could easily be taken for an emblem of the failure of Anglo-Canadian colonization in its encounter with a vital, but less than hospitable Nature.

Both the title and a set of four generic transplanted poles in the background, however, shift the reading to one of Native absence. The title refers to no specific group, and thus becomes indicative of the general state of Native houses. The poles, as Jonaitis has stated, are also generalized signs of Indianness, which otherwise seem missing. They are not prominent, but occupy only one back corner in the distance behind the houses and outbuildings. Jackson seems to have found them necessary to reinforce the image as Indian, since they do not occur in the initial drawings and there were no poles in the village.³⁷ The compositional study entitled "first sketch" shows only a towering scrag, or dead coniferous tree with barren and broken limbs, prominently placed in the foreground in front of the house.³⁸ The scrag is another time honoured allegorical cliché of loss and death, and is in keeping with the state of the decaying house and its disintegration and absorption by nature. This is doubly true given the contrasting meaning ascribed to living pine trees which had by this time, and since Thomson, become the icon of the

³⁵Picturesque conventions included the "ruin that was both picturesquely irregular in itself and a reminder of man's transience". Tillotson, p. 142.

³⁶In fact, it corresponds closely to compositions of the American artist John Burchfield or to Carl Schaefer's 1930s images of farms abandoned during the Depression.

³⁷The poles occur in one of three sketches for the painting in the National Gallery. Landry, 17459, "Composition Sketch for 'Indian Home'". The drawing appears to be inscribed with the directions "blank, deserted, stark". See illustration 41.

³⁸Landry, 17475, "First Sketch for 'Indian House'". See illustration 41.

Group and emblematic of the vitality of the non-Native presence in the Canadian landscape.³⁹ Not coincidentally, a half dozen young conifers are growing up in the foreground in front of the house, signs of vital new culture which will soon screen the remnants of the Indian House from view. In Jackson's transpositions, the tilting poles replaced the vital pine and took on the meaning of the dead scrag next to the ruined house as emblems of the mortality of the culture. Jackson's final composition was, then, every bit as much a fantasy as Kihn's image of Native houses and people, but led to precisely opposing readings.

In finalizing this melancholic image, which may be taken as an allegory on the ruined state of Native culture and processes of acculturation and decay, Jackson changed other details from the first impression of his subject. In the "First Sketch", a road leads directly into the image, giving access to the viewer and restricting the power of nature. In both the following two sketches, and the painting, this avenue of entry was eliminated and replaced by the wall of vegetation. The roof of the house in the painted study, while apparently lacking shingles, runs straight across, as it does in Sketch 17486, without the exhausted sag of the later version.⁴⁰ No figures were included in the first studies, although some appear in the intermediate "Composition Sketch for 'Indian Home'".⁴¹ In the final version, Jackson painted in three small figures, a woman and two children. This was a very unusual practice for Jackson, who usually took pains to eliminate all figures. Painted very summarily, they do not disrupt or resist the mood of the work. These ambiguous passive images have no presence as individuals. Their heads are featureless, devoid of faces or identities, while their bodies are limbless. Dressed in Western clothing, they appear to be moving away from the viewer, into the painting's misty background. In short, despite their brilliant autumnal colours, in this context they have a spectral quality, as if trapped inside and haunting the ruin. They thus appear as the opposite of Kihn's figures with their physical presence. Aside from the addition of the out-of-place poles, Jackson eliminated the river and the

³⁹Johnathon Bordo, "Jack Pine - Wilderness Sublime or Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1992 - 1993), pp. 98 - 128.

⁴⁰See illustration 41.

⁴¹See illustration 41.

view of the town, with its prominent white church and steeple on the far bank, which would have both offered Christian redemption and sited the image at a particular locale. The community was replaced by a low drifting mist and dismal heavy gray clouds. The generic mountains in the final painting are higher than in the first sketch, but are still listless rather than dramatic and give no sense of any specific location. All in all, the final product lacked the qualities of the best of his Quebec barn paintings, done at the same time.

This again raises the question of why Jackson insisted that this mournful and atypical production was to be classified as his “most successful” work and why he would go out of his way to draw his viewers’ attention to it as a point of entry into his limited Skeena oeuvre. Here, the image’s success as a painting seems beside the point. Other issues were at work which supplanted aesthetic considerations. I would like to propose that **Indian House** was singled out by the artist and deemed “successful” to the degree that it demonstrated, more than any other of his Skeena works a programmatic depiction of the complete failure and loss of Native culture and identity and a clear statement of Native absence. Despite the title he did not chose a “traditional” style “Native house”, a “picturesque” example being readily available at Kitwanga which would have been in keeping with Kihn’s precedent.⁴² Rather, in painting an image that would counter Kihn’s representation of a living Native presence and culture, Jackson selected a structure that demonstrated the inevitable process of assimilation into the dominant colonial Anglo-Canadian culture. But this transition did not mean survival for those who gave up their “Indianness” for the comforts and benefits of “civilization” and “enfranchisement” as full Canadian citizens. Rather Jackson’s carefully constructed constellation of motifs signifying desolation, decrepitude and death indicated that even after this transition the race still disappeared. In keeping with Barbeau’s often repeated assessments on the impossibility of the Indian race adapting to non-Native culture, there was no other future but extinction. Any ongoing culture was beyond consideration. The double displacement of the Indians made them, in Barbeau’s words,

⁴²See George F. MacDonald, **The Totem Poles and Monuments of Gitwangak Village**, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, 1984, figure 157, p. 131. The house was owned by Jim Laganitz, and was a prominent tourist attraction. Jackson did, in fact, make a drawing called “Collapsing House” which may have depicted this structure but which did not find its way into a painting. Landry, 17519. See illustration 44.

“outsiders” both from their own culture and from Anglo-Canadian, colonial culture. Jackson’s composition was, then, the perfect foil for Kihn’s paintings. These, it will be remembered, showed the Gitksan as present, vital, in possession of, and integrated into their own culture and territories, and still resisting attempts to destroy their traditions and identity by continuing to practice illegal ceremonies. It is in this sense that the painting was “successful” and showed why Barbeau would favour Jackson and discourage Kihn from ever returning. The painting is precisely what was required to shore up and reinforce the tottering discourse of disappearance. It fulfilled the function of redefining and stabilizing Kihn’s ambiguous images. As such it also fit within Barbeau’s call for a genre of tragic Canadian art which would bear witness to the extinction of the Indian race.

But more was at stake in Jackson’s representations than a pictorial confirmation of an endangered ethnographic theory and a state policy. It was not only Barbeau and Scott who had personal and professional interests in seeing the Indian as absent. So did Jackson. As I have previously attempted to demonstrate, the very myth of the Group of Seven and their claim to representing Canadian national identity was founded on the premise that they were the autochthonic, indigenous, native artists of Canada. The validity of this claim rested on the proposition that the Native population, which had formerly occupied that role, had by definition to be excluded and demonstrably proven to be long absent, their culture and consequently their art no longer being produced. This absence cleared the way for the Group to claim the vacated position, re-territorialize the land, and locate Canadian identity within their characteristic “empty landscapes”. **Indian House** then also reproduced this discursive truth. Not only had any Native inhabitants lost their “Indianness” but the race had disappeared in the process. The painting then not only confirmed Barbeau’s theories, and Scott’s policies, but also the very foundational myth of the Group of Seven and that of Canadian identity itself.

The claim to this position was also a claim to the land. Here again we return to the title of the article with which Jackson proclaimed his perception of the landscape and its peoples to the general Canadian public. “Rescuing our Tottering Totems, Something About a Primitive Art,

Revealing the Past History of a Vanishing Race” summarized explicitly the issues at stake.⁴³ The Gitksan had been correct in their anxiety that the restoration program could result in losing possession of their poles and lands. The possessive pronoun in the title clearly indicates who Jackson and the Canadian press thought were now the rightful owners of the poles. Coupling this possession with the phrases “tottering”, “past history” and “vanishing race” justified the alienation of the poles from the Gitksan, who were represented as either in extreme decrepitude or almost no longer existing. Hence their art and lands were open to appropriation by Anglo-Canadian culture and hegemony. In case the title left any doubt about this prospect, the text drove it home. The Skeena region, according to Jackson, “is becoming a white man’s country and the totem poles forlorn are about all that is left to speak of the greater days”. Apparently there was no Native voice to claim its culture or territories. The initial function of English landscape art, that is to declare title to that which is surveyed, still survived in Jackson’s final paintings. Just a few years later, Jackson’s possessive title would be paralleled by Barbeau’s, “Our Indians, Their Disappearance” in which the Native population was left owning only their own extinction. On the other hand it was precisely at this moment that the Native population, especially on the West Coast, were at the closest they had ever been to getting their land claims before the Privy Council. It was only by the most coercive means that this had just been averted by the federal government. It is within this complex of contested categorical imperatives that Jackson’s otherwise minor canvas becomes, literally, his “most successful” work from the Skeena area, in that it, more than any other painting he did from his experiences there, sums up the issues and places them in what he would see as their proper perspective. The multiple, overlapping and mutually reinforcing positions staked out by **Indian House** indicate how Jackson’s Skeena works were to be read in terms of their generalized representations of the state of Native cultures and peoples. However, when he turned to upriver locations which directly confronted Gitksan presence, within their own villages and territories, the works became more problematic and ambiguous.

⁴³It must be kept in mind that this article was published to coincide precisely with the opening of the exhibition of **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** in Ottawa, and would serve as an introduction to the issues for the general public.

The substantial differences separating the sketches done in the field from the paintings done in Toronto are symptomatic of his struggles with this subject. Indeed, the remainder of his paintings appear to be variations in a sequence of experiments in finding the appropriate balance between his desire to represent the distinct features of what he saw before him, including the poles, the villages, the people and the landscape, and at the same time to reduce all of these to a homogenous structure signifying a unified “Canada”. In addition, he was, as Lynda Jessup has demonstrated, charged with attempting to insure a reading that would be similar to his Quebec pictures and provide a “background” for this national identity.⁴⁴ What Jessup does not recognize, however, is that he also needed to proclaim difference and shift the meaning within the Skeena works to one of disappearance rather than continuity.⁴⁵ All the while he had to maintain the framework of the British-based, picturesque landscape traditions on which Group works were posited. The task before him was not simple. It produced many problems and omissions. For example, none of Jackson’s recorded paintings depict Kitwanga, yet the preponderance of the sketches in the National Gallery were drawn in this community.⁴⁶ His intense interest during his stay corresponds both to the restoration program and the fact that it was here that the train stopped and allowed the passengers to disembark and view the poles. Images of Kitwanga would be of most value for both the purposes of the museum and the railway who were his sponsors. The discrepancy between drawings and paintings is thus of concern. In his memoirs, Jackson claimed that this omission was based on aesthetic considerations. He disagreed with the fresh coats of “garish” paint applied to the poles, which would not only have made them appear

⁴⁴Jessup, “Canadian Artists, Railways, The State and ‘The Business of Becoming a Nation’”, offers a well researched account of Barbeau’s program to enlist the Group of Seven, and especially Jackson and Lismer, in painting in Quebec in the early 1920s as a means of making it part of the collective Canadian identity. See pp. 43 - 64. She has, however, some trouble discerning any of the nuances of difference between Jackson’s and Barbeau’s views of the subject.

⁴⁵Jessup conflates Jackson’s and Barbeau’s views on both Quebec cultural traditions and those among the Skeena to a single image. For example she states that Jackson saw carving traditions in Quebec as “relegated to the past, becoming the surviving evidence of an earlier tradition of creativity in Quebec.” *Ibid.*, p. 59. She never points out that Barbeau did not share this opinion on the traditions’ temporal placement.

⁴⁶In contradistinction to Jackson’s normal practice, the Kitwanga sketches are frequently not named by their location, especially those showing poles. Conversely, almost all of those showing grave houses, the school house and pure landscapes are identified as at Kitwanga. See Landry, 17452r, 17452v, 17477, 17478r, 17478v, 17479, 17512, 17513, 17514, 17515, 17516, 17517r, 17518, 17519, 17520, 17521, 17522, 17523v, 17523r, 17525, 17526, 17528 and 17529r.

unauthentic, but also too new. Furthermore, he was nonplussed by their vertical placement. He felt they should have tilted. Such angularity would have given them the appropriate aura of picturesque ruins, set in a perennial state of arrested decay. He even attempted to intervene to have them so positioned, but was unsuccessful.⁴⁷ The restoration and renovation of the poles ruined them as ruins for Jackson. Although it would have been easy for him to reposition them in his paintings, as Campbell, the engineer in charge, suggested he do, he abandoned any further efforts to paint the village.

In his paintings, as opposed to his sketches, Jackson favoured the villages of Kispiox and Kitsegukla, which the restoration project had either not reached or where it had been resisted.⁴⁸ The poles there remained unaltered. **Kispayaks Village** is one of the most ambitious of Jackson's depictions of these two communities.⁴⁹ Significantly, its composition duplicated many of Jackson's earlier works in Quebec. Unlike his empty landscapes, it featured a series of rustic buildings scattered across a clearly defined mid-ground.⁵⁰ By deploying this conflation of compositions, Jackson directly confronted the problem of depicting Quebec and the Gitksan as both the same, that is as "background" for an English speaking post-colonial national identity, and as different, that is as respectively ongoing and discontinuous. This overlap, which tended to blur the boundaries separating the roles of the two cultures, led to certain ambiguities which were further complicated by the actual Native presence in the Skeena area. Given the inhabited state of the village, the buildings of Kispiox may have been discernibly old, but they were neither decrepit nor swallowed up by nature. They could not function "successfully" as tropes signifying ruin or disappearance as did his **Indian House**. Furthermore, their rustic construction and viability brought them dangerously close to the Quebec barns. This resemblance tended to collapse their separate meanings into a non-differentiated sameness in which the distinct readings

⁴⁷Jackson, *A Painter's Country*, p. 110.

⁴⁸Because of the changes that had occurred since Kihn's expedition, Jackson and Holgate were not allowed into the village of Kitwancool. Dyck, p. 57.

⁴⁹See illustration 61.

⁵⁰See illustration 48.

were lost. I believe that it is possible that this inability to clearly establish the concurrent similarity between the images of the Gitksan and of Quebec within Barbeau's concept of their roles as background, yet find signs which would demarcate the difference between present and absent cultures, disturbed and eventually stymied the artist and his patron. In fact, **Kispayaks Village** was his only attempt to render the Gitksan communities using this compositional structure.

The ambiguities which arose from the similarity between the Gitksan and Quebec buildings were further problematized by a small group of people and dogs sitting around a campfire in the foreground. Although highly unusual in his empty landscapes, we have already seen such figures appear in **Indian House**. But here, given the change in context, they seem to serve a different function, and could even be taken to signify an ongoing Native presence. Would then it not have been more expedient to have eliminated them? In this instance, however, the necessity of redoing Kihn's images must be kept in mind. Kihn, it will be recalled, showed his figures in ceremonial regalia, either as portraits with an individual presence or actively participating in a forbidden ritual, and thus a force of resistance to government policy, the pressures of assimilation and the discourse of disappearance. Jackson's figures, on the other hand, are nondescript. As in **Indian House**, they are unidentifiable as either individuals, a specific Native group, or even a race. They have no distinct identity. The signs which identified them as Gitksan in the Kihn portraits have been erased.

Jackson's treatment of the poles in **Kispayaks Village** followed the same pattern. Back in the studio, he rejected most of the sketches that he had done in the community which closely detailed the crests on the poles. Instead, he chose as the basis for the painting an exceptional drawing which placed them in the background behind the houses, showed none of the features of their distinctive carvings and reduced their monumental presence.⁵¹ The unique characteristics of Gitksan art were thus reduced to simple, angled silhouettes, dwarfed by other features. Given

⁵¹Compare sketches 17537, 17538, 17539, all of Kispiox poles, with 17546 and 17547, on which the painting seems to be based. Landry, pp. 219 - 220. See illustration 45 and 46.

Jackson's assessment of the significance of upright poles, their angles, while not precarious, became the sign of cultural decay missing in the remainder of the image. In the process, they lost their material and sculptural presence, as well as the details that conveyed their artistic and cultural heritage, and became little more than tropes for Indianness and a means of pictorial transition from the mid-ground village to the looming wall of distant mountains. This background of towering peaks, covered with an early fall snow, done in Jackson's distinctive palette of blues, whites and ochres, with which he rendered the Canadian landscape from coast to coast, occupies a third of the canvas. It dwarfs the village, people and poles, and, again in contradistinction to the sketches, becomes the dominant image of the painting. By refocusing in his paintings on the topography of the Canadian landscape, which in Jackson's overall oeuvre tends to a sameness, signs of difference are diminished, if not swallowed up and erased. Any resistance to inclusion within this homogenizing national landscape would be futile. Yet even this solution did not seem to satisfy the artist. Despite the fact that Barbeau included it as one of three by Jackson in the illustrations for **The Downfall of Temlaham**, the artist abandoned any further attempts at that time to either paint this village or use these compositional devices.⁵²

The greatest number of paintings Jackson did from his excursion into the Upper Skeena depict the village of Kitsegucla. Again, this site was an unusual choice, in that while on the railway line, it was neither a stopping off point nor the most picturesque of the communities. It seemed, however, to have produced the greatest challenge to the artist. In a work entitled **Gitsegyukla Village** but now known by its anglicized name, **Skeena River Crossing**, Jackson varied his conventional compositional approach in a manner which better accommodated the depiction of difference between Quebec and the Gitksan.⁵³ In an unusual move, not seen in his Quebec paintings, and seldom repeated, he took a viewpoint from the side face of the village and almost eliminated the foreground. Unlike **Kispayaks Village**, this shows some of the buildings and poles in closer proximity and in greater detail. But at the same time, any indications that the

⁵²He did, however, pick up the theme again in 1943 with a **Souvenir of Kispiox**.

⁵³Jessup identified the title of the work and its position within the 1927 **West Coast Art** exhibition. Jessup, p. 84, n. 1. See illustration 49.

unique aspects of Gitksan culture were actually surviving and ongoing were carefully counterbalanced or eradicated. This is evident in Jackson's representation of the main structure on the left, which occupies almost the entire lower quadrant of the painting. The old-style plank construction which Jackson depicted appears to have been transposed from a sketch done at another site, entitled **Collapsing House**.⁵⁴ The title itself signifies its near ruinous state, which, along with its missing planks, serves as a metaphor for Gitksan culture in general. The drawing which appears to be the study for the painting, conversely, shows a structure in a much better state of repair.⁵⁵ The final composite result is, then, far less ambiguous in its meaning as a "ruin" than the houses and buildings at Kispiox. This clear statement of the state of Gitksan culture, although a pictorial fiction, allowed for a more detailed rendition of three of the eleven poles, which are shown in the foreground. Their upright stance and crest images, which, if seen in isolation could provide testimony to the vibrancy of the Gitksan social structure, are counterbalanced by the context of the adjacent ruin. Conversely, the background poles, by far the majority, become blurred into obscurity. But this solution also did not appear to satisfy the artist and again, he did not repeat it.

A small panel, possibly painted on site, points to yet another variation in Jackson's experiments to construct a set of conventions which would include the image, or at least the territory, of the Gitksan while excluding any testimony to their current cultural viability. It features another village site, probably Hagwilget, but the title does not identify the community. The panel is known as **Rocher de Boule**, the name of the prominent mountain situated behind the village.⁵⁶ In this case, Jackson tilted the balance completely in favour of the landscape. The village, composed of only a few houses nestled in the distance at the base of the mountain, bears little evidence of any Native presence, aside from what might be a pole on the far side of a western-style dwelling. There are no figures. Gitksan presence has thus been almost fully erased. This

⁵⁴Landry, 17519.

⁵⁵Landry, 17551 r may be a study for the painting, but again, the house in the drawing, done on site, is in a much better state of repair. See illustration 47.

⁵⁶Edmonton Art Gallery collection .

configuration, however, did not point to further potential; no corresponding larger canvas exists.

Several studies for a poster for the CNR are also present in the National Gallery's collections of sketches.⁵⁷ Although these do not actually appear to have ever have been used for their intended purpose, they were worked up later into a gouache painting titled **Native Town of Git-Segyukla, on the Upper Skeena**.⁵⁸ While a minor work, it demonstrates what must have been Jackson's growing exasperation with his recalcitrant subject and the difficulties in the conflicting goals which had been given to him. Here he removed himself from the village and positioned himself at a distance across the river, on which he placed a carved canoe. On the far shore, he placed a number of minuscule figures, small buildings, and a rank of vertical, albeit tipping, poles which again, as in his image of Kispiox, contrasted with, and were absorbed by, his standard and conventional background of undulating horizontal lines in the hills and clouds. Again, no details of the poles are visible, even though they were supposed to be the major selling point in the poster and the unique attraction of the region. It is not surprising then, that it did not meet the requirements of the railway. Instead of being highlighted, signs of difference were diminished and absorbed by the encompassing Canadian landscape. The village, poles and people were again represented, even if they did not so desire to be, as part of the greater program of the Group of Seven. They are no longer Gitksan, but Canadian. This picture, although apparently not used as a poster, was included in Barbeau's book, **The Downfall of Temlaham**.

Recent discussions of the Skeena works point to what was felt to have been omitted from Jackson's drawings and paintings, such as all signs of contact and assimilation which placed the villages into a timeless, ahistorical "ethnographic present".⁵⁹ This argument is, however, hard to

⁵⁷Landry, 17468 r "Poster Designs for Canadian National Railway", 17468 v, "Poster Design for Canadian National Railways", and 17469, "Poster Design for Canadian National Railways", all dated 1926. The actual picture could not have been done until 1928. "Mine is rather a fizzle. . . I would just as soon keep it out of the book. I might make a[n] illustration of Gitseguklas from across the river. I have a pencil drawing which has possibilities." Jackson to Barbeau, January 15 [1928]. See also Barbeau to Jackson, January 19, 1928, both CMC Archives. See illustration 42.

⁵⁸See illustration 60.

⁵⁹Dyck in particular has given an extensive catalogue of modern elements that do not appear in his pictures.

sustain in the face of **Indian House**, other works from Port Essington, and the western clothing of the Natives. Nonetheless, something is indeed missing from Jackson's depictions. What has been eliminated is any sense that this landscape was, at that moment, a site of contestation and struggle. Jackson reported resistance to both his own presence and the restoration project. As has been shown, in 1927 Gitsegukla occupied an important position for the ongoing negotiations and ultimate cessation of the restoration project. At precisely that moment, the restoration crew was being denied the right to work on or "restore" any of the poles in the village. Jackson himself later reported that "[t]he Indians were not too friendly when I was there" and expressed concern over artists who were to follow in his path.⁶⁰

None of this dispute is openly evident in either Jackson's drawings or his paintings, which were done far from the scene. Insofar as both the passivity and decrepitude which pervade the paintings have been fictionalized and idealized, they may again be linked to the practices of British landscape art, specifically Constable's landscapes of East Anglia from the mid-1820s. As John Barrell has pointed out, these were done at the moment when both depressed economic conditions and land reforms in England were producing violent clashes between tenant farmers and land owners, with the artist belonging to the latter group.⁶¹ Constable's bucolic paintings, which placed the workers at a great distance and integrated them into a peaceful landscape, erased any evidence of these conflicts and showed them as the artist wished to see them. Jackson's pictures have a similar serenity, obtained by turning a blind eye to any of the struggles of the Gitksan to either preserve their culture and identity or maintain ownership of their territories. Jackson, in fact, followed a similar strategy of placing his diminutive and passive figures into the landscape in such a way that they became a harmonious part of it. It may, indeed, have been precisely this denied and disguised conflict which made Gitsegukla of interest to the artist, in that it lay at the border of a resistant otherness and was thus in most need of being incorporated within the frontiers of representation.

⁶⁰Jackson to Barbeau, June 13 [1927], CMC Archives.

⁶¹John Barrell, **The Dark Side of the Landscape**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 131 - 165.

In this context, the omission of any paintings of the village of Kitwancool becomes significant and merits more discussion than it has hitherto received. Kitwancool, as we have seen, was the site of greatest resistance to programs of assimilation, land appropriation, and historical revisionism. But, as Barbeau and Kihn's expulsion from the community indicated, it was also resistant to artists, ethnographers and restorers sent in to "invade" and represent the area. This resistance to representation indicates that the village had a clear and sophisticated understanding of the larger issues, especially as they related to land claims and control of their own history, and were desirous of maintaining control over their own image and any discussion around that image. The works by Jackson, and most of the other artists who visited the region at that time, depicted none of the issues and the struggle surrounding them. Rather than painting the country "as it was", he painted it as he and his sponsors wished it to be. In attempting to naturalize this desired state of things and mystify the real relationships, Jackson again followed in the traditional practices of British landscape painting.⁶²

Jackson's limited output of paintings implied a growing lack of enthusiasm for the subject which stemmed from his unsuccessful attempt to work within the program of the Group of Seven and Barbeau's more complex take on the construction of a stable unified Canadian national identity. Jackson faced many problems. As previously discussed, his attempt to reconcile the two was based on a dangerous conflation of both Quebec and the Gitskan as "background" for a Canadian culture. This resulted in what has been seen, sometimes disparagingly, as a homogenous sameness in his depiction of different regions of the country's diverse landscapes. Kispiox could bear a close resemblance to a village in Quebec. This is sometimes criticized as a lack of creativity and a falling back on the continual repetition of a standardized set of conventions. This should not, however, be thought of as necessarily undesirable. Rosalind Krauss has pointed out that the picturesque, which underwrote Jackson's compositions, was predicated on such an approach.⁶³ But here repetition took on a specific ideological function. Jackson, in his travels

⁶²See also Bermingham, p. 75.

⁶³Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde", in **The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths**, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985, pp. 151 - 170.

across Canada, attempted to demonstrate that all of the country, and not just the Ontario Shield, could be enclosed within a single set of representational conventions. The perception of homogeneity was precisely the point and does much to explain why he would have at first found Barbeau's project sympathetic. The unity of the country, based on a monocultural, British-based precedent, could be visually demonstrated by blurring the differences between the various geographic and cultural regions. The Skeena, in this scheme of things, ceased being the domain of an Indian Other with all the anxious difference that implied, and was, in theory, incorporated directly within the representational system which was seen to be Canadian, and which encompassed all of Canada. The Gitksan view of themselves as a unique people with a unique identity was thus overcome and displaced. Indeed it had to be made to vanish since any indication of their presence tended to destabilize the delicate and precarious balances necessary to maintain the myth. Their poles, which were in the process of becoming increasingly visible in Canada as signs of "Indianness" could then form a part of the composition and be included in the artist's gaze, but only insofar as they were always placed in the background and made subordinate to the larger vision of the encompassing Canadian landscape, which laid claim to the territory, the art that remained there, the remaining peoples and their land. Whether Jackson's few final paintings actually accomplished this objective of making the Skeena Valley a site of homogeneous Canadian identity is, however, still in question. Indeed, the entire project of attempting to reconcile Barbeau's concerns with those of the Group in the face of the Gitksan could not be said to have been successful. After Jackson left the area in the fall of 1926, no Group of Seven member would return to the Skeena, although Jackson himself was to return to both British Columbia and to Quebec on numerous occasions in the following decades. Jackson could nevertheless be assured that despite his disappointment in his own output, his friend, Edwin Holgate, had done somewhat better.

Edwin Holgate, who accompanied Jackson and Barbeau to the Skeena in the summer of 1926, was also from Montreal. He, like Jackson, had close ties to France and had studied there, where he picked up a limited range of modernist conventions. He would, later, briefly become a member of the Group of Seven in 1930 just before its breakup, but at the time he was only an

associate. In the mid-twenties he was most noted as a portraitist.⁶⁴ One could expect that his work from the summer of 1926 would make an interesting contrast with the previously mentioned portraits by Edmund Morris of the Native leaders of the Prairies, or with Kihn's work from the Stoney or Skeena area. Yet this comparison fails since there are few finished portraits in oils or prints from Holgate's excursion, although there are studies and drawings. Two portrait sketches by Holgate are listed in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. One, titled **Tsimsian Indian (Jim Robinson, Hazelton)**, done in black and red chalk, is similar to Kihn's compositions.⁶⁵ It shows a highly detailed head against a flat background. The figure wears a button blanket reduced to flat graphic patterns with no modelling that is obviously derived from Kihn. Less derivative is a drawing also entitled **Tsimsian Chief (Samuel Gaum)**, which focuses exclusively on the head of the figure, cut off at the neck, without a blanket, but wearing a carved frontlet.⁶⁶ It was included in **The Downfall of Temeleham**. Four other portraits are listed in the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition catalogue.⁶⁷

One well known painting derived from the 1926 trip is the National Gallery of Canada's **Totem Poles, Gitseguklas** which was also published in Barbeau's book.⁶⁸ Dating from 1927, it was done back in Montreal from studies. Not being a landscape artist, Holgate was neither integrated into nor competent in the picturesque-derived pictorial conventions of the Group. He thus took a different view from Jackson and placed himself, as had Kihn, who was also not primarily a landscape artist, within the village. Holgate concentrated on the poles and buildings, rather than the scenery, and showed them in some detail, rather than making them distant props in a repeated

⁶⁴Dennis Reid, **Edwin H. Holgate**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976, passim.

⁶⁵Landry, 3495, p. 138, dated 1926. Hill does not seem to see this derivation. He assesses Holgate's limited work as far superior to Kihn's, although he does not provide any detailed analysis, indeed, he provides no examples at all, except the two we have mentioned here, which he refers to in a footnote. "Holgate drew large expressive portraits, far more accomplished than Kihn's finished illustrations." Hill, p. 191, and fn. 65, p. 300. See illustration 51.

⁶⁶ Landry, 3494, p. 138, dated 1926. See illustration 51.

⁶⁷Op cit. This number does not compare to Kihn's sixty some works.

⁶⁸Landry, 4426, p. 139. See illustration 65.

landscape. Indeed, they dominate the composition. One figure, a female with a child, possibly derived from a composition by Kihn, moves away from the viewer into the background. Otherwise, the town is deserted, except for a dog. This departing figure recurs several times in various of Holgate's works. Despite his proven ability at depicting the figure, the painting is almost uninhabited and borders on being deserted. There is no community to claim the village except the artist and his associates. Like Jackson's works, his painting lays claim to the deserted territory.⁶⁹

Working from sketches done while in the Upper Skeena, Holgate also made a series of woodcuts. Of the eight or so done, only one can be seen as a portrait, but its title belies this status. It is simply called **Tsimisian Indians**, although it was also known variously as **Natives of the West Coast**, **Coast Indians and Totem Poles**, and **Two Chiefs**.⁷⁰ Ian Thom, in his study of these prints, states: "Holgate informed one of the private collectors that the chiefs were 'Chief Amihilat and Chief Hlengwah of the Tsimisian tribe.'"⁷¹ Given the precedent established by Kihn, the fact that Holgate withheld the names when the work was exhibited is significant, as is the fact that the middle figure between the two chiefs is seen from a lost profile, that is her face is almost completely obscured. The Gitksan people, as individuals, were beginning to disappear from the pictorial record constructed by Anglo-Canadian artists. The other prints in the series either have no figures or they are seen from behind or at a distance. One of the most ambitious compositions is called **Departing People, Skeena River, or A Passing People**.⁷² The poignant inference here may be found in a passage from Holgate's own thoughts: "I felt we were witnessing the rapid decline of a splendid race of creative and well-organized people. There persisted a brooding

⁶⁹A second painting, titled **Hazelton Graveyard**, is even more macabre in its concentration on a melancholic image of death. It shows the same figure wandering through the unique grave houses which are characteristic of the region. See illustration 50. The figure also occurs in a woodcut, **Totem Poles, No. 3**. See illustration 52.

⁷⁰See illustration 54.

⁷¹Ian Thom, **The Prints of Edwin Holgate**, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1990, figure 18.

⁷²See illustration 53.

gloom which I found it impossible to dispel.”⁷³ Holgate’s words, like those of Jackson, echo the sentiment of Barbeau, who may well have primed him on the perceived plight of his subject. In any case, they indicate that both ethnologist and artist were part of a discourse on the Natives that held their disappearance as axiomatic, even given the contradictory evidence before their eyes. Despite the increasing discrepancy with observable facts, Holgate’s representations reflected, reproduced and reconfirmed the prevailing view held by white society at the time.

In 1927 two more artists went West under the auspices of Barbeau and the CNR: Anne Savage and the sculptor, Florence Wyle. Although biographies or memoirs exist for both, the references to their Skeena experiences are more cursory than those of A. Y. Jackson.⁷⁴ By this time, Native resistance to the program had grown to the extent that, as Dyck points out, Barbeau felt obliged to advise them “to avoid Kitsegucla, and even recommended that they visit other villages in July and August, when most people would be away working at the coastal canneries.”⁷⁵ The program to paint the region had now been forced to act surreptitiously, and to follow Barbeau’s practice at Kitwancool before he was expelled from that village. The two artists were, however, allowed to visit Kitwancool. Neither, in any event, produced a large body of work from the trip. Wyle’s production was limited to miniature poles cast in plaster and some busts, which, although included within the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition, are largely insignificant. Savage painted a series of small, stylized, art nouveau influenced studies of the villages and landscapes, with the latter predominating. The only one illustrating Native presence which has been published shows a row of blank vertical poles with all of their features effaced, banded by heavy straight dark lines, set against a line of stylized houses and a mountain backdrop.⁷⁶ Tiny figures, equally abstracted, are located in front of the houses. No precise site

⁷³Thom, n.p..

⁷⁴See Anne McDougall, **Anne Savage: the Story of a Canadian Painter**, Ottawa: Borealis Press, 2000, p. 58. McDougall gives the date of Savage’s trip as 1928, an impossibility in that her Skeena work was included in the 1927 exhibition and featured in **The Downfall of Temlaham** which was printed in July 1928.

⁷⁵Dyck, p. 57.

⁷⁶“Untitled Oil Sketch”, *ibid.*, p. 61. See illustration 55.

can be attached to the image although it may be an abstraction of Kitwancool. This was not the work, however, selected by Barbeau for **The Downfall of Temlaham**. Instead, he chose a small panel study depicting a wandering river drifting into a distant, melancholic, and idealized valley flanked by towering mountains, with not a soul in sight. McDougall indicates that this variation on the “empty landscape” was known as **Hills on the Skeena**.⁷⁷ Within the context of Barbeau’s text, however, it took on a new title and meaning. The last image in the book, it was called **Where the Native Paradise Lost of Temlaham Used to Stand (near Hazelton)**.

Not all of the work found in the text, however, came from artists who had travelled under the direction of Barbeau. Emily Carr had preceded Barbeau and the others into the field by fifteen years and had arrived before the railway had entered the region. She was, of course, the recent discovery of Barbeau and was highlighted at her debut in the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition. Perhaps surprising in this context, is that fact that Barbeau included only one of her works: a 1912 painting which shows a pole at Kispiox with a group of Native children at its base. **The Totem Pole of the Bear and the Moon, at Kispayaks - the “Hiding-place”** occurs near the end of the text, after Holgate’s works and just before Savage’s final landscape.⁷⁸ The two last works provide a striking contrast, the significance of which only becomes apparent after an analysis of the relationships between the text and the illustrations.

Barbeau Re-tells a Story of Ruin

The sequence of twelve illustrations in the book drawn from the artists discussed above seldom correspond directly to incidents occurring within the four stories that are narrated, yet there are important parallelisms that indicate that their selection and placement within the text was done with far greater care than in **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, where the placement of the illustrations had been left to the artist. Barbeau’s first and longest text, “Kamalmuk”, recounts

⁷⁷McDougall, p. 60.

⁷⁸See illustration 68.

the history of the so-called Skeena River Uprising, or Rebellion, and “Kitwancool Jim”.

Composed of three “Parts”, each divided into four sections, it occupies almost two-thirds of the book. The three other stories are based on Gitksan myths. These include “The Retaliation of Keemelay”, “The Painted Goat of Stekyawden” and “Downfall” which briefly tells of the loss of Temlaham. The last, despite the fact that it gives the book its title, is the shortest.⁷⁹

Having had no scruples about taking surreptitious photographs of Kitwancool and its poles after he had been asked to stop during his first visit, Barbeau now further ignored the express wish of the Kitwancool to write their own history themselves. One might speculate that in writing a ‘history’ of the Kitwancool, Barbeau sought to deal with the trauma of his unceremonious expulsion and all that that would have represented, both personally and as an ethnographer. In any event, he did not deal fairly with his subject. Any possible historical accuracy was lost in the reduction of the characters to broad stereotypes whose simplistic motivations are rendered through stilted, sentimental and sententious dialogue that parodies Gitksan oratorical style. It must be acknowledged that Barbeau’s Native speakers were, unlike many of their counterparts in popular rendition, passionate, articulate and thoughtful. The narrative unfolds through a series of highly embroidered incidents that Barbeau has invented outside the historical record. Barbeau’s text, if lacking in subtlety, and his plot, if manipulative and predictable, are not without drama, vivid descriptions, or complexity. Although he was working with good source material, it must have still cost him some effort of imagination to produce. In many ways this ambitious display of literary pretensions ranks as one of his most creative undertakings within his genre of Canadian racial tragedy.

His rendition of the Skeena River Rebellion is then not a simple historical recounting. Rather it hinges on the elaboration of a subtext involving the conflict posed by the confrontation between

⁷⁹It is often stated that Barbeau’s book is a “fictionalized-history”. This is only partly so. Over a third of it is based on retellings of Gitksan myths. Its pseudo-historical narrative still exerts authority. Terry Glavin relies on it in *A Death Feast in Dimlahamid*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1998, pp. 165 - 169, although he substantially modifies Barbeau’s account with other evidence. Susan Crean, in her innovative recounting of Emily Carr’s life, *The Laughing One: a Journey to Emily Carr*, Toronto: Harper, Flamingo, 2001, p. 262, recapitulates it without critical comment, although she also cites Glavin.

Gitksan traditions and an invidious non-Native colonial culture, over which they are powerless and “whose superiority in most ways proved so overwhelming”.⁸⁰ Indeed, the major theme that develops throughout the story is the fracturing of Gitksan society over whether to respect tradition or adopt non-Native ways.⁸¹ The two are, however, posed as mutually conflicting and exclusive. No compromise or negotiation between them is considered to be possible. The eventual outcome, following the period of strife and confusion while the old ways still persist, is deemed inevitable.

Barbeau’s major theme is embedded in a set of parallel domestic, socio-political and cultural disputes that structure the narrative according to the Western literary conventions of both allegory and tragedy. Sunbeams (Fanny Johnson) who initiates the story and personifies the continuity of Gitksan culture, is haughty, excessively proud and ambitious; that is, she suffers from hubris. Her son, on whom she is depending to see her vision perpetuated, is however rendered as “puny” and “feeble”, thus undermining her hopes from the beginning and consequently the future of Gitksan culture as a whole. His untimely death brings about the conflict upon which the story is based. Conversely, her husband, Kamalmuk or Kitwancool Jim, whose double name signifies his conflicted position, sees into the future and wants to adopt the ways of the “White Man” who is “now penetrating the country on all sides”. He believes that “custom was the idiom of an age already out of date, on the wane everywhere; its discredit would soon be complete, final. . . The triumph of the white people, the Ramkseewahs, over native primitiveness and reluctance spurred him to novel emulation. . . . [while] confronted with decrepit advisors who preached tradition to him.”⁸² He is, consequently, “open-minded. . . strong and optimistic”. Yet at the same time, under the relentless incitations of his wife to avenge the death of their son, which she attributes to the witchcraft of a rival, he is enlisted to

⁸⁰Barbeau, **Temlaham**, p. 141.

⁸¹See especially the central pivotal section, “Christians and Heathens” in which these issues are articulated clearly and at length.

⁸²Barbeau, **Temlaham**, p. 6 - 7. For Kamaluk as having “faith in progress and modernity” and rejecting traditional ceremonies, see p. 29, for his worries about a “relapse into savagery” see p. 48, for Sunbeams’ son as a “weakling” and “helpless”, p. 32, “in distress”, p. 35, “humbled”, “immature” and “contemptible”, p. 37.

take revenge by killing the rival and is doomed. This results in the string of events which lead to potentially fatal divisions within the people. These are, however, healed and resolved through traditional procedures.

All would be well and tragedy averted, except the episode invokes a greater conflict and brings the non-Native justice system down on the Gitksan. White officialdom, anxious over its precarious hold on the region, and inflamed by unscrupulous interests into believing a full-scale revolution is at hand, feels the need to intervene to assert its authority and bring Kamalmuk to trial. Kamalmuk goes into hiding, successfully eludes capture, but finally is tracked down by white authorities and shot dead under questionable circumstances. The tragedy now expands to include the deaths of Sunbeams' son, her ambitions, her "evil" opponent, her husband, and inevitably, of Gitksan culture itself.⁸³ But Barbeau also reports that years after the events he has related, the outside interference had not been forgotten. When an Indian agent came to survey the area for the purpose of allocating reserves, he was humiliated and forced to leave without completing his task (not unlike Barbeau's own experience). The history became, thus, both a symbol of the downfall of the Gitksan, in which any attempt to hold on to their culture results necessarily in its loss, and the point of their resistance.

At the end of the chapter, Barbeau concludes that "[t]he Kamalmuk episode is now sinking into the quicksand of tribal recollections; it forms a chapter by itself in the obscure annals of native Canadian races struggling against their fate without a ray of hope. . . . It forms the last page of the Downfall of Temlaham, the earthly paradise of old lost long ago to a sinful race of man." But even at the moment of telling, the situation will not allow narrative closure and remains ambivalent. He adds, hinting at his own experience:

No White Man to the present day can set foot unmolested on the tribal domains of the Kitwinkul natives, domains that stretch spaciouly around the lakes and beyond the mountains from Kitwanga northwards to the Nass. That promised land, which prospectors, hunters and ranchers have coveted for a generation, is still an Indian country, effectively guarded - perhaps the last unconquered native stronghold of the Red Man in

⁸³Ibid., pp. 68 - 69.

North America.”⁸⁴

But closure, although deferred, is inevitable and will occur when “the last of his race has died off or surrendered to foreign domination”. Indeed, the remaining three sections and the illustrations insure that the ambiguous and ambivalent situation is overcome.

The paintings which were chosen to accompany this section of historical text follow the pattern of first allowing for ambivalence and then closing it off, confirming in the end Barbeau’s assumption of disappearance. The book opens with two of Kihn’s landscapes, including his depiction of poles, houses and costumed figures at a feast and his painting of the poles at Kitwancool.⁸⁵ These are followed by his portraits of **Sunbeams**, shown as an old woman with her crests and regalia and an unrelated individual male elder, **He-knows-the-Sky, Alimlarhae, an Old Chief of the Skeena**, similarly depicted.⁸⁶ As a whole the four works show a people in full possession of their culture, their art, and their ceremonies of the past which the text recounts in detail. If the initial conception of the book had gone forward, more of Kihn’s pictures of a vibrant continuing culture seen through individuals displaying traditional regalia, combined with his portraits set in a modern context, as had occurred in **Indian Days**, would have followed throughout the text. This, however, would have conveyed a message which would openly have contradicted the fundamental premise and purpose of the text. It is predictable that it became necessary, one more time, to either exclude Kihn’s ambivalent images or to textually discipline them by placing them in such a manner that they would be equally redolent of the past and/or by providing alternative visions of the present. Both methods were employed. Within this recontextualization, Kihn’s unruly images could be given a stable and fixed meaning. That the portraits are of two elderly individuals, rather than any of the many younger people who Kihn portrayed, is also significant.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 162 - 163.

⁸⁵See illustrations 56 and 57.

⁸⁶See illustrations 58 and 59.

Kihn's works are immediately modified by the next three images chosen for this section, namely Jackson's sequence of village scenes. These lead from pictures of the villages of Kitwanga and Kitsegucla, sites integral to the story, to an image that would have been foreign to Kihn and does not relate to the text, Jackson's painting of **Spekshu or Port Essington, A mission village, at the mouth of the Skeena**.⁸⁷ The work shows the non-Gitksan coastal village, over one hundred miles from Gitksan territory, from across a body of water. Its white Christian church is set prominently in the middle of the composition, behind a boardwalk, and flanked by a row of colonial dwellings. No poles of any type are present. Indeed, almost all signs of the Indian, except for a few canoes in the water, are entirely absent and have been erased. There are no figures. Both these absences and the distance of the site from the actual topic of the book raise the question of the work's role in the narrative since it entirely excludes its purported subject. It is, however, closely related to **Indian House**, which was also painted in Port Essington. The preliminary oil sketch showed precisely this scene in the background although it was eliminated in the finished painting. In both, however, the Indian in general, and by extension the Gitksan, have either disappeared or faded into the Canadian Christian scene. Indeed, little separates this image of Port Essington from many other Jackson paintings of Quebec, maritime villages or other Canadian sites, except its title. It is, then, a pendant for **Indian House**, which does not appear in the book, and carries much of its meaning. The inclusion of either was necessary to the content of the subtext of the book in that they both demonstrated the loss of Native culture on which the text hinged and provided the appropriate conclusion to the problems of resistance which Barbeau had to admit still existed at Kitwancool.

The second last painting in the section, Holgate's **The Upper Skeena, near the site of Temlaham - the Good-land-of-yore**, which immediately follows **Port Essington**, confirmed the state of Native culture found in Jackson's coastal community.⁸⁸ It shows an unnamed parallel village, which Gerta Moray has identified as probably the white settlement of Hazelton which superseded Temlaham, set in the Upper Skeena Valley composed primarily of brightly painted,

⁸⁷See illustrations 60, 61 and 62.

⁸⁸See illustration 63.

i.e. colonial, buildings.⁸⁹ The community is, like Jackson's **Port Essington**, devoid of signs of Indianness; it has no poles at all and has no figures to occupy or claim the land. The "dominant" culture has triumphed from the coast to the inland communities. Both Jackson's and Holgate's paintings have been situated at the end of the text so as to place Kihn's images, which either precede them or occur at the beginning, in the past, to make them retrospective and to confirm the fact that in the present Native culture has been lost and that the Indian has virtually disappeared. The doubts raised by events at Kitwancool are thus overcome and the anxiety of the persistence of the Other are removed.

The last painting chosen to illustrate the story of Kamalmuk seems somewhat ironic. Again done by Holgate, it is entitled **Young Gitksan Mother with a Cradle at the edge of the Skeena**. The single figure of the female and child appeared first in Kihn's depictions of totem poles at Kitwancool. In this narrative context, however, she seems to relate more to the figure of Sunbeams, who lost her child and set the whole tragedy in motion. The cradle, in fact, appears empty. It should also be noted that Holgate did another image of the area, using the same figure. Although not illustrated in the text, **Hazelton Graveyard** directly links the figure to death.⁹⁰

Holgate's painting of **The Totem Poles at Git-Seygukla**, as we have seen, shows close ups of the poles and could thus more effectively suggest Native presence.⁹¹ It is, then, while grouped with the other works by the artist, necessarily and predicably separated from the conclusion of the Kamalmuk story. It serves instead to introduce and illustrate the mythic narrative which follows Barbeau's pseudo-history. "The Retaliation of Keemelay", which occurs in the distant mythic past, is one of three concerning Temlaham. Barbeau says they were "given as a corollary" to the Kamalmuk story and indeed, they have a logical relationship to it, when taken within the confines of his purposes to mystify the history of the Gitksan. They are "freely interpreted and paraphrased" (as was his history), ostensibly as an example of Barbeau's program to make Native

⁸⁹Gerta Moray, personal communication, July 24, 2001.

⁹⁰See illustration 50.

⁹¹See illustration 65.

myths the source of inspiration for non-Native writers.⁹² Holgate's picture is thus made representative of a mythic past which parallels the historic present.

"The Retaliation" recounts a mythic story of warfare between two neighbouring villages in Temlaham. The conflict is caused by the beheading of a neighbouring transgressor, whose village rallies and attacks the other, resulting in total "death and extinction", save for two survivors.⁹³ The proximity of this incident in the narrative to Holgate's next image, **Qawm, "Covetous Person", A chief of Kitsalas, the Canyon tribe**, gives the drawing a particularly macabre aspect, insofar as it shows a head, cut off at the neck, with eyes closed. The connection is re-enforced through the red-highlighting overlaid on the black and white drawing.⁹⁴ The two homeless and displaced survivors, a mother and her daughter, roam the wilderness in mourning, seeking a suitable suitor who can wreak vengeance on their behalf. This is Sunbeams, a powerful naxnox, from whom the present Fanny Johnson, the "cause" of the Skeena Rebellion, takes her name.⁹⁵ Sunbeams marries the daughter, with whom he has six children, magically rebuilds her ruined village and destroys her enemies. Carr's painting of Kispiox with its poles, house and children is inserted at this point.⁹⁶ In this context, it also loses its documentary aspirations and joins the Holgate as an illustration of a past more mythic than historic. Nonetheless, it is also the only work in the book given a date, 1912. Carr's image becomes, like Kihn's, which it predates, nostalgic and retrospective. In this context, a new ambivalence arises, but one that is not threatening. Both the Carr and the Kihn illustrations are made to point to either an historic or a mythic past and show how things were in contrast to how things were when

⁹²Barbeau, **Temlaham**, p. vii.

⁹³Ibid., p. 175.

⁹⁴A second beheading occurs parenthetically a few pages later on, see pp. 173 and 184, and a third on p. 216. See illustration 66.

⁹⁵The meaning of naxnox is complex. It may refer either to a narrative or an object. Joanne MacDonald summarized the term as referring "to a personal spirit power which was revealed to participants in sacred ceremonies called 'haliat' preceding a potlatch; 'naxnox' implies the idea of power exhibited by the person wearing the mask." The owner of the right to display the naxnox could also assume its name, which would be used on an everyday basis. Joanne MacDonald, "Gitwangak Village Life; a Museum Collection", [Ottawa], Environment Canada, 1984, p. 11.

⁹⁶See illustration 67.

the book appeared.⁹⁷ The story concludes with the enemy village overcome. At the hands of more powerful forces which Sunbeams possesses, the initial transgressors are defeated and lose their lands. “They gathered their possessions in haste at night, their last night in the bosom of their ancestors’ homeland, the beloved country of Temlaham no longer their own. ‘These strange men cannot be destroyed, O the sorrow of our hearts!’ they lamented; ‘their turn now it is to rule over these domains.’ Yielding to the inevitable”, they went into exile.⁹⁸ At this point, the selection of stories and the manner in which Barbeau presents them takes on an eerie parallelism. The mythic conflicts with superior powers resulting in the loss of homelands corresponds to the historic invasion of the region by colonial forces. As will be shown, it is precisely this conflation between myth and history with which Barbeau ends his book.

The last two successively shorter tales are “The Painted Goat of Stekyawden” and “The Downfall”. Barbeau made them sequential, with the second emerging as a later episode. In the first story, a “sinful” transgression against the rules for hunting and disrespect for the game results in retribution by the abused animals, a tribe of mountain goats, and the death of the community, except for one survivor who acquires the single-horned mountain goat as a crest. In the second and final tale, occurring generations after the first, the transgression of the first salmon ritual results in a period of famine and the final loss of Temlaham. “The former land of bliss and plenty had ceased to be. It remained a barren prairie, forever desolate, forever accursed.”⁹⁹ The survivors were then dispersed. Once again the themes of dispossession, displacement and disappearance are played out in mythic terms, and made to parallel and predict the “inevitable” fate of the historic future. Savage’s final empty landscape accompanies these last two tales.¹⁰⁰ It serves, in contrast to the Carr, as an appropriate coda that brings Barbeau’s

⁹⁷Barbeau was to make this point explicit in “The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies”, p. 203, in which he said of Carr’s 1911 and 1912 paintings that “[h]er work is of things that without her would have been lost, for they have since disappeared.”

⁹⁸Barbeau, *Temlaham*, p. 218.

⁹⁹Ibid, pp. 242 - 243.

¹⁰⁰See illustration 68.

parallel themes to a close. If interpreted as a site of the story of mythic Temlaham, the empty landscape shows the loss of the Gitksan paradise, a tragedy which occurred, the reader has been reassured, through a fatal flaw in the essential character of the people which paralleled Christianity's original sin. On the other hand, if it is taken as a contemporary, historic landscape, then it shows that the Gitksan are no longer present and have been expelled in present time. In either case, neither the Indian as a generality nor the Gitksan specifically maintain their lands any longer either in myth or in actuality. The inexorable process of disappearance and dispossession has been reified, mystified and finalized both in the sequence of stories in the text and within the sequence of the illustrations.

With the final images in place, the purpose of the book becomes clearer, as does the purpose behind Barbeau's project to bring artists to the Skeena to paint the region. Both artists and text were enlisted in his larger genre which he had outlined in **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, that is the writing and painting of the tragic tale of a disappearing people which needed artists and writers such as himself and those whom he enlisted to bring the story of death to life. The parallel narratives played out in the illustrations and the text reinforce each other in that they recount a double loss in which the mythic past is conflated with the historic present. The story of Temlaham which recounts an expulsion from an original Edenic Gitksan paradise is extended into the loss of their culture and lands after contact. In Barbeau's narrative constructions, the Gitksan are doubly damned. **Temlaham** was no more a popular book with certain academic pretensions designed to introduce a non-scholarly audience to a Native culture than the paintings of Jackson and the others were simply part of a new broader Canadian identity. They were, rather, a reaffirmation of the discourse of disappearance in which both the selection of Native myths and the specific histories recited, as well as the careful inclusions, exclusions and placements of the illustrations all played key parts. As such, Barbeau brought a variety of disciplines to bear on the project, whose character went well beyond the concept of hybridity. He joined ethnology, mythology and folklore studies with history, literature and artistic practices in order to construct an all encompassing framework in which the central message of cultural loss could be continuously circulated and endlessly reproduced.

As has been shown previously, Barbeau recognized that the loss of Gitksan traditions was accompanied by the loss of their land claims, a point that was always avoided in justifications for the potlatch ban but which must have always been tacitly understood as one of its primary, if unspoken, motivations. Sunbeams (Fanny Johnson), however, makes this explicit, “In default of public gatherings in the house of festivals to sanction exchanges and promote advancement, what happens? Our customs come to the ground with a crash. No longer do we inherit our crests, our uncle’s property, and their hunting grounds.”¹⁰¹ The theme of ownership of the land is taken up again in the middle of the historical story and recurs throughout the myths.¹⁰² Given the unspoken existence of the potlatch ban, which Barbeau never mentioned since this would have undermined the mystifying play of fate, the stories are then also testimonies to the forfeiture of their territories, despite the resistance of the Kitwancool. In this sense, then, the ability of the picturesque landscapes to claim the land which they survey, as well as the history of British landscape as a site of displacement, becomes most pertinent.

The book closes with a question posed by Barbeau posing as a Native speaker:

What is Temlaham to-day, what is it to us, who live on reserves conceded by the Ramkseewah, the White Man?”

A legend of the past, a barren stretch, two miles below Hazelton on the Skeena, a place which we still visit at times, when we are sad at heart.

The white usurper has staked most of our preserves for his own use and barred off our approach

Some of us protested bitterly when the very site of Temlaham was taken away from us by three white men, over a score of years ago. The land, then, was opened up for settlement.

We tried to resist the spoliation; only to be sentenced to a term in goal for our punishment. Temlaham, even though only a forlorn symbol, was no longer ours.

This is followed with a dirge whose last lines are “Must there be only an end, O Powers above? Algyah, algyah, algyah!”¹⁰³ Important here, once again, is the claim that the Gitksan have been

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 73 - 74.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp 243 - 244.

defeated, have accepted the reserve system, have given up their lands, have become powerless and voiceless, are at the mercy of the non-Native judicial system and are at “the end”. They verge on an extinction always/already embedded within their own myths. External factors are of no consequence here.

It was no coincidence that the book was written and illustrated precisely at the moment when the Gitksan were pressing their land claims and were at their closest point to succeeding, and that Native numbers in Canada were, despite all efforts by the Department of Indian Affairs, on the rise. Nor was it coincidental that it appeared just as the totem pole restoration program and the “invasion” of artists into the territory were failing, two projects intended to represent the Gitksan and their culture within a new context that would demonstrate them as already gone. That the message of an already determined fate was produced and distributed at the same time as the federal government was enacting legislation prohibiting Natives from hiring legal counsel to pursue land claims, must also be considered as more than mere coincidence. The actual state of affairs would easily have given lie to the book’s message but for many who had no direct knowledge of the Gitksan, and who relied upon Barbeau’s authority, or who were convinced by the rhetoric of his subtexts, his “telling” would have been their image. Indeed, as recent court cases have pointed out, it is firmly embedded in non-Native perceptions.¹⁰⁴

The program to send artists to the Skeena did not, in actual fact, immediately cease with the publication of Barbeau’s book or the accompanying exhibition of **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, although from this point it did wind down. In the summer of 1928 two more artists travelled to the region: Pegi Nichol and George Pepper. Nichol had already gone west in 1927 as far as Alberta through the joint recommendations of Barbeau, Brown and Scott. Barbeau clarified their collaboration, which at this point was still harmonious, in his recommendation of Nichol to Murray Gibbon.

Mr. Eric Brown, Dr. D. C. Scott and myself are very much interested in a young lady here, whose name is Pegi Nichol, who is a very successful young painter. Kihn had

¹⁰⁴See **Delgamukw v. British Columbia**, 1997, Appeal from the Court of Appeal for British Columbia File No. 23799.

admired her talent when he was here and she is a special friend of the Brown's and the Scott's [of whom she did portraits] . . . She would like to go out west on an Indian Reserve to make portraits of Indians. I think that Morley Reserve would be a good place for her . . . Mr. Scott would facilitate her stay there. She would in all likelihood bring back a number of good portraits and landscapes which might be of use to you and to us in our Rocky Mountains exhibition next autumn and winter. . . . If you come to Ottawa very soon we would manage to have you meet her and converse with Mr. Brown and Mr. Scott about her.¹⁰⁵

Although a number of the Stoney portraits from 1927 were included within the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition, it was her trip into the CNR territory the following year that proved most fruitful. She recorded her experiences almost immediately and in some detail. Her direct impressions, which she published in the **Canadian National Railways Magazine** in 1931, are of value insofar as they confirm the structure of the program and the position of those working within it and record further signs of the change in the attitude of the Gitksan to being represented by non-Native artists. In her article, she announced that she was “coming out to paint Indians” and stated her reasons, motivations and opportunities.

Primed by four, or five years on portraits of the west coast people by Langdon Kihn and others, carvings on poles [etc.] . . . seen in the museum and, as a latest addition to my interest, the reading of Marius Barbeau's book, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, on the train, I was excited.¹⁰⁶

She provided significant details of other aspects of her trip. Firstly she reported the collaboration of the National Museum and the railways in using the Natives, but more specifically their poles, as a tourist attraction for the Skeena route. Like Jackson and Holgate, she saw herself as an agent of both museum and railway. At Kitwanga “[p]assengers on the Canadian National Railways travelling to the West Coast are allowed to disembark.” She also noted the program initiated by Barbeau to bring artists out to the Skeena area to create a “Canadian” art based on the Natives of the area. As with Jackson and Holgate, contact with Barbeau predetermined her reception of her subject. But she also reported, more than Jackson or Holgate, the growing resistance to and

¹⁰⁵Barbeau to Gibbon, May 30, 1927, CMC, Coll. Marius Barbeau, 1919-26, Gibbon, Murray B-197/19.

¹⁰⁶Pegi Nichol, “Where Forgotten Gods Sleep”, **Canadian National Railways Magazine**, March 1931, p. 25.

awareness on the part of the Native population of the full significance of the project to paint or represent them. Indeed, the suspicion encountered by Jackson had increased. A recommended subject, Mrs. Laknits, refused to sit. "Blanket or not, 50 cents an hour or not, friend of Mr. Barbeau or not, she said, 'I receive no benefit and my people laugh at me.' That's all she said but appeared to be thinking a lot more." Certainly, she resisted "donning her headdress for the last time and courting a stately portrait", which is how Barbeau represented the Gitskan two years later to a white audience.¹⁰⁷ Despite his affirmations to the contrary, it seems it was the artists who went begging.

Nonetheless, despite Nichol's testimony about her difficulties, she did manage to procure some sitters. These constituted the bulk of her work. "The paintings [Nichol] MacLeod did in the West are basically portraits of Indians. . . . She reused her only extant canvas of totem poles as the back of one of her paintings in the Canadian War Museum."¹⁰⁸ When her article was published by the CNR, however, these portraits were excluded. Instead, her writing was accompanied by reproductions of Langdon Kihn's spectacular landscape fantasy, **A Feast Among the Skeena River People**, and William Holgate's **The Totem Poles of Git-Segyukla**. It is doubtful that the exclusion of her own work was her choice. In any case, the growing resistance by the Gitskan spelled an end to the project. Nichol and Pepper were among the very last to take the trip as part of the overall program to create an image of the Skeena and the Gitskan as part of a new Canadian identity. Dyck has pointed out that "John Byers, then assistant to Arthur Lismer, travelled [to] the coast in 1928", the same year the Emily Carr returned to the area, that "Toronto artist Lowrie Warrener (1900-83) visited Gitskan territory in 1931" and that "Parisian painter Paul Cozé also travelled westward" but that no work of substance seems to have been produced.¹⁰⁹ Barbeau's program, like the totem pole restoration program, first faltered and then failed.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Joan Murray, ed., **Daffodils in Winter: the Life and Letters of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904 - 1949**, Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1984, pp. 24 - 25. One illustration is given as **Indian Girl**, from 1927.

¹⁰⁹Dyck, p. 45. See also Barbeau, "The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies", p. 197

Exhibiting a Discursive Ruin: Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern

Despite the fact that the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition has been the subject of much concentrated study in the last decade, it is still not entirely certain when discussions began concerning this remarkable project, what shape they took or who was behind it at any given point in its early stages. What now seems apparent, however, is that throughout its development it went through several transformations as it responded to various exigencies.

How, precisely, the idea for the exhibit arose is difficult to determine but it was not without recent precedents. In many ways it lived up to Brown's claim that it was the first exhibition showing Native art as "artistic first and ethnological after".¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, as previously shown, many of its features, especially the joint display of Native and western art, duplicated the Kihn exhibition in New York which had been reviewed in **Arts and Decoration** in 1922. Indeed, Native art was being shown in New York and elsewhere in the United States at this time as part of a project to have it recognized as a fundamental aspect of a unique, non-European national identity and aesthetic and to preserve, rather than destroy, Native culture. It is also known that there was a move in Canadian ethnographic circles since at least 1923, and possibly earlier, to recognize Native art as art. These initiatives were made by Edward Sapir and Harlan Smith who, as students of Boas, differed with Barbeau and Scott on the relationships between Native and non-Native cultures. Sapir, however, had resigned in 1925 and had been replaced by Diamond Jenness. In his absence a consensus on the topic that was in keeping with the state's position could be more easily imposed and the exhibition given a clear, uncontested message.

According to Dyck, the first proposal for the exhibition may have been made in early 1926 by A. Y. Jackson to the hanging committee of the Toronto Art Gallery, of which he was a member, for a show of Indian masks.¹¹¹ Jackson's second announcement is contained within the letter in

¹¹⁰Brown to F. Cleveland Morgan, October 28, 1927, NGC Archives. "This is the first time that such an exhibition has been attempted from a purely artistic and ethnological standpoint."

¹¹¹Dyck, p. 114. Jackson to Barbeau, January 21 [1926]. "I suggested the exhibition of masks and the committee think it a fine idea for the next season."

which he confirmed his acceptance of Barbeau's invitation to accompany him to the Skeena to repaint the area already visited by Kihn.¹¹² As will be recalled, in May, Barbeau wrote to Holgate outlining the forthcoming exhibition in the three cities, and indicating that it would include only a limited number of Native pieces, i.e. some "masks and totem poles in miniature".¹¹³ Barbeau's Skeena project modified Jackson's initial modest proposal, and expanded it substantially into a far more ambitious undertaking which would include the paintings from the region done under Barbeau's auspices within an expanded definition of the canon of Canadian national images. It also included the publication of his book on the subject. Thus after May 1926, the exhibition was announced as containing both Native and non-Native work, with the latter to form the background for the former. Even with these additions the proposal must have appeared fairly straightforward and simple. By late 1926, the concept for the exhibition had changed.

Correspondence on the exhibition in the files of the National Gallery and the Art Gallery of Toronto begins in December 1926 with a letter from Eric Brown to Dr. Charles Camsell, Deputy Minister, Department of Mines, which was in charge of the National Museum. The letter solicits the Museum's and especially Barbeau's co-operation and outlines Brown's vision for the exhibition. The joint project was to encompass "the most artistically interesting examples of this Indian craft work procurable and to include it with as much as is possible of the best work possible done by our modern Canadian artists in the same region [It] will do a great deal towards interesting the public in the life and history of the western Indian tribes, as well as in the aboriginal arts of the domain."¹¹⁴ Brown's position was ambivalent. It was not his exhibition, or idea, but rather one handed on from the Art Gallery of Toronto, Jackson and Barbeau, and he

¹¹²Jackson to Barbeau, February 25 [1926] "I spoke about an exhibition of Indian masks to the ex. Committee of the Art Gallery and they think it will be fine for the autumn."

¹¹³Barbeau to Holgate, May 26, 1926, CMC, Coll. Marius Barbeau B204/19, 1926-29, 1931, 1934, 1940, Holgate, Edwin.

¹¹⁴Eric Brown to Dr. Charles Camsell, December, 1926, NGC Archives.

seemed uncertain of its subject.¹¹⁵ His vacillation between “art” and “craft” indicates some indecision on the nature of the material. He also shifted the balance towards an emphasis on non-Native art, which, as unambiguously “art”, would undoubtedly prevail as the dominant aspect of the exhibition.

Also in late December of 1926, Barbeau wrote Vincent Massey, who was on the board of the Art Gallery of Toronto, soliciting his patronage for a project which, he said, had been put forward the previous spring “to exhibit jointly a considerable number of West Coast Indian carvings and paintings and a certain number of modern paintings by Canadian artists, which might serve as an interesting background to the Indian art motives”.¹¹⁶ By February, the Art Gallery of Toronto officially had requested the exhibition.¹¹⁷ Brown’s involvement and National Gallery proceedings remained dormant for a period, since he was in Europe in the spring, attending to the *Jeu de Paume*, and travelling across Canada in the late summer, while Barbeau was in the field. In fact, after the initial proposals, and sending artists into the field, most of the preparations for the show occurred only in the fall, just before its opening.

In the meantime, in the course of late 1926 and throughout 1927, unexpected complexities and conflicts, if not dangers, arose from outside the Museum and Gallery, which further modified the exhibition’s development. Brown’s first letter on the topic occurred at precisely the same moment at which negotiations were underway to include the small sampling of Northwest Coast work in the *Jeu de Paume* exhibition. It can be concluded, from the proximities of time, personnel and format, that the two were closely linked and that inclusion of Native material at the

¹¹⁵Barbeau, however, attempted to conceal his position at this time. He wrote to Jackson, December 28, 1926, that “the preliminaries should be directed in such a way as to have the trustees of the Toronto Art Gallery make a formal request for the loan of the specimens and paintings for an exhibition. The loan of our Indian specimens, at least, might not be obtained otherwise, for I would not like to appear either as an organizer or as the manager of this exhibition.” Art Gallery of Ontario Archives. Afterwards, of course, he would claim full responsibility for the show. My thanks to Gerta Moray for bringing the material to my attention.

¹¹⁶Barbeau to Vincent Massey, December 30, 1926. Art Gallery of Ontario Archives. Again, my thanks to Gerta Moray for bringing this correspondence to my attention.

¹¹⁷Edward Greig to Eric Brown, February 24, 1927, NGC Archives.

Paris venue was seen as something of a prelude to the fall show. As has been demonstrated, however, all did not go as planned. The expected repetition in Paris of the Wembley critical triumphs did not occur, while the validation of the nationalism and modernism of the Group of Seven was withheld. At the same time, the Native art tended to overshadow the Group's works and was given a presence and vitality that was other than what the organizers had anticipated. Indeed, Brown's attitude towards the exhibition must have shifted as he read the incoming reviews. Insofar as these had destabilized the key discourses of the disappearance of the Native and the construction of modern Canadian national identity embedded in the landscapes of the Group of Seven, a proper relationship between Native and native Canadian art had to be re-established. It should not be surprising, then, that the **Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** exhibition became a format for addressing the problems posed by the Parisian reviews. What could have originally been intended as one more stage in the triumphs of the Group in expanding the territories included within the national image now became a project to shore up its faltering foundational discursive structures.

These were not the only problems with which the exhibition and those associated with it had to contend. Closer to home, Barbeau's project for including images of the Gitksan of the Upper Skeena River as a background for Canadian culture had also not gone as planned. Not only was he unable to enlist the entire Group in the project, and thus give it the validity he desired, but the one member whom he had enjoined was having reservations. By early 1927, Jackson, now back in Toronto, was beginning to express his doubts about his involvement in Barbeau's project of a direct confrontation of Native and native Canadian art, was having trouble turning his sketches into paintings for the exhibition, and was reducing his involvement in **The Downfall of Temlaham** illustrations. By mid-year he too would have been aware of the Parisian reviews, which would hardly have served as an encouragement. On the positive side was the "discovery", in late 1927, of Emily Carr. Her early paintings of West Coast Native subjects not only compensated for any lack on Jackson's part, but also offered the exhibit a greater historical depth, made it seem prescient, and provided a contrast between "then" and "now" in terms of the state of Native culture. The "now" was, of course, somewhat problematic as Barbeau's plans had

also gone awry in the Upper Skeena itself when the Gitksan refused to fade into the background. The failure of the projects underwriting the exhibition, in conjunction with the Paris experience may well have inspired a need for a monumental public display of success, which could account for the inflation of the exhibition well beyond its original concept and the redefinition of its purpose.

Having been conceived in a fairly optimistic period of self-assurance following the Wembley triumphs, the exhibition was transformed, as doubts arose about its premises. Representing and defining the image of the Indian, which was threatening to escape from its discursive boundaries, became of as of great an importance as reasserting the validity of a distinct Canadian national identity invested in the Group of Seven. This was particularly so in that the voice of the Other was now being heard in Ottawa at the Special Joint Committee investigating land claims. Although it must have been assumed that the voice had been silenced by the outlawing of using the law, its presence still had to be dealt with. This complex of concerns, which were reaching crisis proportions, gave the exhibition a sense of urgency that must have dispelled any initial complacency about its message. Still it must have been anticipated that the boundaries of these threatened discourses, as they were defined in the critical responses, could be more rigorously surveyed and policed than they had been in Paris and the proper responses insured.

Under these mounting pressures, the exhibition, by the time of its realization, had evolved from its origins as a simple affair to a complex undertaking. It was a first time collaboration between the National Gallery and the National Museum, who were still sharing premises, the Royal Ontario Museum (which had received objects from the Cranmer potlatch confiscations as well as the National Museum), McGill University and the Art Association of Montreal. Marius Barbeau was, with Eric Brown, and to a lesser and lesser degree A. Y. Jackson, the driving forces behind it. The railways, whose interests were never far from any such developments, had a stake in the affair. They were kept informed of and played a role in the proceedings, particularly in underwriting shipping for the works. And the Department of Indian Affairs, in the person of Duncan Campbell Scott, was, as always, present, albeit his role was downplayed, if not concealed. All of the parties who had a stake in defining a Canadian national identity and the

role of the Indian within that identity had a part, except, of course, the Natives themselves, who, as far as can be discerned, were not consulted on the matter.

The exhibit opened December 2, 1927, almost two weeks late.¹¹⁸ In January it moved to the Art Gallery of Toronto and in February to the Art Association of Montreal. The concept as it was finally realized, followed that of the *Jeu de Paume* show, but with substantial differences: Anglo-Canadian artists who had painted in Western Canada in the past few years would be exhibited with objects of Native manufacture. This time however, the latter would be shown in significant quantities, well beyond the masks and miniature totem poles originally mentioned by Jackson and Barbeau. The non-Native artists included Emily Carr, with by far the largest selection of paintings, all which dated back some fifteen years. She also showed hooked rugs and pottery of more recent manufacture using Native design motifs. Edwin Holgate's production from the Skeena was numerically well represented with thirteen works. A. Y. Jackson, reflecting his limited output and growing antipathy for the project, showed only three paintings and a group of sketches. Pegi Nichol showed four Stoney portraits and Anne Savage showed a painting and various sketches from her trip. Florence Wyle displayed a series of small plaster models of totem poles and two plaster reliefs of heads. Langdon Kihn's troublesome paintings must have caused problems in the hanging of the exhibition. There is no record that he was invited to the opening or notified of the publication of the catalogue.¹¹⁹ His name was, in fact, excluded from the list of

¹¹⁸See illustrations 69 and 70.

¹¹⁹No mention of Kihn attending the opening occurs in the CMC, NGC or Langdon Kihn Papers. In early November, Barbeau, anticipating a great success, extended an invitation and instructed him to apply for a pass from Gibbon, since the railways "are interested in the exhibition and there will be here quite a gathering of artists for the occasion." Barbeau to Kihn, November 4, 1927, CMC Archives. See also Henry Cleveland Morgan to Kihn, November 22, 1927, Langdon Kihn Papers, where he thanks him for a drawing and looks forward to seeing him at the exhibition. Conversely, neither Barbeau nor Morgan supplied the date for the official opening, which, as has been shown, continuously shifted. In the last letter on file from Barbeau to Kihn before the opening Barbeau refers to the exhibition in a post script: "Our West Coast Exhibition takes place here at the Art Gallery. . . . [Your work] will be exhibited with our other things most of December. Then they will be sent to Toronto early in January." Barbeau to Kihn, November 18, 1927, Langdon Kihn Papers. The letter supplied neither a date for the opening nor any further mention of Kihn attending. It could be speculated that one way to insure Kihn did not arrive was to withhold this crucial information. Kihn got similar treatment elsewhere. Throughout December, he was also in frequent communication with Gibbon on an aborted calendar project, but Gibbon's letters mentions neither passes nor the exhibition nor the possibility of Kihn attending. There is also no record of any one sending, or of him receiving, a copy of the catalogue, or even a notification of its existence. Despite superficial cordialities, it appears

artists in the initial version of the catalogue printed for the National Gallery, and appeared only in an inserted addendum.¹²⁰ No mention of this omission occurs in the files of correspondence, which is suspicious in itself even had it been an oversight. This changed when the show moved to Toronto. The reprint of the catalogue done for the Toronto Art Gallery, which did not use Carr's designs for the cover, and included photographs of the Ottawa venue, listed twelve works by Kihn with the Canadian artists.¹²¹

Not all the works were of the Skeena, nor did they necessarily have an Indian theme. Although paintings from the region received the most attention, the concept of "West Coast" art was given a wider scope. Broadening the exhibition seems to have been a way to include a greater number of the Group of Seven who had declined invitations to venture into the region, and thereby more securely link it to the national image of the country. It was also a means of asserting the emptiness of the landscape which could counter the images of Kihn, Carr and the others. J. E. H. Macdonald had two Rocky Mountain images, while Lawren Harris and F. H. Varley also exhibited mountain sketches. Artists from outside the Group included Walter Phillips, a woodcut and watercolour artist from Winnipeg, who had been featured at Wembley and in Paris. He was invited by Brown at the very last minute, after the initial proposed opening date, and was able to muster four images of Indian villages done on Vancouver Island.¹²² Charles Scott, the head of the Vancouver School of Art where Varley was employed, also showed sketches. Insofar as the latter three came from either the Prairies or British Columbia, they, along with Carr, gave the exhibition a more national cast, an important issue for Brown at that moment.¹²³ Less recent or modern were eight Indian works by Paul Kane, including three portraits and five scenes from

Kihn was no longer welcome.

¹²⁰National Gallery of Canada, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1927. (Ottawa edition). There is no record of when this addendum was inserted.

¹²¹National Gallery of Canada, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern**, Toronto: [Art Gallery of Toronto], [1928]. See p. 15.

¹²²Brown to Phillips, November 23, 1927, Phillips to Brown, November 24, 1927, NCG Archives.

¹²³See Morrison, p. 55.

Indian life, and a Selkirk landscape by Frederick Bell-Smith.

In addition, although listed under a separate heading in the catalogue, were two paintings done in Western conventions by a Native artist, Frederick Alexei, borrowed from the personal collections of Jackson and John Flewin.¹²⁴ Alexei's works tended to blur the distinction between Native and non-Native art, but in a very precise fashion which established several key principles, thereby linking the show to the Jeu de Paume debacle and re-establishing acceptable relationships between Native and non-Native works. Indeed, it was their position on the border between the Native and Modern, as it was phrased, that made them such pivotal pieces. Because they lay outside the positions staked out for both parties, they tended to allow a critical insight into the complexities and ambiguities of what was otherwise posed as a simple, lucid opposition.

Alexei's paintings were categorized in the catalogue as "primitive". It has been noted that the Parisian reviews used this term to characterize the work of the Group, a designation which became a source of some embarrassment and led to the concealment, rather than the planned publication, of the reviews, since it implied a lack of mastery and an incomplete and immature grasp of the conventions being employed. It thus became necessary to re-deploy the term for the home audience in such a way that it could be displaced and transferred elsewhere. Much rode on its definition and to whom it was applied. The term and its proper designation, was, then, carefully articulated in the catalogue so that no mistake could be made.

The two paintings by Fred Alexee . . . might be placed among the primitives of Canadian art here exhibited. In European countries primitive paintings have been prized for their naivete, their charm, and the historical perspective which they confer upon the development of art. In Canada this category has so far eluded search, if we except Indian art pure and simple. Alexee's work possesses something of the quality which we should expect from such primitive painting, and he himself is an old Tsimisian half-breed of Port Simpson, B.C. . . . His sense of colour is limited; his composition is as a rule excellent; and the movement is spontaneous and spirited.¹²⁵

¹²⁴It will be recalled that Jackson had initially proposed the inclusion of Alexie's works as part of the illustrations for **The Downfall of Temlaham**, but then, on consideration, discarded the idea because he anticipated that people would think less of the book. See illustration 71. Alexie's name has been spelt in various ways.

¹²⁵**Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art**, Ottawa ed., p. 13.

The paragraph solicits its meanings from a host of shared assumptions. It categorically denies that there ever was a recognizable non-Native “primitive” art in Canada. Since any such art had “eluded search”, the term could never apply to the Group of Seven, who were, of course, highly visible. The paragraph also locates the term in the work of either European or Native artists, thus twice displacing it from current Canadian non-Native painting. The French critics who identified the Group as “primitives” were thus placed in error. Furthermore, the paragraph supplies a historical model progressing through an evolution from the naive/primitive to the knowing, or one might say, from the incompetence to mastery. Thus Alexie’s paintings, coming from an earlier stage in this development, are “limited”, especially in colour, the *forté* of the Group. Yet their lack is at once their charm and value. The less mastery they have, the better they are. Conversely, if they exhibited more competence, they would, by implication, not be as worthy of attention or aesthetic appreciation. The charming lack of mastery, through a slippage of the double meaning of “primitive” in the third sentence, extended beyond those who had not yet fully grasped the language of conventions that constitute Western art, and included all Native artists and their art. The opposing attributes of lack and mastery are made to constitute a point of binary difference, rather than an affinity, between the Native and non-Native artists, especially the Group with whom they are compared here.

This hierarchy of languages and competencies corresponded on the larger scale to the tropes cited earlier within the writings of A. Y. Jackson, and elsewhere in the popular press. Native speakers are rendered as different insofar as they are deprived of language or voice. When they do speak, they are inarticulate or only capable of employing a naive patois. This disrupts their attempts at communication and deprives them of cognitive authority. Conversely, the writer’s full mastery and command of language is inscribed within their text and emphasized by the contrast. But the inclusion of Alexie’s work served in more ways than simply producing this binary function. It also pointed out that Native artists, under pressure from assimilation, had lost competence in their own language, and were still not yet competent in that of the colonizers. The exhibition of his work thus demarcated the singular direction of cultural influence in Canadian “modern” art, which appeared to be a one way street. This direction distinguished it from its European

counterparts. Unlike the avant gardes of Cubism, Fauvism or Expressionism, there was no influence from the Native/Primitive work on the Group and its affiliates, even when they approached it as subject matter. Insofar as the Canadian “avant garde” had nothing to learn from the Native work, the former was never placed in a position of having not yet mastered the latter’s formal complexities or social subjects. On the other hand, Alexie’s work was proof that the reverse was true and that the process was incomplete. Alexie’s primitivism demonstrated that Native artists, having lost their competence in their own arts, had still only acquired a stuttering voice in the new Western vocabularies. Given the confirmation of these assumptions, no attempt needed be made to demonstrate that the modern work was in any way indebted to the Native work, (as had been asserted by the Parisian critics) aside from adopting it as subject matter within the range and repertoire of Canadian subjects. While the Canadian artists had gazed upon and taken possession of the Native material, the latter remained passive and did not act in turn on those who were beholding it. The work of the non-Native Canadian artists which approached the Native subjects diverted the dangerous aspects of a critique of Western culture that could be found in the work of the European avant gardes, and instead re-affirmed the continuity of a British colonial, picturesque tradition.

The only affinity between the Native and the “modern” work was that they both sprang from the land and could be taken as declarations of nationalism. Brown was insistent on this point and repeated it three times within his brief, single-page essay in the catalogue. Still vacillating between art and craft, he stated: “The Indian sense of creative design and high craftsmanship was at its best as deeply rooted in his national consciousness.” This continued “so long as his national consciousness and independence remained” but had disappeared as had their arts.¹²⁶ Thus Native nationalism had vacated the scene and was supplanted by non-Native Canadian nationalism. Barbeau confirmed Brown’s assessment. He stated that “a commendable feature of this aboriginal art for us is that it is truly Canadian in its inspiration. It has sprung up wholly from the soil and the sea within our national boundaries.”¹²⁷ The Canadian national “us” and

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 2.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 4.

“our” with whom Barbeau identified both himself and his readers did not, however, belong to the Indian, who by implication became “them” and the “other”. Brown employed a similar tactic when he shifted the identity of the Indian into a oneness with an exploitable Nature. He confirmed Harlan Smith’s early proposals on the use of Native motifs by industry, stating that although now gone “[e]nough remains . . . to provide an invaluable mine of decorative design . . . possessing for the Canadian artist . . . the unique quality of being entirely national in its origin and character.”¹²⁸ Like any other national natural resource, Native art belonged to no one, since it was assumed tacitly that no Natives existed who had a valid and singular claim to it. In this absence, the art could be colonized, claimed and “mine-d” at will. In this sense, the use of Native materials as a basis for nationally distinct commodities became an affirmation of capitalism and industry, i.e. of Western economic values, rather than a potential critique. But it also assumed that the Natives owned nothing, including their own culture, and thus had no claim to any of their lands either.

Much of the catalogue essays, it seems, were written against the claims of the Natives to cultural continuity, ownership and self-representation and against the judgement by the French critics at the Jeu de Paume exhibition of both the Group of Seven and the Native work. There was, for example, the absence of any formal affinities between the “modern” and Native work, with the exception of the possibility of adaptations for nationalistic decorative industrial designs. Conversely, the exhibition and its texts established clear relationships of difference based on temporalities, influences, identities, ownerships and hierarchies, especially those between the primitive and modern. With these securely in place, it was now possible to openly confront the problematic Parisian reviews. They had valued the Native work highly, in some cases, higher than the Canadian paintings and had given it an unwanted presence. They had also collapsed the difference between the primitive and the Canadian, and had withheld mastery and sophistication, which were associated with Parisian modernist artists. These positions were now displaced. Barbeau could thus acknowledge that Thiébaud-Sisson had written the previous year that “between the specimens of Canadian West Coast art and those of the Bantus of Africa or of the

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 2.

ancient Aztecs of Mexico, there is an obvious analogy Yet, the art of the Canadian tribes has advanced further than the others and discloses a much finer culture.”¹²⁹ Such an assessment could only be made openly in a context where Brown had already established a firm hierarchy which separated the arts (or crafts) of “the Canadian West Coast tribes”, which had disappeared, from “our more sophisticated artists”, who, it was asserted, could not be associated with the primitive or be seen as lacking mastery. In the new context, the fact that the Native work had been praised by the French critics no longer diminished or threatened the Group. Indeed, it was made to serve as a demonstration of how much higher and even “more sophisticated” was their work. The words of the French critics were thus redeployed to reverse their initial assessments.

But if the relationships between this exhibition and the one in Paris became more lucid, then those between the Native and “modern” work became less so, except to establish difference and a hierarchical relationship, and to make one the subject of the other. Brown articulated his ambivalence and the ambiguity of the exhibition when he stated that the show was an “an endeavour to analyse their relationships to one another, *if such exist*, and . . . to enable this primitive . . . art to take a definite place as one of the most valuable of Canada’s artistic productions”.¹³⁰ According to Brown, any clear relationship was cast into doubt. For Brown at least, the basic premise of the show was anything but “definite”, except to absorb Native art into a hegemonic national Canadian art, where it could take on a new meaning for a newly educated audience.

Nonetheless, there was an abundance, if not an over-abundance, of Native material. This ranged from miniature poles, to monumental house posts and canoes, as well as masks, headdresses, statuettes, batons, painted and carved boards, food boxes and trays, ladles and horn spoons, charms and amulets, argillite carvings, Chilkat and button blankets, woven mats and capes, hats, bracelets, drums and rattles. In short, the exhibition fulfilled all the potential of plenitude promised by Barbeau in the catalogue for the Jeu de Paume catalogue, yet absent from that

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 3.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 2. My emphasis.

exhibition. The Native material did vary somewhat with the venue. Most of it came from the National Museum. This appears to have been supplemented with several pieces borrowed from the personal collection of Duncan Campbell Scott. An invoice within the records shows that six masks and two ladles were returned to him after the exhibition.¹³¹ As the National Museum would not permit some of its collection to travel out of Ottawa, the exhibition in Toronto was supplemented by work from the Royal Ontario Museum. This, in turn was added to by work from the McCord Museum at McGill. In short, as the exhibition grew in scale in late 1927, it came to involve not only artists from Montreal to Victoria, and a host of government bureaucracies and administrations, but also almost all of Canada's entire cultural institutional framework. The scale of the resources brought out to supply, contain and administer the work was nothing short of monumental, if not breathtaking. Such a display of co-ordinated cultural forces centred on one art exhibition was unprecedented in the history of the country.

The simultaneous presentation of "modern" and "Native" work seems to have posed certain logistical problems. The majority of the Native pieces were not confined within glass cases, but were placed in the open, interspersed with the paintings in symmetrical arrangements.¹³² This arrangement seems to have been based on an adaptation of the conventions for the display of ethnographic material established in the late 1800s. In those, typographic, taxonomic and comparative relationships, which were lacking here, generally formed the basis for organization.¹³³ The strict balance also violated the conventions that had developed for the display of paintings. Everyone agrees that these arrangements did nothing to establish differences between the works from the various Native groups, although these were mentioned in the catalogue.¹³⁴ They also did nothing to demonstrate any similarities or affinities between the Native and non-Native pieces. The installations were, in fact, by any contemporary standards,

¹³¹Invoice, NGC Archives.

¹³²Small objects were placed within vitrines. For a detailed discussion of the symmetrical arrangements, see Morrison, pp. 67 - 68.

¹³³See illustration 72.

¹³⁴**Canadian West Coast Art**, Ottawa ed., p. 3.

banal and uninformative in the extreme. Education does not seem to have been the guiding principle. It would almost seem that, once the selections had been made and negotiated, not much thought was put into the hanging, aside from a pleasing balance. I would contend, however, that the excess of pieces, the excess of order, the excess of institutional involvement and the dearth of information, were precisely the means necessary for insuring the proper reading of the works.¹³⁵ Locking the entire spectrum of Native production, seen as simply “West Coast Indian”, into this homogenizing “fearful symmetry” within the national museum and gallery framework, as well as representing them in the context of the current non-Native paintings, brought them under control, and securely contained them within their disciplining, discursive frameworks.¹³⁶ The dangerous propensity that the pieces, and even more particularly their makers, showed for breaking out of this construction at that very moment was reassuringly diverted or masked by the rigid arrangement.

In all of this overwrought display of institutional anxiety, might and order, the audience seems somehow to have been overlooked. Each venue at which the exhibition appeared was noted as being poorly attended, evidence of insufficient advance publicity or promotion. In fact, a search of the newspapers yields few preliminary notices to build interest in the exhibition as had occurred in Paris. Nor did a series of articles appear to educate the potential audiences on the unique qualities of the works, although, as we have seen, several were published which posited the decrepit state of Native and specifically Gitksan culture, and which seem to have been given a greater priority.¹³⁷ In fact, by the time the show opened in Ottawa it is almost as if it had become, despite its initial promise, something of an embarrassment. The unexplained delays in the opening day, which was first given as November 20, then moved by Brown to November 24, and finally occurred on December 2, was the first indication of a desire not to have the work

¹³⁵I am here extending and modifying ideas initially put forward by Morrison, pp. 67 - 68.

¹³⁶My thanks to Dr. John O’Brian for providing this cogent reference to Frye’s model for Canadian culture.

¹³⁷A brief notice of the coming exhibition, based on an interview with Barbeau, did appear in the **Evening Citizen**, Ottawa, Nov, 10, 1927, which outlined its basic premises and the introduced Carr. A second notice announcing the loans from McGill from the Dawson collection and works by Kihn, appeared in the **Montreal Star**, November 14, 1927. CMC Archives. Both gave the opening date as November 20.

seen and to limit its exposure.¹³⁸

Carr's journals provide further insights into this complex and conflicted situation. Her bitter disappointment at the hastily assembled and poorly attended "opening", at which she was told by Barbeau that Brown had not sent out the invitations, is well known. Less often reported is her preamble. Here, she recounted Barbeau's confident anticipation of a triumph that would have validated his efforts and his theories. Barbeau raised Carr's expectations by asserting that such openings usually attracted "thousands" of people and that it was sure to be a crush. But Carr was also aware of his wife's anxiety at Brown's suspicious statements that it he intended it to be an "informal" event. When they arrived and found the paltry crowd, Barbeau felt thwarted by Brown and was extremely bitter, while Brown put on what Carr saw as a hypocritically cheerful front. She did not understand what had occurred, but felt personally embarrassed and humiliated.¹³⁹ It was, in fact, no simple petty jealousy or turf war between two rival bureaucrats forced to share premises and projects. What was at stake between Brown and Barbeau, and what had finally come to a head, was a vision of Canada and its identity as established in the visual arts and its precise relationship with Native culture. It now becomes clear, in the context of the complex issues surrounding the exhibition, that Barbeau's attempt to imbricate both *Canadien* and Indian culture into the fabric of Canadian identity threatened the integrity of Brown's fragile monocultural constructions. The latter required that both of these be marginalized, if not excluded. It is hardly surprising that he would have opposed the exhibition, albeit not overtly, and that Group participation was kept to a minimum. Thus, the Ottawa exhibition was, as Carr stated, a "fizzle". Her assessment that if momentum was lost at the opening, it would not be regained and the show would close before it opened was probably correct.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸Director [Brown] to Collins, November 9, 1927. NGC Archives. Note that this is the day before the **Evening Citizen** announcement and five days before that in Montreal. Internal communications on the matter do not seem to have been good.

¹³⁹Emily Carr, "Journal", British Columbia Archives.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.. With Kihn not in attendance, Carr could take centre stage, even if for a small house. But this raises the question of the presence of the other artists at the opening. It appears that few of those in the show actually attended. This leads to the speculation of what role this exhibition would ultimately have played in the narration of Canadian art and culture had it not been for Carr's "discovery" which ensured its place. Would it, without her, have

The show did not do that well in its other venues either. The situation was repeated at the opening in Toronto where Edward Greig, the curator, reported to Brown a “very small attendance”.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, despite the logistics, expenses and difficult negotiations that went on in assembling the work and getting it from one venue to the next, the exhibitions were actually open to the public only briefly. If the National Gallery followed its normal procedure of being closed by December 22, the Ottawa show was open for less than three weeks.¹⁴² The time in Toronto was equally short, from January 6 to January 29, just over three weeks. Here, however, Barbeau intervened to raise its profile by speaking and arranging for Juliette Gaultier to perform at the Gallery, both events being written up in the press. He reported that these were well attended and people even turned away. His accounts, however, may be somewhat suspect, given the reports in the Ottawa papers that the opening there enjoyed a huge attendance, and in that he had a flair for exaggerating his own successes. Indeed, Jackson reported that attendance at the exhibition itself was small. “The West Coast show here has had no attendance at all, about ten a day at the best. It is a hopeless situation.”¹⁴³ The third venue, the Art Institute of Montreal, appears to have been a last minute addition, evidence of negotiations dating back only to November.¹⁴⁴ By November 30, no fixed dates had been given.¹⁴⁵ The official request came only

fallen into the same obscurity as the *Jeu de Paume*?

¹⁴¹Greig to Brown, January 7, 1928, NGC Archives.

¹⁴²Other exhibitions at the gallery held in December that closed before January were generally concluded by December 22. Hill gives December 29 as the closing day, but then he also gives the opening as November 20, indicating these are not to be trusted. While it was not uncommon to have three-week exhibitions, or even less, it was less than the rule for major shows.

¹⁴³Jackson to Brown, Saturday, [n.d.], NGC Archives. Hill assumes this letter was sent from Montreal and was thus about the show there, but there is nothing on the document to indicate that it originated in that city. He also reports that the recorded attendance in Toronto was “good”, citing AGO records which place the figure at 7,742. Hill, p. 192 and n.76, p. 300. This number is, however, small when compared with that given for other exhibitions. Brown frequently cited 30,000 visitors to exhibitions at the National Gallery, in a much smaller city. Hill does not cite the letter from Greig indicating the limited attendance at the opening.

¹⁴⁴The first mention that Montreal wanted to host the exhibition occurs in Cleveland Morgan to Barbeau, November 22, 1927, NGC Archives. Morgan had known of the exhibition, however, at least since late October. Director [Brown] to F. Cleveland Morgan, October 28, 1927, NGC Archives.

¹⁴⁵Director [Brown] to Greig, November 29, 1927, NGC Archives.

on December 14, but dates were still being negotiated.¹⁴⁶ Brown suggested that the entire show was probably too much for their limited space and that they take only a portion of it.¹⁴⁷ By the end of January, they were being offered the show for only one week.¹⁴⁸ After threatening to cancel, the Art Association finally managed to hang on to the entire show from February 17 to March 22, the longest duration of the three.

Where it was not shown was equally telling as where it did appear. In the course of the exhibition, it attracted attention from American museums who were beginning experiments in precisely this direction. The American Museum of Natural History sent an expression of interest and asked for the catalogue.¹⁴⁹ On January 18, the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, which had shown Canadian work both in 1921 and 1927, and consequently had a well-established relationship with Canadian institutions, requested the show.¹⁵⁰ The Canadian National Exhibition asked for a portion of the exhibition for the following fall.¹⁵¹ The correspondence also indicates that Buffalo, presumably the Albright Museum which had previously shown Canadian work, requested the exhibition as well.¹⁵² These overtures, however, amounted to nothing, despite the fact that the work was crated and not committed to any other venues. The precise reasons for not travelling the show do not appear in the correspondence, but there are suggestions of problems with the Native material, although ways around these were also proposed.¹⁵³ It may be speculated, however, that antipathy to such a prospect may have arisen from several unwelcome possibilities, particularly surrounding the potential critical responses,

¹⁴⁶Shepherd to McCurry, December 14, 1917, NGC Archives.

¹⁴⁷Brown to Pinkerton, January 26, 1928, NGC Archives.

¹⁴⁸Pinkerton to Brown, January 31, 1928, NGC Archives.

¹⁴⁹American Museum of Natural History to National Gallery of Canada, January 12, 1928, NGC Archives.

¹⁵⁰Gertrude Herdle to Brown, January 18, 1918, NGC Archives.

¹⁵¹CNE to Brown, January 17, 1928, NGC Archives.

¹⁵²Brown to Herdle, January 23, 1928, NGC Archives. .

¹⁵³Director to Mr. Phillips, The American Legation, Ottawa, February 21, 1928, NGC Archives.

which since Paris had become an important issue. Kihn's paintings, in any American venue, would certainly have been highlighted and the Canadian institutions appeared anxious that his work either be omitted or downplayed, due to its problematic content. He would have undoubtedly shared centre stage with Carr, who would have taken precedence among the Canadian painters. At the same time, the Group work in the exhibition, because of their reluctance to participate, was not all that strong, and thus again would have been cast in an unfavourable light. But above all, there was the danger of the Native work being too highly appreciated, interpreted as confirmation of an ongoing culture and having a direct and present contribution to a larger national identity. Any such readings would have shifted and upset the careful and precarious rebalancing of the relationships within the exhibition. Whatever the reasons, a more suitable show of Group work without the Native material or work by Kihn or Carr was sent to Rochester and Buffalo in the fall of 1928 while the CNE received a display of British, Spanish and Canadian painting.¹⁵⁴

The indifference to the possibility of gaining an international audience for the work indicates that exposure was not, in the end, the aim of the exhibition. Nor was its purpose to inform or educate an audience, as had initially had been planned and stated, except on the supposed state of Native culture. In the course of the troubling events which surrounded the exhibition, its primary purpose seems to have been to reassure the institutions themselves about their relationships with Native cultures and peoples and to shore up the faltering discourses. The process of public education, in any case, could go on in other more permanent formats, such as the continued publication of books and articles that would have a longer shelf life. Equally, since Wembley and Paris, the "audiences" which mattered most to the exhibitors seem to have become the reviewers. Jackson already began to direct events with the publication of "Rescuing Our Tottering Totems".¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the Group and the National Museum took an active hand in ensuring the correct viewpoints were forthcoming.

¹⁵⁴Hill, *The Group of Seven*, pp. 217 and 340. Hill does not mention that these were substitutes for the original requests for a version of the *West Coast Art* exhibition.

¹⁵⁵Jackson, *op. cit.*

Re-viewing the Ruins

It would be an exaggeration to say that the critical response in Ottawa to the show was muted. To be more accurate, one would have to say that it was almost non-existent. The local press had obviously not contacted to drum up interest. In terms of response, only the **Ottawa Citizen** printed a brief review.¹⁵⁶ This was an unusual reticence in a city where such discussions were eagerly welcomed. Instead, the **Globe** in Toronto led off on December 3 with a brief notice that in Ottawa “history in Canadian art was made” in showing “the best works of native craftsmanship” with “the best Canadian artists, showing what a tremendous influence the vanishing civilization of the West Coast Indian is having on the minds of Canadian artists”.¹⁵⁷

Despite the lack of local attention, the Toronto-based national magazine **Saturday Night** offered an extended commentary by Guy Rhoades.¹⁵⁸ Rhoades must have met Langdon Kihn while the latter was in Ottawa in 1925. He also had a deep interest in the Natives of Canada. He was in communication with Harlan Smith and may have visited the Skeena in 1926. Writing to Kihn in March of that year, he stated,

I myself will probably be at Hazelton or thereabouts. I expect to have to hobo most or all of the way out. But there is a great deal I could write from there which cannot be done from this place owing to the Duncan Campbell Scott outfit and my intimacy with the museum bunch. But out there I would be an eye-witness free to say whatever I liked.¹⁵⁹

It would appear that any statements about the Natives published in the national press were policed and controlled, that alternative views existed but were suppressed, and that individuals were making the trip out on their own without museum or railway assistance. Rhoades’ article thus opened with an equivocal reference to the notion of disappearance: “The vanishing Indian

¹⁵⁶**Citizen**, Ottawa, 20 November 1927.

¹⁵⁷**Globe**, Toronto, Dec 3, 1927.

¹⁵⁸Guy Rhoades, “West Coast Indian Art, Unique Exhibition in Progress at the National Gallery, Ottawa”, **Saturday Night**, December 18, 1927, p. 3. Rhoades was a reporter for the Ottawa **Citizen**.

¹⁵⁹Rhoades to Kihn, March 17, Langdon Kihn Papers.

did a strong comeback.” This metaphor of regeneration, which may have been as far as he dared or was allowed to go in that direction, was accompanied by the recognition of the Native material as art. He even referred to the works as “masterpieces” and devoted the first half of his article to them. Furthermore, after noting the influence of Native art on current Canadian artists, he repeated the claim made since Paris that the “natives of the Pacific coast possessed what was probably the greatest decorative art which has ever developed”. He then went further. Linking the art to heraldry, he noted that “each design . . . could be adapted to fit any field he [i.e., the artist] chose to put it in. He was permitted to distort it as much as he pleased as long he preserved certain features which disclosed its identity. In each being which he portrayed the essential features were different.” These characteristics were not available from the catalogue and the article represented a fairly sophisticated analysis of the most significant conventions of much of the work. This may indicate exposure to Barbeau’s talks on the subject or have been the result of seeing an early copy of Boas’ analysis of Northwest Coast art in his **Primitive Art**, which was published that year.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Rhoades offered no further insights. Much of the rest of the review was devoted to an appreciation of Emily Carr who was, in his view, “one of the greatest discoveries ever made in this country” and “really the feature of the show”. Her paintings were seen as an historical record of “many of the phases of Indian life which have ceased to exist”. Although he mentioned Kihn, Holgate, and Nichol, he did not mention any of the Group.

In contradistinction to the non-response of the Ottawa papers, those from Toronto gave the exhibition full coverage. Reviews appeared in the **Globe**, the **Star**, and the **Mail and Empire**.¹⁶¹ The first reiterated several aspects of the catalogue and included the invocation that “industrial leaders . . . seeking something purely Canadian in design . . . should not miss consideration of the

¹⁶⁰Franz Boas, **Primitive Art**, New York: Dover, 1955, p. 183. Originally published in 1927 by H. Aschehoug, Oslo, for the Oslo Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, and in 1928 by Harvard University Press. This section of the book had first appeared as an essay, “The Decorative Art of the Indians of the North Pacific Coast of America”, **Bulletin American Museum of Natural History**, Vol IX, (1897), pp. 123 - 176.

¹⁶¹“West Coast Indian Art”, **Globe**, Toronto, January 12, 1928; “Art of B.C. Aborigines Deemed Equal to Aztecs”, **Star**, Toronto, January 9, 1928; “Arts Abandoned with Beliefs of Paganism”, **Mail and Empire**, Toronto, January 11, 1928. The latter was reprinted as “Indian Art is Fine Heritage”, **Colonist**, Victoria, January 25, 1928.

art of the West Coast Indians". It also mentioned the popular vision of the totem pole made familiar in the stage musical "Rose Marie" and in film, as well as citing Barbeau and Brown. It concluded, with another peal of the death knell: "Trade and commerce of the white man have changed the Indian, and apparently driven from him the desire for self expression. . . . Perhaps the white leaders of today can do something to perpetuate the Indian's art, even though done by 'mass production.'"¹⁶² Apparently, those responsible for the death of the art were also its rightful heirs, and stood to profit from its demise. No mention of any of the paintings was made. The **Star** omitted any mention of industry, but rather gave a catalogue of the various Native groups and the variety of objects on display, quoting Barbeau in saying that "Their most accomplished artists left works of art that count among the outstanding creations of mankind." Although immensely appreciative of the aesthetic value and variety of the work, the article placed it firmly in the past. Just before turning to the present day arts, it stated: "These aboriginal arts . . . flourished as recently as [the] middle of the last century." It then gave a brief mention of Carr, the members of the "school of seven", Wyle, Kihn and Kane. It concluded, "A visit to the Grange will end the scepticism of all who still doubt that there is a genuinely Canadian art."¹⁶³ The **Mail and Empire**, which had published Barbeau and Scott's article on the state of Native culture, continued that very point. Its headline proclaimed "Arts Abandoned with Beliefs of Paganism." The opening line stated "Creative art among the British Columbia Indians has largely passed out. . . . and today the art is dead, according to Mr. C. Marius Barbeau. . . who gave a talk . . . last evening at the Art Gallery of Toronto upon 'The Traditions, Music and Art of the West Coast Indians'. 'They do not believe in traditions any longer,' he said: 'they do not, indeed, believe in themselves. They no longer believe in art for its own sake, as once they did.'" The remainder of the article carefully reiterated certain of Barbeau's theories on the origins and recentness of the art. It concluded that "[t]he attendance was exceptionally large."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶²**Globe**, Toronto, January 12, 1928.

¹⁶³**Star**, Toronto, January 9, 1928.

¹⁶⁴**Mail and Empire**, Toronto, January 11, 1928, reprinted in **Colonist**, Victoria, January 25, 1928. One wonders if Barbeau himself wrote the article.

The two Montreal reviews differed from those in Toronto. Contrary to Hill's assertion that the show was virtually ignored here, the resulting reviews provided more information on the exhibition itself, and a more reasoned approach to the art. There were no statements of the death of the culture, or the appropriation by industry of its motifs. In both cases, the paintings again received only scant attention.

There was also some coverage beyond the local press. The Rhoades article has already been mentioned. The following month another article appeared in **Saturday Night**, this time by Stewart Dick.¹⁶⁵ He dismissed the landscapes of Harris, Varley, MacDonald and Phillips as unrelated to the theme of the exhibition, thus undermining any attempt to see a relationship between their work and the Native material. Instead, he focussed directly on the "real interest of the exhibition . . . the native Indian work". Viewing this in isolation, he noted the "decorative quality" and "the instinctive use of pattern with freedom and boldness". Although Dick displayed no education in the field and no ability to distinguish one tribal style from another (for which the catalogue and the layout of the display offered scant assistance), his enthusiasm and feeling for the work is unmistakable. Nonetheless, Dick's critical vision was contained within the discourse of the period. He countered Rhoades suggestion of a "comeback" by presenting the acceptable position on the state of Native culture. He also felt compelled to go beyond his role as critic and pronounce the art's disappearance as inevitable and unfortunate. He maintained that any attempt "to keep it alive by artificial means is hopeless and futile. The manufacture of synthetic primitives is a form of modern art production certainly not deserving of encouragement." In any case, he saw the exhibition as the terminus of Indian culture beyond which there was no hope of revival.

The anonymous reviewer for **Canadian Forum** was however less enthusiastic and seemed to have trouble forming any firm opinion on the work in the exhibition, although he was in no doubt

¹⁶⁵Stewart Dick, "Canada's Primitive Arts", **Saturday Night**, January 21, 1928, p. 2. Given the date, and Rhoades review of the Ottawa show, Dick was probably dealing with the Toronto show.

about its final message.¹⁶⁶ His studied antipathy, combined with hints of irony is odd, considering it was precisely this period, that is the late 1920s, when the **Forum** took its greatest interest in serious discussion about art, particularly “modern” art. J. E. H. MacDonald was on its editorial board, and was shortly joined by Lawren Harris. Indeed, for this brief period it became one of the nodes of Canadian national identity and the virtual organ of the Group of Seven. Thus, although the **Forum** had previously published Holgate’s woodcut, **Totem Poles at Kitselas** from his series on Skeena River and Gitksan subjects, as well as Brown’s report on the attention given to Native art at the Jeu de Paume exhibition, in which he had declared the forthcoming antagonistic relationship between Native and Canadian art, the review of the West Coast show drifted from low-brow references to physical culture, to high-minded quotations from Thoreau, but only cursorily touched on the art itself. It opened with the notion that

[p]erhaps all good Canadians are bound to have something of the Indian in them having inherited this country and so put themselves in contact with that earth-memory of hers at which our mystics hint. In time we shall likely develop a better Indian type of physique. The colour and build and action of the young people crowded around a supply-boat at the summer resorts certainly suggests it.

Continuing in this vein with a contrast of the primitive and modern in sports, factories and motor cars, it eventually dealt with the art itself, noting that,

one can share the enthusiasm of foreign authorities and critics over it. No knowledge of its ethnology is needed to enjoy the largeness of pattern of the formal painted designs, the elaborated finish and ingenuity of their carved and painted boxes, bowls, and rattles, the extraordinary combinations of conventionalized birds, arm movements of the brush work in the larger patterns. To one’s fancy all the lines have the roll and crescendo of waves and the swoop of great birds and fish. The play of art is not often better seen than in these grotesque carved and painted masks.

The reviewer concluded patronizingly, if not fatuously, that the Natives “are children pretending, but what clever children. This work must undoubtably go into the fabric of our Canadian art, but not too directly; our umbrellas and fountain pens are not blubber knives and harpoons.” The “discovery” by Eastern Canada of Carr was not mentioned, nor was any of the other non-Native material, including the work of the Group of Seven. The omission of the evidence of precisely

¹⁶⁶“West Coast Indian Art”, **Canadian Forum**, Vol. VIII, No 89, February, 1928, p. 525.

the relationships ostensibly addressed by the article indicates that it may well have been motivated by an attempt to place Native art outside of the discourse of that art which constituted or had claims to representing Canadian identity, except in its most abstract sense. In foreclosing any such debate, the review was a final skirmish on what Brown had previously called on these same pages, “a future battleground in the studios and round the club fires”. Group members never again risked contributing to such an enterprise where their own work might be seen as of less interest than the “primitive” art with which it was displayed.

Still, it seems that, like Rhoades, there were others who were not so quick to dismiss Native art as a thing of the past. At precisely the time when the exhibition opened in Ottawa, an article appeared in **Studio**, probably the most widely circulated and read English language art magazine at the time, on the subject of Native masks. It was written by Eustella Burke and illustrated with photographs by Harlan Smith and Barbeau. The text discussed the “Indians of the Pacific Coast of Canada [who] have developed a school of art which makes them unique among the aborigines of America”. This was the last time, however, that she employed anything approaching the past tense. The rest of the article described the art, its social and ritualistic functions and its production as existing in the present. “Their principal arts *are*. . . Animal motifs *are* used . . . Human figures also *occur*.” She spoke of the ongoing ceremonial activity in the same manner. “There *are*, among these Indians, a number of secret societies. . . . [W]hen an Indian, his face covered by a well-carved mask, dressed in a blue blanket adorned with red flannel applique designs and decorated with scores of small pearl buttons, dances into view of the audience watching the ceremonies, the effect is most astonishingly realistic.”¹⁶⁷ This vivid description which implies actual experience of such prohibited affairs, combined with the photographs from the Gitksan villages of “Gitwinkul” and “Gitsegukla” showing actual dancers in such costumes, gives the impression of an ongoing and dynamic culture. At no point did she suggest that it was in a state of decline or extinction.

¹⁶⁷Eustella Burke, “Indian Dramatic Masks”, **Studio**, Vol. 94, no. 417, (December 1927), pp. 417 - 419. My emphasis.

Given the understanding that had been reached thus far on the discursive frameworks surrounding Native art, culture and peoples, it is predictable that such an article in such a venue could not go unchallenged. The following December, a followup article written by Douglas Leechman, of the National Museum, appeared in the same journal.¹⁶⁸ He began with a reference to the **Canadian West Coast Art** exhibit, calling it a “unique experiment new in the history of Canadian art; one which has, indeed, seldom been attempted before anywhere” and a “decided success”.¹⁶⁹ He then made reference to the Burke article and reiterated its major points. His illustrations were photographs of the Ottawa installation along with paintings by Kihn, Holgate and Jackson, which, however, he did not address. Although he repeated many of Burke’s points, he varied from her on one essential issue. He concluded, yet one more time, the general view that the art had reached its final stage, and had, itself, no future.

It is greatly to be regretted that this art is rapidly dying out, and once dead it can certainly never be revived. In the old days when the influence of the white man had not made itself felt, the workmanship was of the highest, but, first the introduction of our tools, which led to quicker and, therefore, more careless production, and then the adoption of our ways of living by the younger generation of Indians, have had their fatal effect. Nearly all the old artists are dead and there are none to take their places. Efforts have been made during the last three years by the National Museum of Canada to preserve the totem-poles which are left, a highly commendable move in the right direction.¹⁷⁰

Leechman’s statement on the state’s position was well informed but also misinforming. The obsequies delivered by Leechman in his peroration again declaimed the decline into decrepitude and inevitable death of the arts and culture of the Indian, brought about by the “fatal” contact with European culture. He also made transparent the relationships between this premise, the exhibition and the totem pole restoration program.

Significantly, Leechman obscured or left out some pertinent information. Given his position, he would have known that in fact the Native population was on the increase. He would also have

¹⁶⁸Douglas Leechman, “Native Canadian Art of the West Coast”, *Studio*, Vol. 96, (1928), pp. 331 - 333.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 333.

known that the federal government under Duncan Campbell Scott at the Department of Indian Affairs was doing all it could to suppress Indian culture, of which the potlatch ban was only one aspect. He mentioned none of this. Nor did he indicate that resistance was growing and vital especially among the Gitksan but also elsewhere in British Columbia, as well as on the Prairies, and that this resistance had resulted in the failure of the “commendable” restoration program and its attempt to transform the poles of the Gitksan into museum displays, tourist attractions, and emblems of a non-reclaimable Native past for non-Native audiences. Nothing was said about the growing issue of land claims. Whether deliberate or not, these omissions indicate clearly the gaps and enforced silences which riddled the discourse of the Indian as well the anxiety, if not panic, that could arise from the representation of the Native in writing, art, and museum/gallery displays. Indeed, the exhibition as a whole, from conception to execution and reception, was meant to shore up this discourse as conceived by its organizers and to give it a final solidity and validity. Leechman’s article rehearsed these for an international audience who may have been led astray by Burke.

The question arises, then, to what extent did the exhibition in its final form, together with the catalogues and the reviews succeed in its objectives? The answer can only be, in part or not well. Certain things were clearly established and agreed upon by all. There was a general consensus that the only relationship between Native art and Canadian paintings lay in their mutual attachment to the land and their purported national identity. Native culture, identity and art, however, no matter how sympathetically or enthusiastically received, were deemed to be things of the past. The corollary here was that they had been supplanted by a Canadian identity which had mythically sprung, fully formed like Athene from the head of Zeus, out of the National Gallery and the work of the Group of Seven. About this, there could be no dispute. There could be some debate about the precise date of their passing, or the state of their decrepitude within the horizons of the discourse, or what to do with the remnants of that culture, that is whether to incorporate them into a Canadian national design or not, but obviously any thoughts outside this structure were carefully policed and disciplined. Needless to say, this prohibited any oppositional ethnological or Native voice from entering the discourse, which circulated strictly as a knowledge about its subject among those who were in a position to formulate and observe it.

Within such circumstances, the Kitwancool people were right, their interests would not have been served by co-operating and their histories would still have to be written by themselves. Insofar as the integrity of the discourse was never challenged by the exhibition, the door was clearly left open for the Group to occupy, unchallenged, the position of native Canadian artists.

On the other hand, there was also little doubt that the Native art one more time completely overshadowed the paintings. Almost all the reviews focussed on the Native material and spent little time on the other artists, who in several cases were either not mentioned at all or dismissed as beside the point. Such neglect could be damaging to the claims of the Group, who were prescient in either not participating or, as Jackson did, discretely reducing his involvement, with the program. This risk would not have been as evident, however, before the *Jeu de Paume*, that is when the winter show was still in its formative stage as a selection of masks. Afterwards, of course, it increased, as the exhibition expanded under the pressures to contain the ever more problematic image of the Native. In the end, the reverse occurred.

The installation shots and the catalogue indicate why the reviews would have focussed on the Native art. The paintings were dwarfed and contained by the monumental sculpture, and the sheer proliferation of other objects, rather than the other way around. Had the Native works been limited to a fragmented selection of smaller, less consequential objects such as a few masks, argillite carvings and miniatures, as in Paris, or material that would signal "handicraft" or "decoration" to a non-Native audience, such as baskets or jewelry, chances are this could have been avoided. In Canada, however, the situation was reversed. By bringing in monumental sculptural pieces such as houseposts, boxes and dance screens, and in particular the immense, centrally placed, greeting figure collected by Harlan Smith, the physical and visual relationships changed, even if the show lacked actual poles. Within the final display, the smaller paintings in which so much was invested, were not up to the task of absorbing and appropriating the plenitude of works which surrounded them. They were, in fact, incommensurate with them. Thus, instead of solidifying and shoring up a national identity, the exhibition revealed yet further lacunae in that structure, which was too heavily invested in landscape painting. Aside from a deep past, a *volk* and an ancient claim to the land, there was also a lack of a corresponding

monumental, national public sculpture, which could have been brought in, had it existed, and helped with the task at hand.¹⁷¹ There were, instead, only a few small plaster pieces by Wyle. This situation at the exhibition corresponded to the wider lack in Canada, but contrasted with other European countries, such as France and Germany, which had invested heavily and effectively in producing national, public sculptural traditions in the previous centuries.

It might also be suggested that the exhibition lacked the presence of the Natives themselves and their rituals, which could have animated the works on display. The Gitksan people, dressed in traditional regalia, performed traditional ceremonies and gave eloquent speeches in their own language, when they greeted the Governor-General, Lord Byng, on his arrival in their territories during his tour of the Skeena in 1927. They could easily have been invited to attend and enhance the opening, in a manner similar to that which had occurred in the United States when the Pueblos came to New York.¹⁷² Of course this was not possible. Any such performance would have violated the legal restrictions on Native dancing and demonstrated the fallacy of the discourse of disappearance. Furthermore, such ceremonies would also have exposed yet another lacuna in what Hobsbawm would call the invented traditions of the Canadian: the lack, despite Gibbon's efforts, of any coherent set of national ceremonies or rituals which engaged the entire population.¹⁷³ In short, the diversity of the Native material, and the suggestion that it comprised a visual culture which permeated every aspect of its people's lives, made it appear that the exclusive investment in painting was focussed too narrowly. Insofar as Canada aspired to recognition both at home and abroad as an autonomous nation with a distinct and singular

¹⁷¹See Hobsbawm, pp. 76 - 83. On the invention of the "mass production of public monuments" as one of three key components for fostering the concept of the nation, see p. 78 - 81. It should be noted that at the same time as Barbeau was inscribing the disappearance of Native sculptural practices, he was also diligently writing about continuities in French-Canadian sculpture, and insuring that the latter was receiving wide recognition within English speaking Canada.

¹⁷²**Province**, Vancouver, July 12, 1925, n.p. CMC Archives. See illustration 74.

¹⁷³On the "invention of public ceremonies", see Hobsbawm, p. 77. He notes several means in France of the "tendency . . . to transform the heritage of the Revolution into a combined expression of state pomp and power and the citizens' pleasure. A less permanent form of public celebration were the occasional world expositions which gave the Republic the legitimacy of prosperity, technical progress - the Eiffel Tower - and the global conquest they took care to emphasise." p. 78. Canada needed a Wembley of its own. It would not have one until Expo 67 in Montreal at which a new era would be announced with the inclusion of (an admittedly controversial) Native pavilion.

identity, more attention should have been paid to the wider model of Scandinavian nationalist arts, or for that matter, that of the Native material in the exhibition, which included all of the elements then required to qualify for such a status. Depending on landscape paintings derived from an imperial tradition for a distinct national identity was an audacious experiment, but in the end it excluded far too much to be a stable construction, let alone contain the unruly elements, such as the Native populations, that it hoped to encompass. Despite its affirmation at the imperial centre, which saw itself reflected in the work, the painting of the Group of Seven was, in short, incommensurate with the nation as it stood and for which it stood.

Conclusion: Ambiguity and identity - Reclaiming a lost Heritage

In the previous chapters I have shown how in Canada in the 1920s an innovative, but problematic, conjunction of Canadian Native art and the art which aspired to colonize that terrain was part of an undertaking to forge a distinctive Canadian national identity in the wake of World War I. This “national” culture and identity were invested in a group of painters from Central Canada who became known as the Group of Seven. The landscape paintings they produced were supposed to be based on an unmediated response to the empty primordial wilderness that was unique to Canada. Perceived as springing from the land, their work was spoken of as indigenous, native and autochthonic, that is they served as elements in a naturalized and essentialized dualistic construction which separated colonizing empire from emerging nation. These terms also applied to the Native peoples of Canada. These diverse peoples, whose territories had been colonized, were thought, at that time, to form a collective whole, a race, who had vacated the landscape and were on the verge of extinction. Their disappearance then, allowed for the erasure of the dualism of indigenous and colonial, and the uninterrupted construction of the new national culture in terms of its autonomy from its colonial parent.

There were, however, destabilizing elements within both of these claims and the discursive structures which supported them. The vindication of the Group of Seven at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley as the artists who represented the new Canadian culture and identity was, paradoxically, underwritten by their adherence to the exhausted British landscape conventions, including the picturesque. This connection, which remained unspoken, places the Group within an ambiguous and ambivalent framework. It now appears that the Group and the identity inscribed in their works, were as much the last gasp of colonial presence as they were the first breath of a nascent Canadian national culture. I have shown, however, that this position of perpetuating imperial forms corresponded to Canada’s foreign policy at the time of solidarity/independence in relation to Britain and the empire. In addition, the demonstrations of Canadian presence at Wembley were also marked by the absence of the Indian, which was necessary to foster the claim that the Group were now the “native” artists of Canada. All

remained well as long as the two versions of the native and the Native remained separated. It was only when they were brought into conjunction that problems arose. They first confronted and challenged each other at the Jeu de Paume in Paris when a small group of Northwest Coast carvings were introduced by Marius Barbeau, in part, in an effort to make visible and integrate what he believed were the last traces of Native art into the fabric of Canadian visual identity. That all did not transpire as planned was made evident by the reaction to the French reviews from the Jeu de Paume exhibition. The Parisian critics tended to overly appreciate the small quantity of Native art within their own highly developed discourse of the “primitive” and withhold the qualities of nationalism, modernism and mastery from the Group.

The suppression and denial of the existence of these reviews, as well as any affiliation between the Group and a contemporary Native art went beyond a cultural, or artistic, desire to be identified as the only true “native” Canadian art. There were several other factors at work: commercial, political and ethnographic. They overlapped, intersected and interacted in complex ways. Although usually operating in concord, at key moments they also contradicted each other and worked at cross purposes, to the detriment of each. These discrepancies opened up spaces which allowed for a critical analysis of the discursive structures and knowledges that they produced. Interdisciplinary in nature, these constructions of native presence and Native absence involved a host of artists, bureaucrats, critics, curators, engineers, ethnologists, government agencies and institutions, publishers, railways and tourists working from Ottawa, London, Paris, New York, Toronto, Montreal, Banff, and the Skeena River Valley on a series of interlocking administrative duties, exhibitions, excursions, painting projects, publications, and restoration programs. But, countering all of this, there was also the factor of the Natives themselves. The failure to take their presence, voice and agency into account led ultimately to the failure of the mutually supporting discourses of a singular, unified Canadian national identity, based on British precedents, and of the disappearance of the Indian.

The commercial agenda, primarily represented by the tourist component of the railways, used the Indian and the image of the Indian for promotional and entertainment purposes. It utilized the services of artists and ethnographers, but allowed them to define “Indian” to serve their own

purposes. The political agenda, as embodied at this time in the person of Duncan Campbell Scott, was the eradication of any traces of Native culture and identity in Canada. Understanding the power of artistic and other cultural activities, and their relationship with land and other claims, he supplemented other coercive and repressive measures with the prosecution of potlatches and related ceremonies in an attempt to destabilize and disrupt the cultural continuity and identity of the Natives in Western Canada. In this he was aided by the agenda of certain ethnographic interests, one in particular.

The ethnographic agenda, as it related to the creation of a national identity and the role of Native art and culture, was, of course, ably represented by Marius Barbeau. As a French-Canadian, with a profound interest in that heritage, his interest was not strictly limited to the Indian. At the Jeu de Paume exhibition he used the sculptural art of the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast to open a gap within a unified, monocultural, English-based concept of Canada invested in the Group. He wished to contrast the role of Native art and culture with that of Quebec. He proposed that both could be part of the "background" of Canadian identity and thus fill the lack of a deep past, a folklore, a *volk* and an ancient attachment to the land, which English speaking Canada could not legitimately claim. But the equation was unequal. He promulgated cultural discontinuity for the Gitksan and other Natives, placing their culture in the past, while at the same time postulating cultural continuity for the French-Canadians. His tactics and actions in insinuating a more heterogenous concept of national identity, while initially enticing, tended in the end to fragment the claims of the Group and the discourses of identity on which they rested.

The disruption of these constructions continued on another front when Langdon Kihn, who had been influenced by his experiences among the Pueblos and his association with individuals who supported the idea of the continuity and value of Native culture in the United States, was invited to come to Canada by the Canadian Pacific Railroad to undertake a trip through Alberta and British Columbia to paint the Natives and to work with Barbeau on a book on the topic. Kihn's ambivalent work, which can be read in ways other than those intended, had to be critically disciplined in order to insure that it was taken as a sign of disappearance and did not destabilize the hegemonic discourse. At first, Barbeau adequately fulfilled this task by incorporating Kihn

within the new genre that he proposed, and that he and Scott practiced, of a Canadian art that recorded the tragic demise of a doomed race. Further pressure, however, came when a similar project was undertaken on the Upper Skeena River under the Canadian National Railway. Here the focus shifted to the study of the Gitksan, who did not fit so easily into Barbeau's narratives of Native decrepitude. Previously isolated, they were made visible by the new railway which went through their territories. They were also receiving widespread attention for resisting colonization of their lands, as well as possessing the most visible proofs of Indianness, their totem poles. Within this new context, in which both artist and ethnographer were sent packing from the village of Kitwancool, the situation reached critical mass. Kihn's portraits and landscapes now threatened to appear as testimony to the continuity of Gitksan culture rather than its disappearance, a continuity borne out in fact by actual experience and suggested by the artist's own writings as well as those of international critics. It became necessary, then, to exclude and conceal Kihn's images and to replace them with others more suitable to the state's purposes.

A totem pole restoration program, designed to preserve the poles of the Gitksan as museum objects, engaged many of the same administrators and principles. It was organized by the joint efforts of the National Museum, the Canadian National Railway and the Department of Indian Affairs and became another method for incorporating the signs of Indianness (but not the Indian) into a Canadian cultural milieu. At the same time, under the guise of humanitarian restoration and the preservation of a threatened artistic heritage, it also attempted to make the poles emblems of discontinuity, implicitly transferring their ownership and authority from the Gitksan, who were represented as no longer in a state to appreciate, produce or possess their own arts, to a non-Native Canada audience, which was now endowed with the competence to administer and consume it. This process, however, was also resisted by the Gitksan, who took an active role in "speaking back" to the program. The fact that it had to be abandoned before it reached its goals added yet more pressure to an already exacerbated situation.

A similar fate befell the attempt by Barbeau to bring in artists associated with the Group of Seven in an effort to replace Kihn's images and to make the Skeena and its Native villages and poles a new subject for the imaging of Canada as a nation. Barbeau had already enlisted Jackson in

painting Quebec, where he depicted a rural society, attached to the land, and having a deep history, that was at odds with his images of the empty “wilderness” landscapes from elsewhere in Canada. Recognizing Barbeau’s conjunction of the Indian and the *Canadien*, Jackson attempted to accommodate his sponsor by rendering the Skeena villages using the same conventions as he had in Quebec, but in a discontinuous rather than continuous state. The task was daunting and Jackson began to question his involvement in the project, which implicitly threatened the fundamental claims on which the Group was based. The attempt to cast the Skeena and its indigenous inhabitants as a new site for Canadian art might have gone for naught had it not been for the other, less well-known, artists who were also enticed into the trip west. Their collective works shored each other up and were joined in Barbeau’s mythologized history of the Gitskan, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, as another contribution to his genre of racial tragedy. Here they operated within his pseudo-historical text to once again make the image of the Indian “disappear”. Barbeau’s carefully structured narrative collapsed myth into history in order to validate and mystify the fated inevitability of Gitskan disappearance within their own mythology. But, of course, his story of territorial and cultural loss also undermined their land claims and showed the end of their ceremonies without ever mentioning the outside government policies which actually lay at the root of the matter. Indeed, with a sophisticated understanding of how truths about colonized people are constructed and reproduced, Barbeau took every opportunity to promulgate the discourse of disappearance as a naturalized occurrence to as many audiences as he could find. When the audience was not properly receptive to the message, as in Paris, it was dismissed. When the message did not come out as desired, as in Ottawa in 1927, the audience was severely restricted.

The other, unfactored, agenda was, of course, the agenda of the Other. Despite the focussed attempts of Scott and increasingly coercive legislation designed to eradicate any trace of Native culture, the Indian, both on the Prairies and the West Coast was doing anything but disappearing on schedule. Instead, First Nations peoples were increasing in population, organization, visibility and vocalization in resisting these programs. Not only were various Native groups putting forward highly public claims to cultural continuity, they were also resisting the bans on traditional ceremonies, and advancing their land claims. Concurrently, radical shifts in

ethnographic practices, which had their proponents within the very administrative structures of the government, were challenging the discourse of disappearance and the state's policies. At the same time, there was a growing, and highly successful, movement in the United States to recognize ongoing Native cultures as part of a new, non-European, American national identity. In the face of these threats, which were appearing on many fronts, controlling both the Native population and their image in Canada became of as great importance as controlling the representation of the nation. Both undertakings became increasingly complex and conflicted, particularly when they overlapped. Both Barbeau and Scott did what they could to shape and control the unruly image of the Indian which threatened to break free from its discursive boundaries. But it refused to be contained.

The **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art - Native and Modern** was in many ways the culmination of all these agendas and factors. Initially a modest proposal, it grew under the force of the pressures to produce a dramatic representation of the desired relationships between Canadian native and Native art which by 1927 seemed threatened on every side. Yet burdened by the weight of the responsibilities it was made to bear, and undermined by divisions within, it too failed to reach its goals of closing up the ruptures within the two discourses on which the new Canadian identity had been based. Insofar as it did not effect closure on the "narration of the nation", other possibilities emerged, but only after the old positions had broken up or had themselves disappeared.

What then can be concluded from the undertakings of the 1920s? What was, when all was said and done, the outcome? The answer, at least in terms of the avowed goals of all of the above, is very little. Indeed, the challenges, denials, anxieties, resistances and ruptures that both provoked and ensued from these projects precluded the possibility that anything concrete or lasting could emerge from the conflicted confrontation, at least as initially conceived. On the other hand, the proceedings revealed the ambiguities and uncertainties surrounding the discourses of national identity and the disappearance of the Indian. Albeit inadvertently, their failures initiated the break up of each. Insofar as this necessitated the formation and negotiation of new and more broadly inclusive narrations of the nation, without any claims to essentiality, the outcome can be

said to be significant indeed, and even, in its own ambiguous way, highly successful. Indeed, it took such failures in attempts to effect closure on the narration of the nation to open up a range of new, if more complex, possibilities. Some of these can be discerned by following up the various projects and discourses which constituted these interlocking programs.

What, for example, became of Barbeau's efforts to make the image of the (disappearing) Indian, specifically the Gitksan of the Upper Skeena River, a background for Canadian visual identity? The answer is again very little or nothing at all. No artists from either the Group of Seven or any of the others who had visited the area under his auspices ever returned to the region. Indeed, the conjunction of the two had undermined the premises on which the Group was predicated. A repeat would have been unthinkable. Given Jackson's extensive travels, his avoidance of any further association with the site must be taken as evidence that it had become somehow forbidden. Only Emily Carr returned to the Skeena after her "discovery" by Barbeau and the National Gallery in 1927. She, in fact, can be taken as something of a control case as she emerged out of obscurity and into this troubled discourse. On her return to British Columbia, after the opening of the exhibition, she again took up her project of painting the Indians and revisited the same villages on the Upper Skeena. Things, however, had changed from her first encounter. In the interim the land, villages, poles and people, as well as their culture had become the focus of a multitude of interlocking institutions and disciplines jointly engaged in creating, reproducing and disseminating a discourse around a new Canadian identity and the representation of the Indian. Barbeau was her primary contact with the latter and she now knew and recognized him as an authority on the subject. Much of what he said would of course have been confirmed by others. Indeed, she would have heard few alternative voices. Her encounter with this discursive framework had a profound impact on her vision of her subject, which, in turn, testifies to its presence and power. If she had been partly engaged with the discourse of disappearance in her first trips, that she was now fully absorbed by it is proven by the huge and quantifiable difference which separates her later paintings from her earlier work. After 1927 the Native is absent from her paintings of the villages in the Skeena. Unlike many of her early depictions, the sites are now totally deserted. While the poles remained part of the artist's vision, as Barbeau would have recommended, the people, to whom she initially dedicated her work, and to whom

she had often directed her gaze, by and large vanished somewhere beyond the framing edge of the pictures. The portraits which she used to paint were no longer as numerous, to the extent that they existed at all. Instead, the concentration of her Indian pictures from the late twenties was almost exclusively on the poles and what appear to be deserted and melancholy village sites. The Indian had disappeared.

Although no catalogue raisonné of Carr's work has yet been published, this shift in her vision may be seen in Doris Shadbolt's monograph on Carr's paintings, which since its publication in 1979 remains the most important study of her work.¹ Not one of the illustrations Shadbolt has selected for reproduction from the works done in 1928 or 1929 shows a living human figure. Although Shadbolt does discuss Carr's concentration on poles as subjects, the sudden and complete disappearance of the Indian is not seen as cause for comment. Yet just a few pages earlier, she reproduces paintings from 1912 and 1913 that are, by contrast, crowded with people.² Although Shadbolt discusses the changes in style that Carr's work was undergoing at this time, she does not see any significance in the discrepancy in subject. It remains to be fully discussed.³

Shortly thereafter, that is by 1931, Carr would abandon not only the Indian as person but also as subject. Poles too disappeared under directions from Lawren Harris, her other important mentor. While otherwise insisting that she remain uninfluenced by others than herself, he repeatedly directed her to abandon her Indian subjects, which were the foundation of her practice.⁴ Harris,

¹Doris Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979.

²Shadbolt, p. 50.

³Efforts in this direction can be found in Gerta Moray, "Wilderness, Modernity and Aboriginality in the Paintings of Emily Carr", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 43 - 65, and John O'Brian, *Gasoline, Oil, and Paper: the 1930s Oil-on-Paper Paintings of Emily Carr*, Saskatoon, Mendel Art Gallery, 1995. It is known that Carr was instructed to place figures in her work on the advice of W. Newcombe. If she was amenable to instruction on this point, it is just as possible that she took them out on advice from Barbeau.

⁴Harris' relationship with Carr is usually figured as that of benevolent, if paternal, mentor and source of inspiration. It is, however, more ambivalent than this. A closer examination begins to indicate his antipathy to her Native subject matter, which he discouraged through several means. Blanchard states that he was instrumental in excluding her paintings of such topics from the 1928 Group of Seven exhibition which followed the *West Coast Art* show. He offered the excuse that he could not find anything he liked. Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr*,

of course, understood clearly at that moment, as he had earlier when he turned down Barbeau's invitation to come to the Skeena, that representations of Native presence, especially a spiritualized Native presence, could not peaceably co-exist with the Group of Seven's claims any more than it could with his own move towards a transcendent purity which he believed was part of the essential identity of the northern races of North America as defined by their place. What remained unspoken here is that Harris' "northern races" were colonial rather than indigenous, a fact whose recognition would have rendered his position problematic. Indeed, if his theories of race and place were correct, then the Natives should, in fact, be this chosen group. Obviously transcendent images of totem poles, which might have confirmed this eventuality, and rendered the colonial populations as spiritual interlopers, had to be avoided. Under such duress, there was no choice but to insist that Carr abandon the totems and turn to landscapes, the emptier the better.

At the same moment as Carr was abandoning her Native subjects, Barbeau made several efforts to keep his project going, but these met with little success. In 1931 and 1932, at the same time as "Our Indians - Their Disappearance" appeared, he published a pair of articles summarizing the Skeena project, extolling the artistic representations of "the picturesque Rockies" and "the fine wood carvings of the Northwest Coast tribes and their totem poles" as part of a new "national

Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987, p. 185. Their unpublished correspondence is also telling. At precisely the same moment, that is January 8, 1928, Harris wrote to Carr, "I have nothing to say - save this - don't be influenced by anything or anybody. Shun everything but your own inner promptings, your own purest reactions - like the plague. You like my stuff . . . But don't be influenced by it, . . . stay decidedly with your own way, your own direction." In his next letter, however, he reversed his position with some ingenious sophistry. "How about leaving the totems alone for a year or more? I mean the totem pole is a work of art in its own right and it is very difficult to use it in another form of art. But, how about seeking an equivalent for it in the exotic landscape of the island and coast, making your own form and forms within the greater form. . . . Now, if you go back to totems, the old ways of seeing, not that they were not good, the old habits will assert themselves." Harris to Carr, n.d.. Just in case she had not fully understood the full significance of his instruction, he pressed his point again. "I thought and still think a partial holiday from totems would prove of real help to you. . . . The reason I mentioned the totem is that it already in itself is a definite artistic form and if you did too many you might become dependent on them." Harris to Carr, n.d. Emily Carr - MG 30, D 215 Vol. 2, Harris - Carr Correspondence 1928 - 1929, British Columbia Provincial Archives. Presumably it was better she become dependent on him rather than "them". Her Native subjects were also excluded from the Rochester exhibition of Canadian art in the fall of 1928. While he praised such works as **Totems, Kitwanoocool** in March 1929, he did so in the secure knowledge that she was following his advice and had begun to turn to pure landscape without Native presence. Blanchard, p. 198. He then purchased **Indian Church** which shows a Christian rather than Native religion in the forest. Shadbolt, p. 206 and Ann Davis, **The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920 - 1940**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 9 - 14. Carr responded well to this series of admonishments and punishments (withholding exhibitions) followed by praise and rewards. She obediently did precisely as he asked, and internalized his instructions into her own identity.

consciousness”.⁵ He was, however, obliged to exaggerate the vitality, continuity and quantity of the work produced by non-Native artists as well as the death of Native culture, the two being inextricably linked. “Scenery, totem poles, native graveyards and Indian physiognomies have tumbled upon canvas or into plastic clay at a terrific pace. Gitksan chiefs once more have donned their regalia, perhaps for the last time; they are dying out.”⁶ These articles had little impact since what was “dying out” was, in fact, his program. His presence in the field was also curtailed when research funds dried up during the Depression. This however would have had the advantage of preventing him from witnessing the ongoing traditional cultural activity in the region in the 1930s. Having not witnessed it, he could later claim it never occurred.

What then, of the attempt to have Canadian Native art recognized as art, not ethnography? Again, little or nothing, at least in this country. In fact, precisely the opposite. The clash between the Group of Seven and its claims to national priority on the one hand and the Native material on the other set up a conflict which disadvantaged the recognition of the latter for some time. Immediately following the exhibition, Brown spurned offers from Barbeau to collect Native work for the Gallery and chastised him for sending him pieces for consideration on spec.⁷ The Art Gallery of Toronto also turned down his offer to acquire poles for their collection. Some sporadic attempts did occur in the following decades to include Native pieces within the realm of art exhibitions which were seen as representative of Canada, but not at home and certainly not in the proportions of the 1927 exhibition.⁸ For the most part, Native art in Canada was returned to

⁵Barbeau, “The Indians of the Prairies and the Rockies”, p. 198.

⁶Ibid., p. 204.

⁷Brown to Barbeau, June 24, 1929. CMC Archives. At a later date, a letter from Brown to Barbeau confirmed the purchase of a Haida carved and painted box for \$150 plus transportation costs. This was, however, a rare and exceptional instance. Brown to Barbeau, March 10, 1933. CMC Archives.

⁸**A Century of Canadian Art** at the Tate Gallery in London in 1938 included two Chilkat blankets and a selection of argillite poles, mounted adjacent to early French-Canadian carvings. At the same time, Graham McInnes included a brief chapter on “Native Arts” within his survey **A Short History of Canadian Art**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1939. By the time he expanded this into **Canadian Art** in 1950 the chapter had become four pages, but much of his entry was taken up with the discussion of non-Native artists who had worked with Native imagery rather than Native art itself. He mentioned nothing of any contemporary production. Graham McInnes, **Canadian Art**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1950, pp. 5 - 8. Nonetheless, this was indicative of a change as the programmatic “revival” of

the category of ethnology and replaced into the museum where it would remain for the next forty years, at least insofar as the country's national institutions went. When a new recognition of Native art did emerge after World War II, it did so unevenly. The National Gallery did not again collect Native material until the 1980s, decades after other galleries in Western Canada had been exhibiting and acquiring Native work *qua* art.⁹

In consolidating its position of excluding Native art after the **Canadian West Coast Art** exhibition, the National Gallery forfeited its opportunity to take the lead on the international scene. Although the format for the exhibition was not repeated in Canada, it excited interest almost immediately in the United States in the landmark **Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts** held in 1931, which is frequently cited as the first of its kind. As the letter to Kihn inviting him to become a member stated:

The art of the American Indian is just beginning to receive its due recognition as one of the world's great original expressions of design. The average white American however, still thinks of Indian art as belonging only to the remote past. Few realize the extent to which Indian arts have persisted, despite the pressure of an alien civilization, through centuries of vast changes and varying fortunes, down to our own machine age. Throughout the United States there are Indian artists and craftsmen who are producing, today, paintings, pottery, textiles, baskets, jewelry, beadwork, quillwork, costumes, embroideries, of great intrinsic beauty, conforming to an unbroken aesthetic tradition that had its origin in pre-Columbian times. This extraordinary persistence of an ancient art is perhaps unique in history. It is at once classic and modern.¹⁰

Shifts in the recognition of Native art and culture as an ongoing aspect of American identity were then underway, but insofar as this was denied in Canada, no such followup was possible here. When the National Gallery finally altered its view decades later, it would be obliged to follow American and French programs rather than take the lead.

Native culture and art as commodity was at by that time underway. See Dawn, "Ksan."

⁹Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism and Beyond", in Diana Nemiroff et. al., **Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, pp. 16 - 17.

¹⁰Liston M. Oak to Kihn, March 19, 1931, Smithsonian Archives.

What then of Scott and the discourse of disappearance? In the end, it was the discourse rather than the Indian that disappeared. Scott's policies had been disastrous because they were completely out of touch with the reality of the Native situation. By the time of his retirement in 1931, he had to admit that his ambitions had not been achieved. Neither his dream of an Anglo/Canadian national monoculture nor his solution to the Indian question had been realized. He left, however, a continuing legacy of conflict. As it became increasingly evident that the discourse of disappearance had to be jettisoned, there was a gradual move to claim that Native culture and identity had been "revived" from its moribund state. When this claim too became unworkable, that of continual survival began to slowly replace it. This complex and ongoing shift in the perception of the position of Native peoples both within their own cultures and within Canada, which is proceeding along many fronts, has opened up new and constructive possibilities for renegotiating their relationships on much different terms.

What then, of the Gitksan who were the focus of so much of this attention? Although the history of their relationships with non-Native forces is only just being written, it is now evident that they in no way suffered what Barbeau termed the "total eclipse" of their culture. The recent publication of William Beynon's field notes from a 1945 potlatch are only just the beginning of the reconstruction of a dynamic cultural record that occurred at a time when it was ethnography that went into eclipse during the Depression and Second World War.¹¹ The danger here is that the (much belated) publication of these notes may give the impression that the events they record were isolated. This is not the case. Beynon's notes are only a small fragment of the traditional activity that has been documented as ongoing, and still continuing, in the region throughout this century.¹² Indeed, the Gitksan have not only preserved their identity and culture but are among those involved in the process of renegotiating their position and means of expression within the nation, although, of course, this has not always gone smoothly. Indeed, old notions still persist as shown in the 1991 ruling of the court case *Delgamuukw et al. vs The Queen*. Nonetheless there are still many other alternative narratives yet to be told.

¹¹Anderson and Halpin.

¹²See Dawn, "The Pre-history of 'Ksan, a case for Gitksan Cultural Continuity."

Finally, what became of the national identity which the exhibition of **Canadian North West Art** was supposed to contribute to by providing a deep history, a mythology, a *volk* and an ancient attachment to the land through the appropriation of the art of the disappearing First Nations? It now becomes evident that rather than unifying the narration of the nation or fostering a singular, seamless national identity, it did precisely the opposite. The exhibition and all that preceded it revealed and made clear that the Dominion's claims to nationhood were characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity, ruptures and enforced silences, marginalizations and limitations, cultural conflicts and competitions, and inclusions and exclusions. All of these testified to anything but unity. In short, it was a far more problematic enterprise than had been anticipated. The events of the following decades bore this out. The singular monocultural English-based concept of Canada came under increasing attack and was abandoned for the pluralism of a cultural mosaic. At the same time, the Group themselves came under criticism as becoming the very things that they had claimed they were fighting against, that is conservative, academic, repetitious and irrelevant to a new modernism which now had to struggle against their hegemony.

In the end, that mysterious and elusive object, Canadian identity, remains as open for negotiation as it has ever been within what are now perceived as the diverse narrations within the nation. Still, a nostalgic and cherished vision of the 1920s lingers within segments of a fragmented Canadian mentality, sustained by periodic recitals of the narrative which recount the dream of a triumphant, utopian period that never was, when the Dominion that was not yet a nation was unified under the banner of a heroic Group. But this, in the end, is a dream like that found in Barbeau's re-telling of the Gitskan Temlaham: a mythic, Edenic past from which we have been expelled, but which the country can look back on with a sense of nostalgia, melancholy and longing.

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- P. 412 50. Edwin Holgate, **Hazelton Graveyard**, n.d., location and dimensions unknown.
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- P. 413 51. Edwin Holgate, **Drawings and Paintings** from the Skeena Valley, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 138.
- P. 414 52. Edwin Holgate, **Drawings and Paintings** from the Skeena Valley, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 139.
- P. 415 53. Edwin Holgate, **Totem Poles, No. 4**, formerly **Departing People: Skeena River, B.C.**, 1927- 1928.
Wood engraving on Japan paper, 15 x 12.3 (block).
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K,

Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 140.

- P. 416 54. Edwin Holgate, **Tsimshian Indians**, 1926, woodcut, Art Gallery of Hamilton.
Source: Ian Thom, **The Prints of Edwin Holgate**, Kleinburg, Ontario, 1989, plate 18.
- P. 417 55. Anne Savage, **Untitled oil sketch, (Skeena, B.C.)**, 1927, oil on panel, 23 x 30.5, location unknown.
Source: A. McDougall, **Anne Savage: the Story of a Canadian Painter**, Ottawa: Borealis, 2000, p. 61.
- P. 418 56. Langdon Kihn, **A Feast Among the Skeena River People**, dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, frontispiece.
- P. 419 57. Langdon Kihn, **Kitwinkul, the Home of Kamalmuk**, also, **Gitwinkool Totem Poles**, c. 1924 - 1925, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 3.
- P. 420 58. Langdon Kihn, **He-knows-the-Sky, Alimlarhae, an Old Chief of the Skeena**, 1924.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 22.
- P. 421. 59. Langdon Kihn, **Hanamuk or Sunbeams (Fanny Johnson), the cause of the Skeena River "Rebellion", forty years ago. Her crests - the Stars, the Moon and the Rainbow**, 1924.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 38.
- P. 422 60. A. Y. Jackson, **The Native Town of Git-Segyukla, on the Upper Skeena**, watercolour on paper, [1927], 28.6 x 24.8, Robert McLaughlin Gallery.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 54.
- P. 423 61. A. Y. Jackson, **Kispayaks Village - the Hiding-Place - on the Upper Skeena**, 1927, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 81.3, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 70.
- P. 424 62. A. Y. Jackson, **Spukshu or Port Essington, a Mission Village, at the Mouth of the Skeena**, [c.1926], dimensions and locations unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 86.
- P. 425 63. Edwin Holgate, **The Upper Skeena, near the site of Temlaham - the Good-land-of-yore**, [c. 1926 -

- 1927], dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 118.
- P. 426 64. Edwin Holgate, **Young Gitksan Mother with a Cradle, at the edge of the Skeena**, [c. 1926 - 1927], dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 142.
- P. 427 65. Edwin Holgate, **Totem Poles of Git-Segykla**, 1927, oil on canvas, 80.9 x 81.1, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 167.
- P. 428 66. Edwin Holgate, **Qawm, "Covetous-person", a Chief of Kitselas, the Canyon Tribe**, 1926, black and red chalk on wove paper, 60.2 x 47.7, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 182.
- P. 429 67. Emily Carr, **The Totem Pole of the Bear and the Moon, at Kispayaks - the "Hiding-place"**, 1912, dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 206.
- P. 430 68. Anne Savage, **Where the Native "Paradise Lost" of Temlaham used to Stand, on the Upper Skeena (near Hazelton)**, 1927, oil on panel, location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 223.
- P. 431 69. Installation, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern**, National Gallery of Canada, 1927.
Source: Diana Nemiroff et al., **Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, p. 21.
- P. 432 70. Installation, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern**, National Gallery of Canada, 1927.
Source: Diana Nemiroff et al., **Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, p. 22.
- P. 433 71. Frederick Alexie, two drawings of **Fort Simpson**.
Source: Marius Barbeau, "Frederick Alexie, a Primitive", in **Canadian Review of Music and Art**, Vol. 3,

Nos. 11 and 12, (1945): 22.

P. 434 72. "The Evolutionary relationships of Australian Weapons."

Source: Annie Coombes, **Reinventing Africa**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 118.

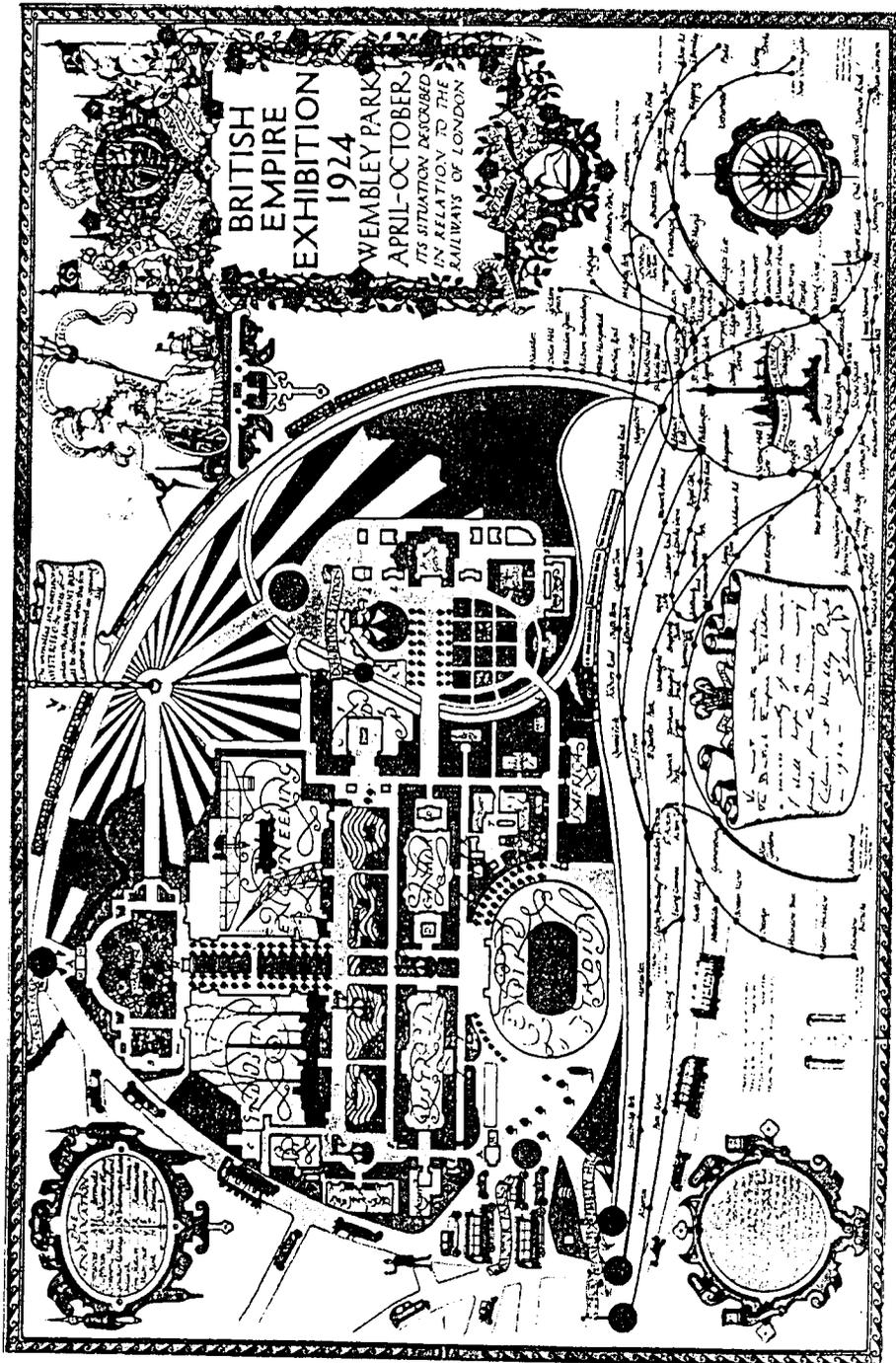
P. 435 73. Emily Carr, **Kispiox Village**, 1912, dimensions unknown, British Columbia Archives.

Source: Peter Macnair and Jay Stewart, **To the Totem Forests: Emily Carr and Contemporaries Interpret Coastal Villages**, Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1999, p. 32.

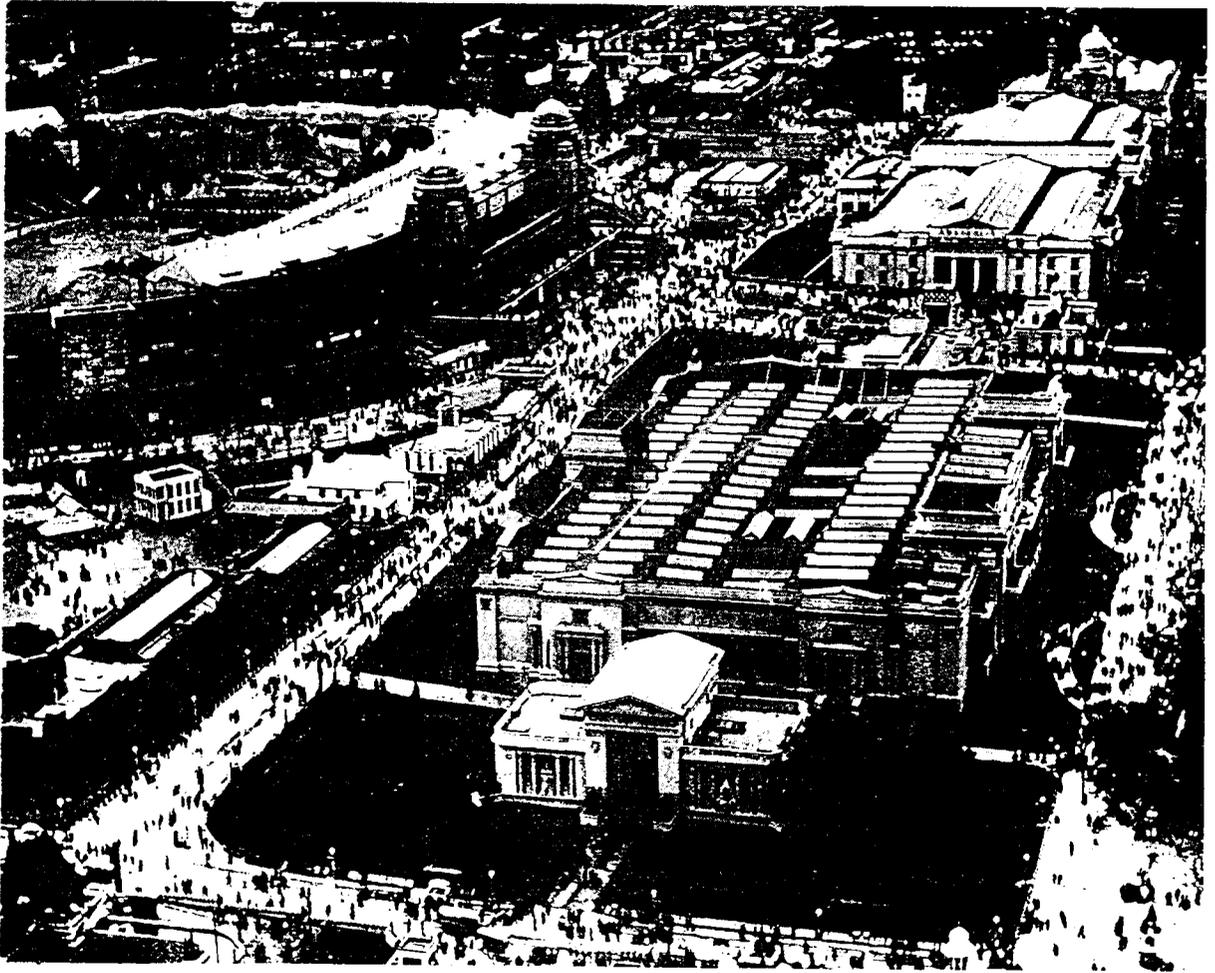
P. 436 74. "Celebrations, Baron Byng at Hazelton, B.C. 1927."

Source: BCPA no. F-5297..

I. Map, British Empire Exhibition 1924, Wembley Park.
Source: John Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions*, London: Studio Vista, 1977, p. 126.



2. Aerial shot, British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, showing the Canadian Pavilion in the foreground, with the Canadian National Railway Pavilion in front, and the Australian and Indian Pavilions behind.
Source: John Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions*, London: Studio Vista, 1977, p. 127.



3. H.R.H. The Prince of Wales in Butter in the Canadian Pavilion as Chief Morning Star, Stony Indians, British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1925.
Source: J. C. H. King, "A Century of Indian Shows. Canadian and United States Exhibitions in London 1825 - 1925", *European Review of Native American Studies*, Vol 5, No. 1, (1991): 40.



Photo
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H.R.H. The PRINCE of WALES in BUTTER, in the CANADIAN PAVILION.
As Chief Morning Star, Stony Indians.
The British Empire Exhibition, Wembley

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4. Edward VIII, when Prince of Wales, in Indian costume.
Source: J. C. H. King, "A Century of Indian Shows. Canadian and United States Exhibitions in London 1825 - 1925", *European Review of Native American Studies*, Vol 5, No. 1, (1991): 41.



PHOTO CENTRAL NEWS H.R.H. PRINCE OF WALES CHIEF MORNING STAR STONY CREE INDIANS

5. Cover, [catalogue] **Canadian Section of Fine Arts, British Empire Exhibition, London, 1924**, design by J. E. H. MacDonald.
 Source: [Catalogue] **Canadian Section of Fine Arts, British Empire Exhibition, London, 1924**.



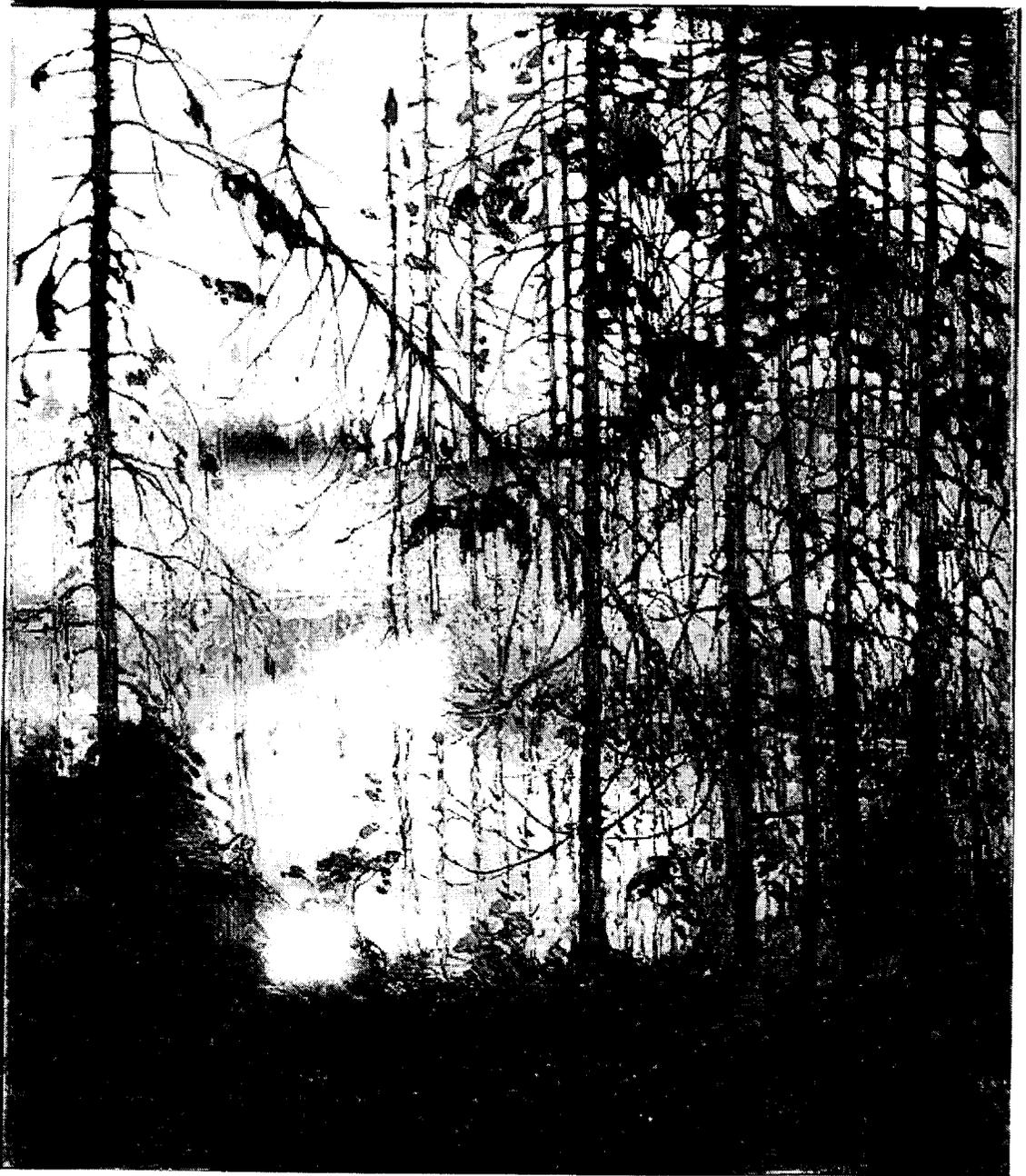
6. Installation: Exhibition of Canadian Art at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995,
p. 143.



7. Installation: Exhibition of Canadian Art at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1925.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995,
p. 150.



8. Tom Thomson, **Northern River**, c. 1914 - 1915, oil on canvas, 115.1 x 102.0, National Gallery of Canada. Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 47.



9. Tom Thomson, **The Jack Pine**, c. 1916 - 1917, oil on canvas, 127.9 x 139.8, National Gallery of Canada. Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 113.



10. Tom Thomson, **The West Wind**, 1917, oil on canvas, 120.7 x 137.2, Art Gallery of Toronto.
Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 115.



11. Tom Thomson, **On the Don River**, 1908, pen on paper, 27.9 x 46.4, private collection, Toronto.
Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 9.



12. A. Y. Jackson, **Landscape with Willows**, 1903, watercolour over graphite on wove paper, 28.3 x 39.1, National Gallery of Canada.

Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 177.



13. Tom Thomson, **Tree**, c. 1908, watercolour on paper, 19.1 x 12.7, private collection, Toronto.
Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 29.



14. Tom Thomson, **Northern Lake**, c. 1913, oil on canvas board, 25.2 x 17.8, private collection, Montreal.
Source: J. Murray, **Tom Thomson Trees**, Toronto: McArthur, 1999, p. 17.



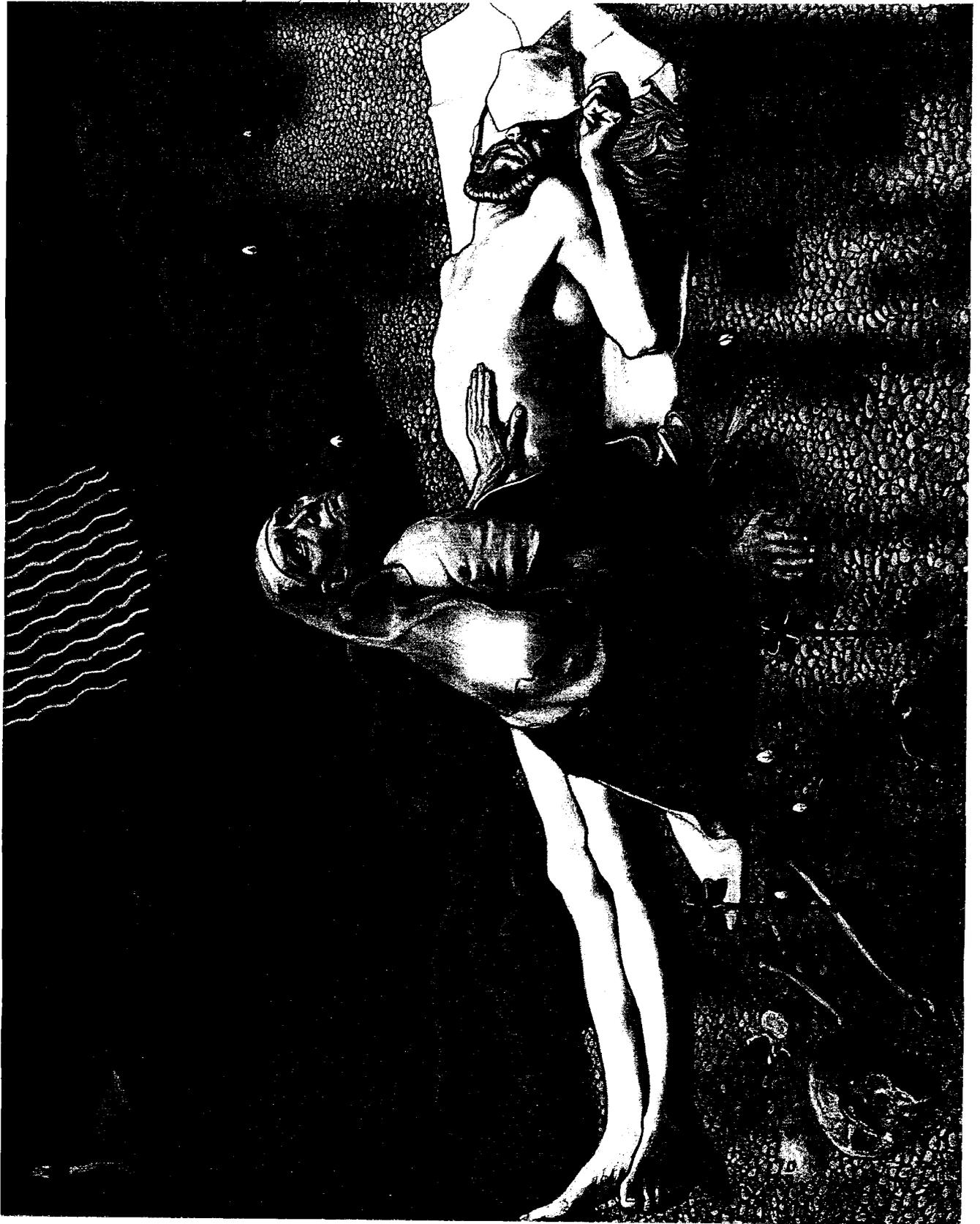
15. Lawren Harris, **Pines, Kempenfelt Bay**, [1921], dimensions unknown, Art Gallery of Hamilton. Source: Leonard Richmond, "Canadian Art at Wembley", **Studio**, Vol. 89, (1925): 20.



16. Lawren Harris, **First Snow, North Shore of Lake Superior**, 1923, oil on canvas, 123.4 x 153.5, Vancouver Art Gallery.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995, p. 140.



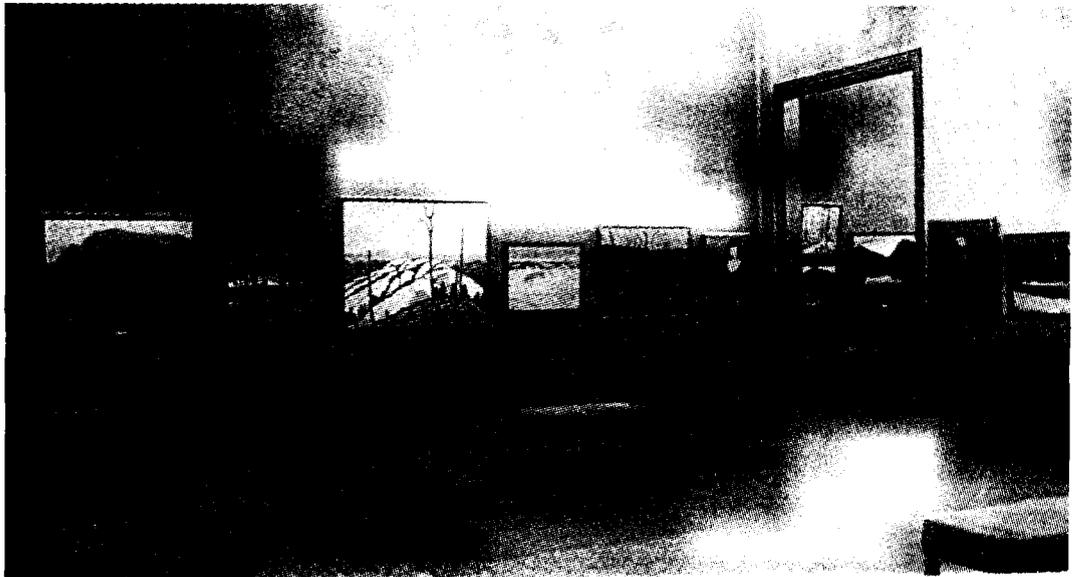
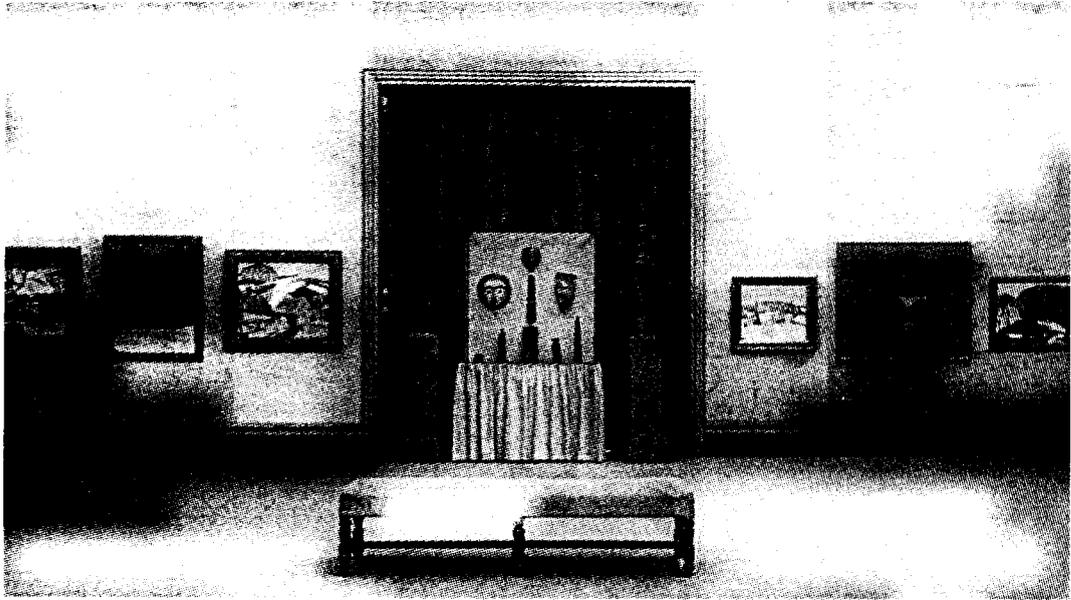
17. Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Lemminkäinen's Mother*, 1897, [oil on canvas], 85 x 118, Atheneumin Taidemuseo, Helsinki.
Source: Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 91.



18. Akseli Galen-Kallela, **Landscape Under Snow**, 1902, [oil on canvas], 76 x 144, 118, Atheneumin Taidemuseo, Helsinki.
Source: Kirk Varnedoe, **Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Twentieth Century**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 92.



19. Installation, *Exposition d'art canadien*, Jeu de Paume, Paris, April 1927.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995, p. 216.



Immortalizing a Disappearing Race

What One Painter Is Doing to Perpetuate the Indian Physiognomy

By WARWICK FORD

EVERY man, I hope, retains enough of the boy to warm to the memory of the red Indian and his actual and mythical doings represented our age of chivalry, the golden pathway of high emprise.

With maturer years comes the realization that the original inhabitants of this hemisphere were not alone hunters of an adroit skill, and heroes of vague war paths, but represented very definite and extremely interesting social and artistic problems. With our expanding knowledge of their customs and arts, this feeling grows, and from our early romantic interests, blossoms an ever deepening respect and the dawning conviction that the arts of these dead, but not forgotten years, will one day add an infusion of interest to our own decorative expression.

Surely our designers can not much longer resist the lure of the paradox by which these direct and simple forms of expression, remolded with sensitive appreciation, begin to minister to the aesthetics of our own civilization. For are we not passing surely, if silently, from the age in which a multiplicity of mechanical processes mystified and confused, into a healthier period where the result rather than the media concerns us? In costumes, in drama, in architecture, no less than in pictorial expression, our mood is toward

gratitude increases toward the artist and the scientist whose joint efforts have furnished us with so rich a body of inspirational material. When we come to the appreciation that can include and absorb these arts, we will have come to a sufficient understanding to use them with discretion.

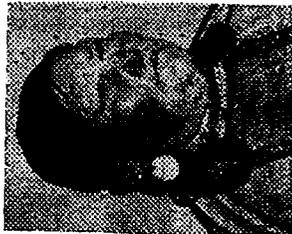
One of the most interesting of the season's exhibitions was composed of certain specimens of American Indian craftsmanship, ancient and modern, and so arranged as to add the proper atmosphere to the eighty portraits and landscapes executed by W. Langdon Kihn, during two recent visits among the Blackfeet Indians of Northern Montana and the Pueblo Indians

in the vicinity of Laguna and Acoma, in arid New Mexico.

Mr. Kihn is an artist, not an ethnologist; he is purely the painter, not a scientist; and yet the accuracy, as well as the excellent taste of his work, attracted the most favorable attention from the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fé, and this exhibition was held under the patronage of that distinguished institution. Dr. Edgar L. Hewitt, Director of the Museum, arranged for the display of the specimens of craftsmanship from the tribes of the Southwest and arranged as well for certain of the more modern specimens of blankets, jewelry, basketry and pottery to be placed on sale.

He hoped in this way to develop an appreciative market in the East for objects of art, seldom offered for sale here, with so distinguished an endorsement of authenticity and excellence of workmanship.

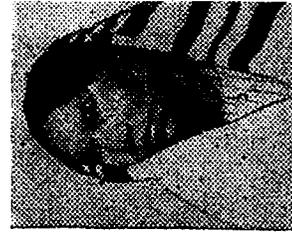
Through the active courtesy of Mr. Louis H. Hill, President of the Great Northern Railroad, a tepee, eighteen feet high, of the Blackfeet Indians, made of painted buffalo hide, was also exhibited. This represents one of the most remarkable artistic expressions of the American Indian, and shows a draftsman's hand and a simplicity of composition that might well be envied by our modernists. But it was, after all, the portraits by Mr. Kihn that were of the greatest interest.



Wife of Chief Curly Bear, who is the only living chief of the Blackfeet tribe



Life study of a "Yellow Woman" of the Blackfeet, drawn by W. Langdon Kihn



21. Edmund Morris, four portraits from the Prairies, 1910.
 Source: Geoffrey Simmins and Michael Parke-Taylor, *Edmund Morris "Kyaiyii" 1871 - 1913*, Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1984, p. 59.



3. *Chief Nepahpenais — Night Bird*, 1910
 pastel on paper
 25³/₁₆ × 19³/₄ (63.9 × 50.1)
 Signed l.l.: *Edmund Morris 1910*



4. *The Walker (Pimotat)*
 pastel on paper
 25³/₁₆ × 19³/₄ (63.9 × 50.1)
 Signed l.r.: *Edmund Morris*



5. *Walter Ochopowace*
 pastel on paper
 25³/₁₆ × 19³/₄ (63.9 × 50.1)
 Signed l.r.: *Edmund Morris*



6. *Chief Poundmaker (Pee-Too-Kah-Han)*
 pastel on paper
 25³/₁₆ × 19³/₄ (63.9 × 50.1)
 Signed l.r.: *Edmund Morris*

22. Frederic Remington, **The Last of his Race (Vanishing American)**, 1908, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 31.5, Yale University Art Gallery,
Source: Brian W. Dippie, "The Moving Finger Writes: Western Art and the Dynamics of Change", in Jules David Prown, et. al., **Discovered Lands Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West**, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 112.



23. Charles Marion Russell, **Running Buffalo**, 1918, oil on canvas mounted on masonite, 74.9 x 120.6, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.
Source: Brian W. Dippie, "The Moving Finger Writes: Western Art and the Dynamics of Change", in Jules David Prown, et. al., **Discovered Lands Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West**, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 112.



24. Langdon Kihn, Mrs. Ben Kakuitts, Red Woman or Wiya-sha, Cree Indian Woman, 1922, size and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies*, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923, frontispiece.



W. LANGDON KIHN 1922

25. Langdon Kihn, **Hector Crawler, Calf Child or Tatanka-cinca (Head Medicine Man of Stony Tribe)**, 1922, size and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923, facing p. 40.



Illustration 25

W. LANGDON KIHN 1922

26. Langdon Kihn, **Joe Nana, Running Calf or Kan-a-hun-kan-goya-kathlam, Kootenay Indian**, 1922, crayon and pencil on paper, 49.2 x 36.8, Glenbow Museum.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923, facing p. 62.



27. Langdon Kihn, **Susette, Indian Name not Known, Kootenay Indian**, 1922, crayon and pencil on paper, 49.2 x 37.4, Glenbow Museum.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies**, Toronto: Macmillan, 1923, facing p. 162.



28. Langdon Kihn, **Indian Days at Banff, Alberta** [1922 - 1926], location and dimensions unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **Indian Days on the Western Prairies**, Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, Bulletin No. 163, Anthropological Series No. 46, 1960.



29. Langdon Kihn, **Indian Days Banff**, poster, [1922-1926], location and dimensions unknown.
Source: E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: the CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism*, 1983.



30. Langdon Kihn, **Totems [at Kispiox]**, c. 1924, dimensions unknown, Vancouver Art Gallery.
Source: G. J. Edwards and G. T. Edwards, "Langdon Kihn: Indian Portrait Artist", **The Beaver**, Winter 1984/85, p. 10.



31. Langdon Kihn, "Mawlahun." A Woman Chief of the Raven Clan at Gitsegukla, B.C., dimension and location unknown.
Source: CMC Photograph 63029.



32. Langdon Kihn, **Lelt or Snake: Tsimshian Indian, Gitwanga, B. C.**, 1924, 76 x 50.7, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London.

Source: G. J. Edwards and G. T. Edwards, "Langdon Kihn: Indian Portrait Artist", **The Beaver**, Winter 1984/85, p. 7.



33. Langdon Kihn, **Tseewa or Thick Thighs. A Medicine Man of the Raven Phratry of Gitwinkool**, [1924], dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Langdon Kihn, "The Gitskan on the Skeena", *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 13, 1927, p. 175.



Tseewa or Thick Thighs.

A medicine man of the Raven phratry of Gitwinkool. Background figures of the crest of semgeek or woodpecker.

34. Langdon Kihn, Weegyot, "Big Fellow" (Mark Weegyot), Head Chief of Kitsegukla, Fireweed Crest, dimensions and location unknown.
Source: CMC photograph 63017.



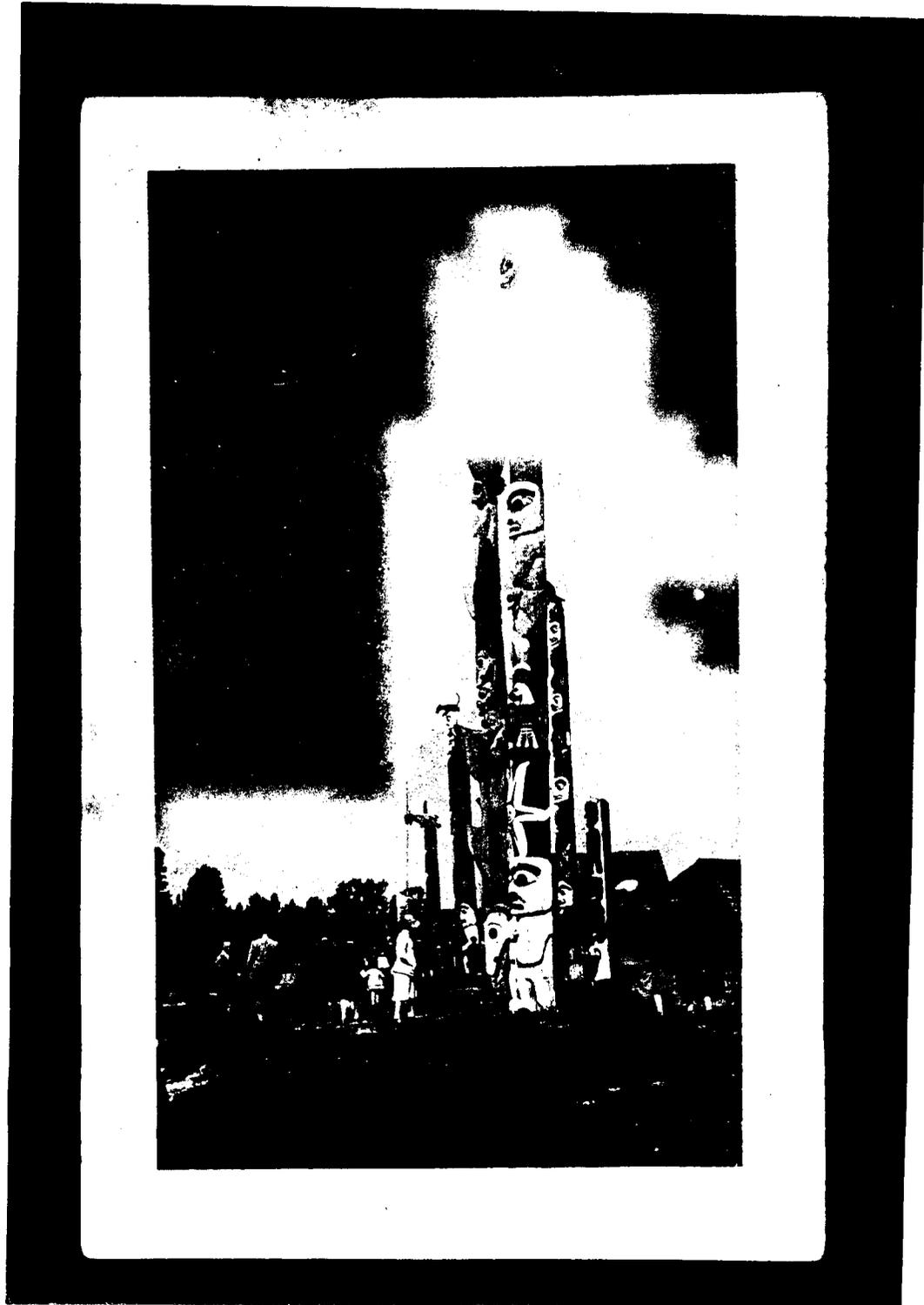
35. "Carrier Indians Returning to their Homes . . . Hagwelgate, B.C. July 24, 1925."
Source: CMC photograph 65201.



36. "Erecting Pole No. 19, Kitwanga, B.C. July 29, 1925."
Source: CMC photograph 64331. Photographer: Harlan Smith.



37. "Kitwanga", postcard
Source: CMC photograph 8371.



38. A. Y. Jackson, "Rescuing Our Tottering Totem, Something about a Primitive Art, Revealing the Past History of a Vanishing Race", *MacLean's Magazine*, December 15, 1927, p. 23.

MacLean's Magazine, December 15, 1927

23

Rescuing Our Tottering Totems

Something about a primitive art, revealing the past history of a vanishing race

By A. Y. JACKSON

Illustrated by the author

SCIENCE and art have joined hands in the little village of Kitwanga past which the Skeena River runs ever hurrying to the sea, its cold gray waters teeming with salmon fighting their weary way upstream, kept alive by some hazy vision of gentler waters and a gravel bed on which to lay their eggs before the life ebbs out of them. Along this river, once a great highway for the Indian tribes, there are many evidences of villages that tell of an active and numerous people. Now it is becoming a white man's country and the totem poles forlorn are about all that is left to speak of the greater days.

For years the totem poles have been tumbling down. Many carefully sawed down to be shipped to far away museums, even to Europe, some to be set up in city streets, others at the behest of fervent missionaries burned as relics of paganism. A lumberman told me of making a raft out of them, no other sticks being available, while others a prey of time or the elements come crashing down and the undergrowth swallows them up. On the Queen Charlotte Islands and all along the coast of British Columbia once the villages bristled with this strange form of art, now scattered and gone. But up the Skeena, totem pole art developed later than on the coast and also survived longer. In the meanwhile, the general attitude towards art after the assaults of post-impressionism art, cubism has become less orthodox and it is realized that the totem pole represents something more than just a heathen idol.

Recently, an American art critic made the statement that the only native art in Canada was the totem pole. He might very well have made the same statement concerning the art of his own country, as taking it by and large, American art exhibits no definite departure from the European tradition, but rather a greater insistence on a conformance to its canons on the part of American art critics.

But the totem pole, after being treated with contempt for years, is now to receive all the aids of modern science for its preservation, and two government experts have been working for months with a gang of skilled men, Mr. Harland Smith, of the Archeological Department, and Mr. T. B. Campbell, one of the engineers of the Canadian National Railways who has charge of reconstructions of these Indian monuments.

The poor Indian is amazed and rather suspicious. He has seen his race exploited, his hunting grounds taken away, his fishing grounds invaded by Japanese. He has seen his people dwindle until the great warlike tribes who roamed the west coast are but pitiful remnants. And now that he has decided to be a white man and forget his past, get a motor boat or a cheap car and play a trombone in the village band, along come archeologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, and other erudite individuals, with them camera men, writers and painters, and the inferiority complex which has infected him for many moons vanishes in the face of all this sudden interest in him. He is drawn, photographed, measured and interviewed, his family history is written down together with anything he remembers of legends or folk lore or songs; then if he owns a totem pole he is asked if he will allow it to be repainted and a nice concrete base put around it. Why shouldn't he be suspicious?

The writer, when sketching totem poles in one village, noticed the local chiefs looking unkindly at him. Finally, one came up and said the chiefs did not want anything done to the poles. He explained that: "white man always make money out of Indian, Indian get nothing. One man write big book full of pictures sell that book fifty cents. Indian get nothing." He was no doubt referring to Marius Barbeau's "Indian Days".

But this interest in the west coast Indian promises several kinds of results. The younger Indian is inclined to belittle his ancestry, ignore his history and legends and often even his native tongue; as one Indian said to me regretfully: "We are no longer Indians and we are not white men, I dunno what we are."

The west coast Indians were remarkable creative artists, totem poles were a late development. No thorough search for earlier work has yet been made, but a stone carving, discovered near Hazelton under

several feet of gravel, goes to prove that important discoveries will be made, and masks and head gear, painted drums, shawls baskets and other things show designs of very distinctive quality. The totem poles along the Skeena are a remarkable collection, less extravagant than the Alaska poles but carved with bold assurance and endlessly varied in design. There are bears

and thunder birds, mountain goats, frogs, eagles, owls, ravens, and many other motifs. There are over a hundred of them, and to restore them all will take some years. When one considers that many of the totem poles had already fallen over, many of them rotten at the base or hollow inside; that they are carved out of immense cedars which required scores of Indians to move and erect, a few of the difficulties of repairing them may be imagined. The poles are sawn off at the base and very carefully lowered to the ground, the centre is hollowed out and a new, well creosoted cedar pole driven in. The whole pole is soaked with linseed oil, painted as far possible in its original color and re-erected on a concrete foundation, the whole weight being taken by the new pole. In some cases, the restoring is so perfectly done that there is no visible evidence of it, and yet the pole has been given another hundred years lease of life.

Indian legends describe this totem pole country as a kind of paradise, which was lost to the Indians through disobedience, a story similar to our garden of Eden. In the background there is too, the great mass of Rocher de Boule, the mountain on which the Indians say their canoes rested when the flood subsided. As to whether the totem pole is the only native art in Canada there is room for controversy.

Besides the restoration of totem poles it is hoped that efforts will be made to preserve some of the Indian cemeteries. The grave-houses are comparatively modern and yet show an amazing number of architectural forms which no one has quite accounted for. Russian and Chinese influence seems to have pervaded the ones at Hazelton and Kishno. They are all wood and rapidly rotting away. The Indian now having adopted the white man's tomb stones is not desirous that they should be preserved. Mr. Marius Barbeau, whose researches into the origins of Canadian life, habit, and customs have been as unflagging as they have been productive of stimulated interest in this wonderful country of ours, has considered the possibility of rebuilding several of the old houses at Kitselas. There are Indians living who remember the details of construction. In a few cases the main supports are still standing so that there would be no great difficulty to overcome in making the Skeena country a centre for the study of the west coast Indian, and at the same time it is quite the most accessible country in America for such study. Here is a country rich in what most of Canada is lacking, a background. It has a history of invasion and conquest, adventures, myths and legends old enough for history and legend to become one. The whole setting is dramatic; its sharp peaks, its rushing rivers, its gorges, the possession of

which meant their chief food, the salmon, and over it all the steady pressure of northern tribes fighting their way southward. And yet along with this there is an imaginative side of life that delighted in dances and ritual, in painting, weaving and carving or other forms of art of which the totem pole was the last to develop. Now embedded in concrete these poles stand on the banks of the Skeena a monument to a vanishing race, and the scale of them and the scale of them and the boldness of the conception make one feel that these people were not without an element of greatness.

Now a word about Mr. Marius Barbeau, to whom reference already has been made. He is Dominion ethnologist, attached to the Victoria Museum, Ottawa, and it was he who first conceived the idea of preserving some of this country's monuments on page 37



The totem poles along the Skeena are carved with bold assurance and are endlessly varied in design.

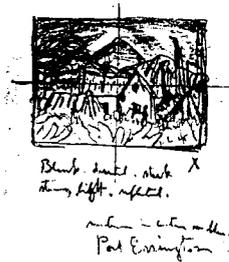
39. A. Y. Jackson, **Indian Home**, 1927, oil on canvas, 53.8 x 66.5, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995,
p. 190.



40. A. Y. Jackson, **Indian Home Port Essington**, 1926, oil on panel, 21.1 x 26.6, McMichael Canadian Art Collection.
Source: Charles Hill, **The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995, p. 190.



41. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art*, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 203.



17459



17475

17459

Composition Sketch for "Indian Home" 1926
Esquisse de mise en place de « Indian Home »

Graphite on wove paper. 18.2 × 12.7 cm.
Inscriptions: l.c., *Port Essington*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
Drawings 17459, 17475, and 17486 are sketches for an oil painting, titled *Indian Home*, in the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ont. (87.JA.43). A related oil sketch is in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ont. (1968.8.3).
NJG 1187.

17475

First Sketch for "Indian Home" 1926
Première esquisse pour « Indian Home »
Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *First sketch for Indian Home*



17486



17460

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
See also 17459 and 17486.
NJG 1185.

17486

Indian Home, Port Essington 1926
Maison indienne, Port Essington
Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *Indian Home*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
See also 17459 and 17475.
NJG 1186.

17460

Skeena River 1926
Rivière Skeena
Graphite on wove paper. 13.6 × 23.0 cm.
Inscriptions: l.l., *Skeena River / A Y Jackson*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
NJG 1182.



17461



17462

17461

Port Essington 1926
Port Essington
Graphite on wove paper. 14.3 × 22.5 cm.
Inscriptions: u.l., *Port Essington*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
Sketch for an illustration published in Marius Barbeau's *The Downfall of Temlaham* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), opposite p. 86.
NJG 1184.

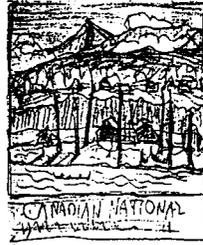
17462

Haysport Station 1926
Gare de Haysport
Black chalk on wove paper. 12.7 × 20.3 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *Haysport Station*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
Haysport is a railway point near the Skeena River.
NJG 1177.

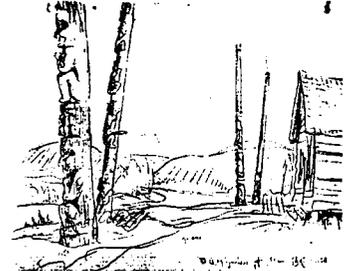
42. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art*, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 205.



17468 r



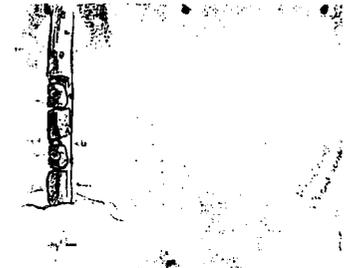
17469



17470 r



17468 v



17470 v

17468 r
Poster Designs for Canadian National Railways 1926
Projets d'affiches pour le Canadien National
 Graphite on wove paper. 12.7 × 20.1 cm.
 Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
 A graphite sketch related to 17468 r, 17468 v, and 17469 was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada in 1983 (28302). A related watercolour, titled *Skeena River*, is in the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ont. (89.1A.162) and was published in Marius Barbeau's *The Downfall of Temlaham* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), opposite p. 54.
 NIG 1191.

17468 v
Poster Design for Canadian National Railways 1926
Projet d'affiche pour le Canadien National

Graphite on wove paper. 20.1 × 12.7 cm.
 Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
 See also 17468 r and 17469.
 NIG 1191.

17469
Poster Design for Canadian National Railways 1926
Projet d'affiche pour le Canadien National
 Graphite on wove paper. 13.2 × 12.5 cm (irregular).
 Inscriptions: l.c., *Skeena Crossing*.
 Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
 See also 17468 r and 17468 v.
 NIG 1193.

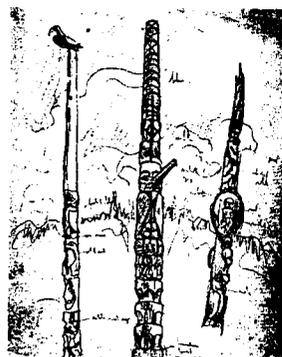
17470 r
Hazelton, B.C. 1926
Hazelton, C.-B.
 Graphite on wove paper. 21.3 × 27.6 cm.
 Inscriptions: l.r., *A Y Jackson Hazelton BC*
 Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
 NIG 1370.

17470 v
Totem Pole 1926
Mât totémique
 Graphite on wove paper. 21.3 × 27.6 cm.
 Inscriptions: l.l., *Hazelton*
 Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
 NIG 1370.

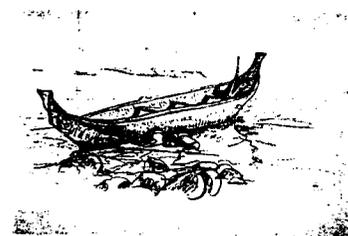
43. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art*, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 208.



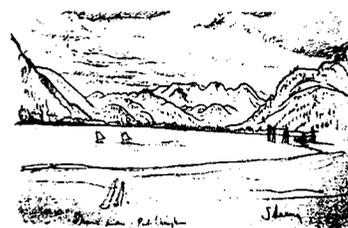
17483



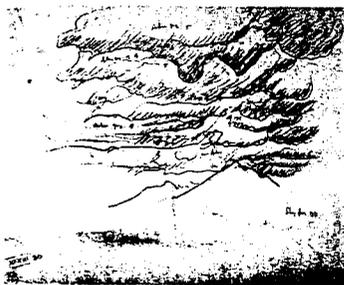
17484 r



17485



17488



17484 v

17483
Skeena Crossing 1926
Skeena Crossing
Graphite heightened with white on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.c., (*Skeena / Crossing*),
l.l., zz, l.r., *Pratt*.
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,
Ont., 1973.
On the verso are additional colour
notations.
NIG 913.

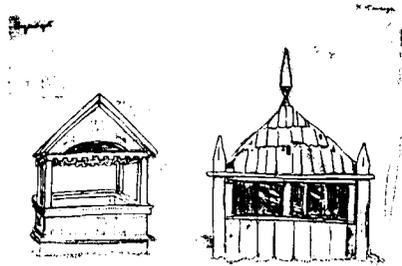
17484 r
Three Totem Poles, Kitsegukla 1926
Trois mâts totémiques, Kitsegukla
Graphite on wove paper. 25.2 × 20.4 cm.
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,
Ont., 1973.
NIG 1171.

17484 v
Sky for D.D. 1926
Ciel pour D.D.
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *Sky for DD*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,
Ont., 1973.
NIG 1171.

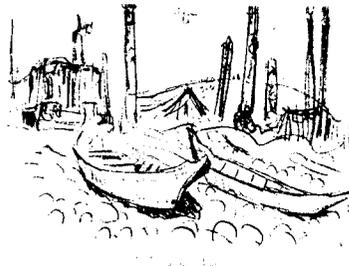
17485
Beached Dugout Canoe, Skeena River
1926
Canot de bois sur la plage, rivière Skeena
Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,
Ont., 1973.
NIG 1179.

17488
Skeena River at Port Essington 1926
La rivière Skeena à Port Essington
Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.
Inscriptions: l.l., *Skeena river - Port
Essington*, l.r., *Skeena*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,
Ont., 1973.

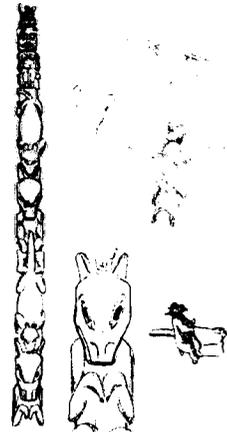
44. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art, Volume Two/G-K*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 215.



17518



17520



17522



17519



17521

17518

Grave Houses at Hagwilget and Kitwanga 1926
Maisons funéraires à Hagwilget et à Kitwanga

Pen and black ink over graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.

Inscriptions: u.l., *Hagwilget* [sic] / *Hagwilget* [sic], u.r., *Kitwanga* / *Kitwanga*

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17519

Collapsing House 1926
Maison délabrée

Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17520

Beached Canoes and Totem Poles, Kitwanga 1926
Canots sur la rive et mâts totémiques, Kitwanga

Graphite on wove paper. 14.5 × 22.7 cm.

Inscriptions: l.r., *Kitwanga*

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17521

Totem Poles of Halus and Hlengwah 1926

Mâts totémiques de Halus et Hlengwah
Graphite on wove paper. 22.7 × 14.5 cm.

Inscriptions: l.l., *Halus* ↑, l.c., *Hlengwah* [sic] ↑

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

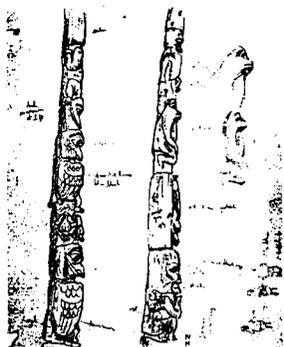
17522

Totem Poles, Dogs, and a Woman 1926
Mâts totémiques, chiens et femme

Pen and black ink over graphite on wove paper. 22.7 × 14.5 cm.

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

45. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art, Volume Two/G-K*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 219.



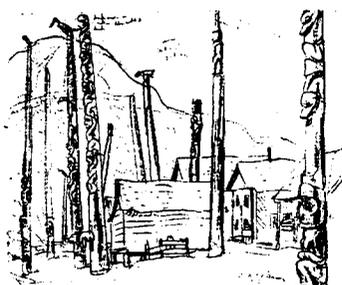
17536



17538



17540



17537



17539



17541

17536

Two Totem Poles, Two Details, and Figure Studies 1926

Deux mâts totémiques, deux détails et études de figures

Graphite on wove paper. 25.2 × 20.4 cm.

Inscriptions: l.c., ZZ / Skeena / Crossing.

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17537

Kispiox 1926

Kispiox

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.r., A Y Jackson

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

A related oil sketch, titled *Totem Poles Indian Village*, is in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ont.

17538

Totem Poles at Kispiox (The "Two Gossips") 1926

Mâts totémiques à Kispiox (les « deux commères »)

Graphite on wove paper. 25.2 × 20.4 cm.

Inscriptions: u.r., Kispiox, l.c., two gossips

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17539

Before Rain, Kispiox 1926

Avant la pluie, Kispiox

Graphite on wove paper. 25.2 × 20.4 cm.

Inscriptions: l.l., A Y Jackson Before rain / Kispiox. [sic]

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17540

Hagwilget 1926

Hagwilget

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.r., A Y Jackson, l.c.,

Hegwilget [sic] / Skeena

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,

Ont., 1973.

17541

Houses, Hagwilget 1926

Maisons, Hagwilget

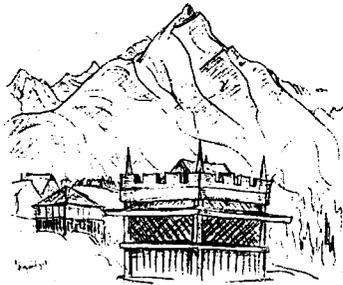
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.r., *Hegwilget* [sic]

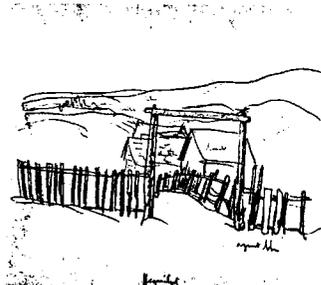
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg,

Ont., 1973.

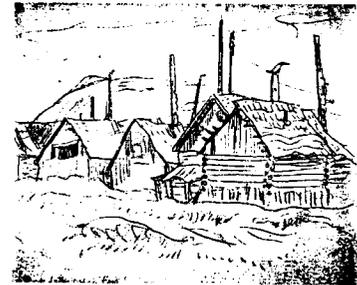
46. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art, Volume Two/G-K*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 220.



17542



17544



17546



17543



17545



17547

17542

Grave House, Hagwilget 1926*Maison funéraire, Hagwilget*

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.l., *Hagwilget*. [sic]

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17543

Totem Pole and House, Hagwilget

1926

Mât totémique et maison, Hagwilget

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.c., *Hagwilget* [sic]

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

On the verso is a detail in graphite of the house.

17544

Fence and Gate, Hagwilget 1926*Clôture et barrière, Hagwilget*

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.c., *Hagwilget* [sic]

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17545

Totem Poles at Kispiox (The "Two Gossips"), and Grave House at Hagwilget 1926*Mâts totémiques à Kispiox (les « deux commères ») et maison funéraire à Hagwilget*

Graphite on wove paper. 25.2 × 20.4 cm.

Inscriptions: u.l., *Kispiox* [sic], l.l., *The 2 gossips*, l.r., *Hagwilget* [sic]

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17546

Potlatch Houses and Totem Poles, Kispiox 1926*Maisons de potlatch et mâts totémiques, Kispiox*

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

A related graphite sketch is in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ont. (1981.36.3). A related painting is in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (84.49) and was published in Marius Barbeau's *The Downfall of Tamlaham* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928), opposite p. 70.

17547

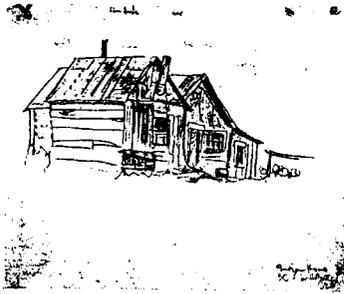
Kispiox and Mountains 1926*Kispiox et les montagnes*

Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.

Inscriptions: l.c., *Kispiox*. [sic] *richer**warmer color than sketch A Y Jackson*

Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

47. A. Y. Jackson, page of *Sketches* from the Upper Skeena Valley, 1926, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Pierre B. Landry, ed., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art*, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 221.



17548



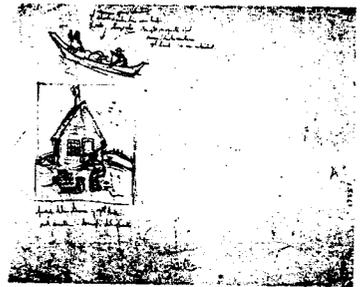
17549



17551 r



17550



17551 v

17548
Indian House, B.C. 1926
Maison indienne, C.-B.
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *Indian House / BC ? w Holgate? / '26*; Verso: l.r., *Depth of Holgate Box*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17549
Kitsequecla Mountain on the Upper Skeena River 1926
Le mont Kitsequecla sur le cours supérieur de la rivière Skeena
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.
A related graphite sketch is in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ont. (1981.36.1).

17550
Totem Poles and Houses, Kitsegukla 1926
Mâts totémiques et maisons, Kitsegukla
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *DD*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17551 r
Totem Poles and Houses, Kitsegukla 1926
Mâts totémiques et maisons, Kitsegukla
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.r., *CC*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

17551 v
Two Men Canoeing and a Man Chopping Wood 1926
Deux hommes en canot et un homme coupant du bois
Graphite on wove paper. 20.4 × 25.2 cm.
Inscriptions: l.c., *Gitseguklas [sic]*
Purchased from the artist, Kleinburg, Ont., 1973.

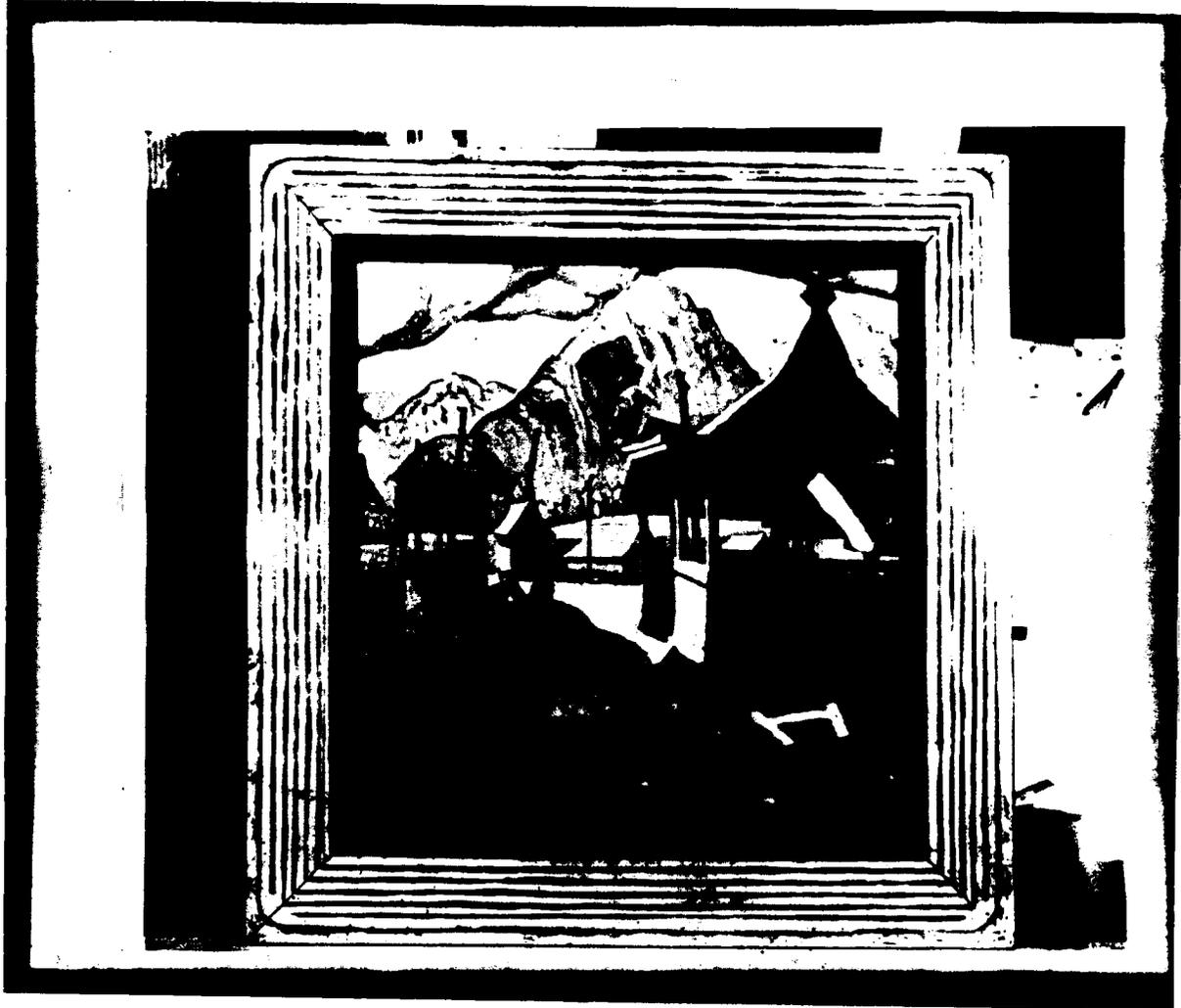
48. A. Y. Jackson, **Barns**, 1926, oil on panel, 81/2" x 101/2", McMichael Canadian Collection.
Source: Peter Mellen, **The Group of Seven**, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, p. 121.



49. A. Y. Jackson, **Skeena River Crossing**, 1926, oil on canvas, 53.5 x 66.1, McMichael Canadian Collection. Source: Peter Mellen, **The Group of Seven**, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, p. 164.



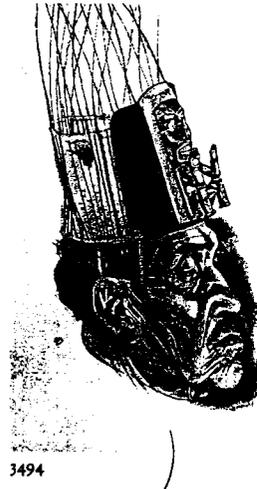
50. Edwin Holgate, **Hazelton Graveyard**, n.d., location and dimensions unknown.
Source: CMC photograph 70033.



51. Edwin Holgate, **Drawings and Paintings from the Skeena Valley**, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 138.



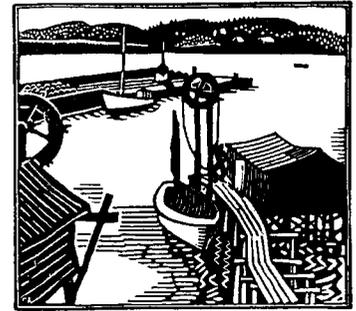
3493



3494



3495



3548

3493
Landing Stage, Port Essington 1926
Débarcadère, Port Essington
Woodcut on bible paper. 13.1 × 10.1 cm (block); 18.2 × 13.8 cm (sheet).
Inscriptions: below block l.r., *E. Holgate.*, l.l., N° 6 -; l.l. corner, *Landing stage. Port Essington*
Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1927.
Thom 21.

3494
Tsimshian Chief (Samuel Gaum) 1926
Cheftsimshian (Samuel Gaum)
Black and red chalk on wove paper.
60.2 × 47.7 cm.
Inscriptions: l.l., *EH*; Verso: l.r., *Samuel Wallace [?] Gaum / Gaum of Gitsalas*

Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1927.
Also exhibited as *Chief Gaum, Tsimshian*.
Samuel (or Simon) Wallace Gaum (Qawm) was chief of the Raven clan of Kitselas, a Tsimshian village on the Skeena River, B.C. He was living in Port Essington, B.C., when interviewed by Marius Barbeau in 1926.

3495
Tsimshian Indian (Jim Robinson, Hazelton) 1926
Indien Tsimshian (Jim Robinson, Hazelton)
Black and red chalk on wove paper.
58.3 × 47.6 cm.
Inscriptions: l.l., *EH*; Verso: l.r., *Jim Robinson - Hazelton -*
Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1927.

Also exhibited as *Jim Robinson (Half-breed), Gitksan*. Jim Robinson was a Gitksan Indian of Hazelton, on the upper Skeena River, B.C.

3548
The West Coast Dock c. 1926-27
Dock de la Côte ouest
Woodcut on wove paper. 7.4 × 8.3 cm (block); 18.7 × 14.6 cm (sheet).
Inscriptions: in block l.l., *EH*; below block l.r., *E. Holgate -*, l.l., N° 6 -
Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1928.
Thom 24.

52. Edwin Holgate, **Drawings and Paintings** from the Skeena Valley, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K,
Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 139.



3549



3547



4426



18262

3549

Totem Poles, No. 3 c. 1926-27
Mâts totémiques, n° 3

Woodcut on japan paper. 15.3 × 13.3 cm
(block); 18.3 × 18.0 cm (sheet).

Inscriptions: in block l.r., *EH*; below block
l.r., *E. Holgate*, l.l., *N° 9*

Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1928.
Thom 22.

3547

La Malbaie 1927
La Malbaie

Woodcut on japan paper. 10.1 × 10.8 cm
(block); 18.2 × 13.6 cm (sheet).

Inscriptions: in block l.r., *EH*; below block
l.r., *E. Holgate*, l.l., *N° 9* -
Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1928.

Also titled *Snowbound Village*. Formerly
titled *French Canadian Village*.
Thom 27.

4426

Totem Poles, Gitsegiuklas 1927
Mâts totémiques, Gitsegiuklas

Oil on canvas. 80.9 × 81.1 cm.

Inscriptions: l.r., *E Holgate*

Purchased from the artist, Montreal, 1939.
Also exhibited as *Gitseguklas*. A prelimi-
nary graphite drawing is in a private
collection, Toronto. *Gitsegukla* is a Gitksan
village on the upper Skeena River, B.C.

18262

The Portage 1927
Le portage

Woodcut on laid paper. 10.1 × 9.4 cm
(block); 17.6 × 14.9 cm (sheet).

Watermark: *HAND*[-]

Inscriptions: in block l.l., *EH*; below block
l.r., *E. Holgate* -; l.l., *N° 1* -, l.c., *To*
M.F.H. -; on label removed from old frame,
Ferd. and my Canoe / Lac Caribou 1927. /
E Holgate.

Purchased from Walter Klinkhoff Gallery,
Montreal, 1975.

Thom 28.

53. Edwin Holgate, **Totem Poles, No. 4**, formerly **Departing People: Skeena River, B.C.**, 1927 - 1928. Wood engraving on Japan paper, 15 x 12.3 (block).
Source: Landry, ed., **Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Art**, Volume Two/G-K, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994, p. 140.



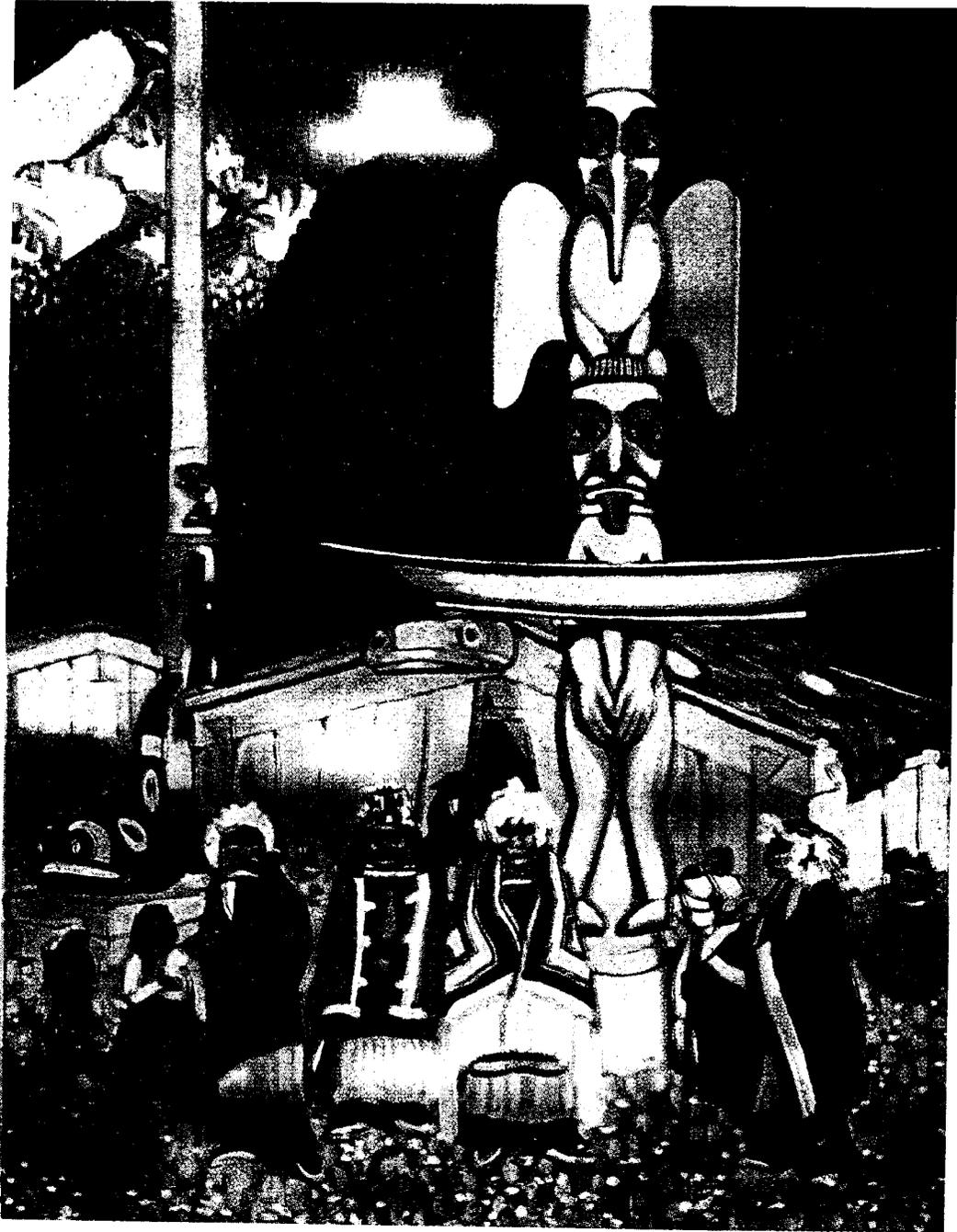
54. Edwin Holgate, **Tsimshian Indians**, 1926, woodcut, Art Gallery of Hamilton.
Source: Ian Thom, **The Prints of Edwin Holgate**, Kleinburg, Ontario, 1989, plate 18.



55. Anne Savage, **Untitled oil sketch, (Skeena, B.C.)**, 1927, oil on panel, 23 x 30.5, location unknown.
Source: A. McDougall, **Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter**, Ottawa: Borealis, 2000, p. 61.



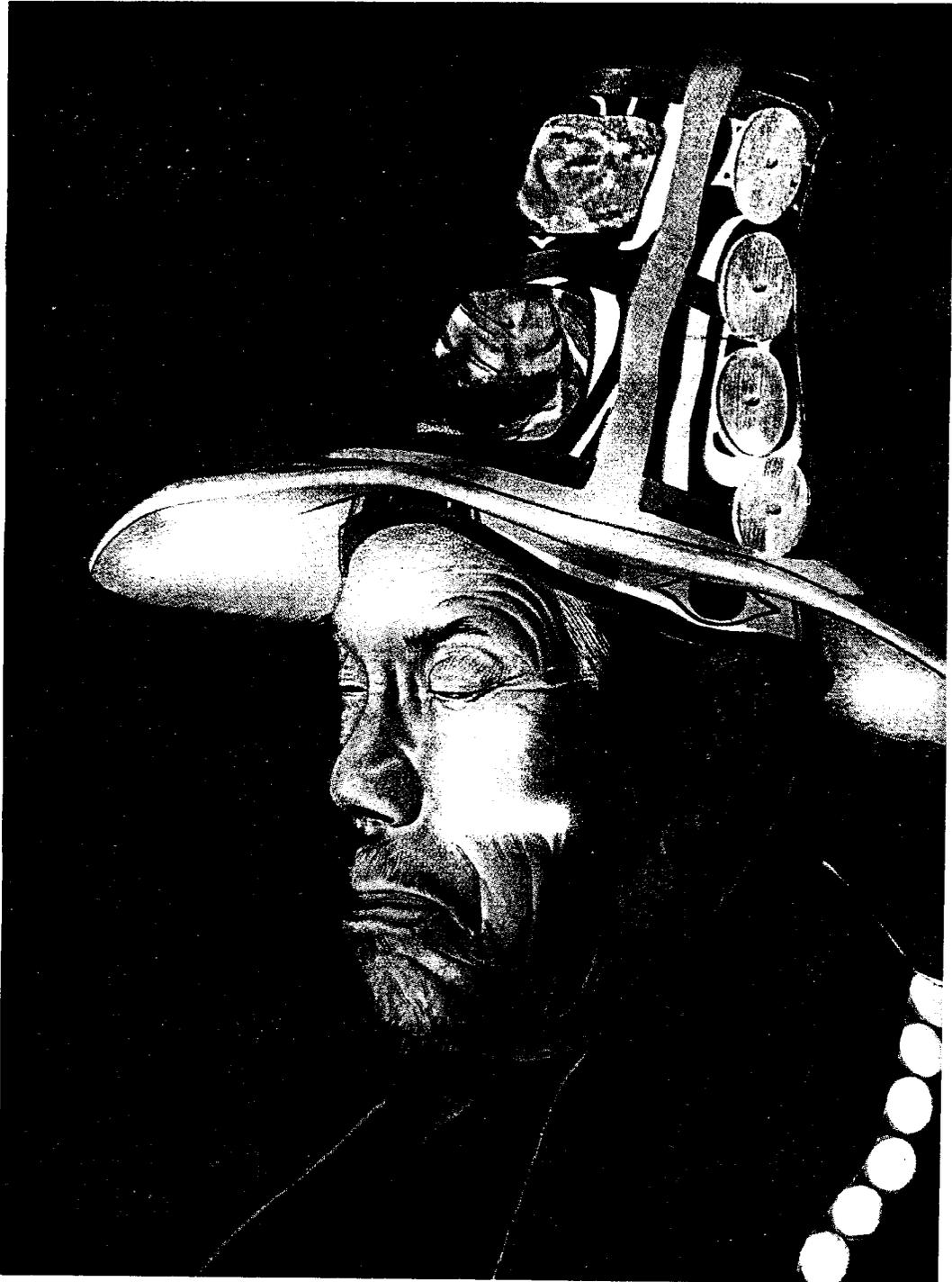
56. Langdon Kihn, *A Feast Among the Skeena River People*, dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, *The Downfall of Temlaham*, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, frontispiece.



57. Langdon Kihn, **Kitwinkul, the Home of Kamalmuk**, also, **Gitwinkool Totem Poles**, c. 1924 - 1925, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 3.



58. Langdon Kihn, **He-knows-the-Sky, Alimlarhae, an Old Chief of the Skeena**, 1924.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 22.



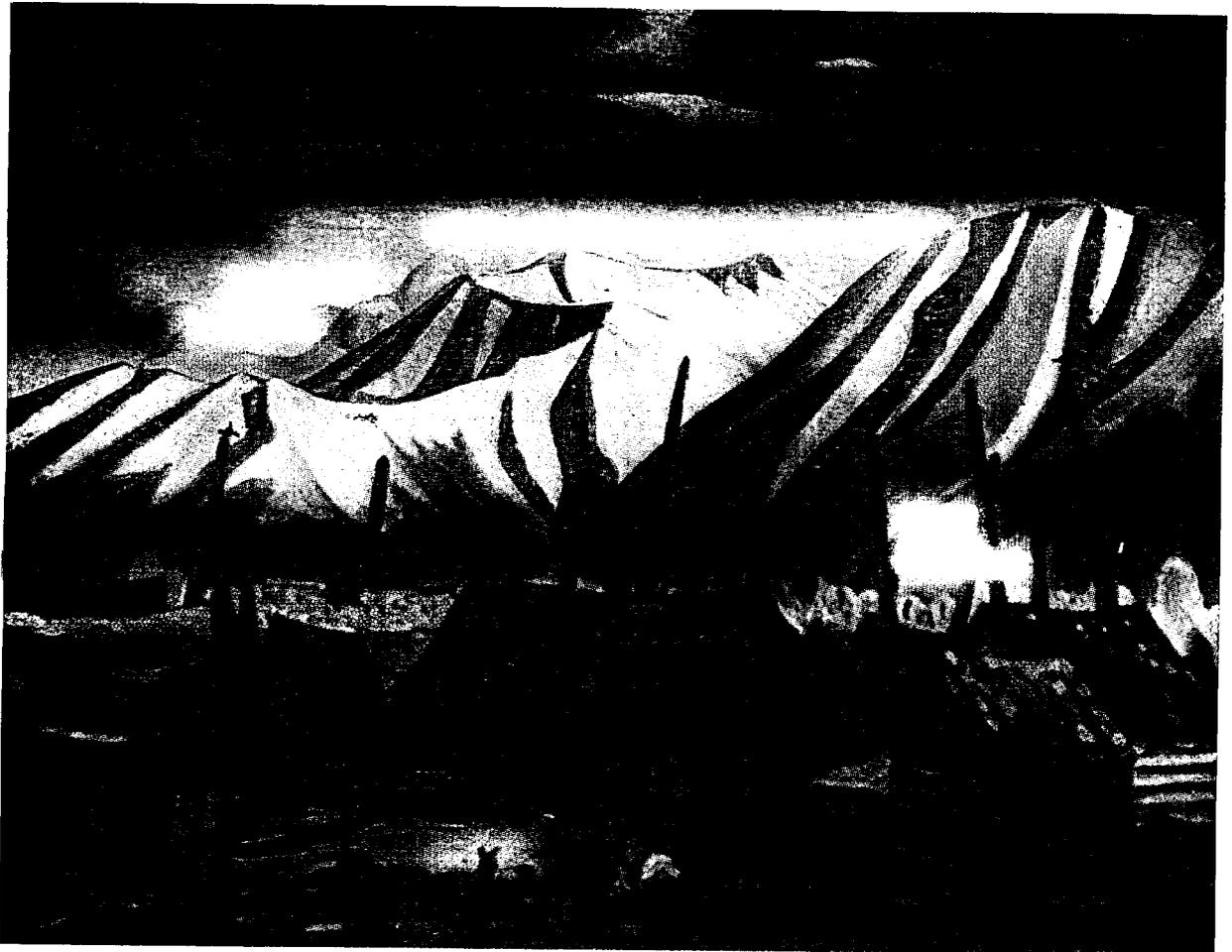
59. Langdon Kihn, **Hanamuk or Sunbeams (Fanny Johnson), the cause of the Skeena River "Rebellion", forty years ago. Her crests - the Stars, the Moon and the Rainbow, 1924.**
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 38.



60. A. Y. Jackson, **The Native Town of Git-Segyukla, on the Upper Skeena**, watercolour on paper, [1927], 28.6 x 24.8, Robert McLaughlin Gallery.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 54.



61. A. Y. Jackson, **Kispayaks Village - the Hiding-Place - on the Upper Skeena**, 1927, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 81.3, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 70.



62. A. Y. Jackson, **Spukshu or Port Essington, a Mission Village, at the Mouth of the Skeena**, [c.1926], dimensions and locations unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 86.



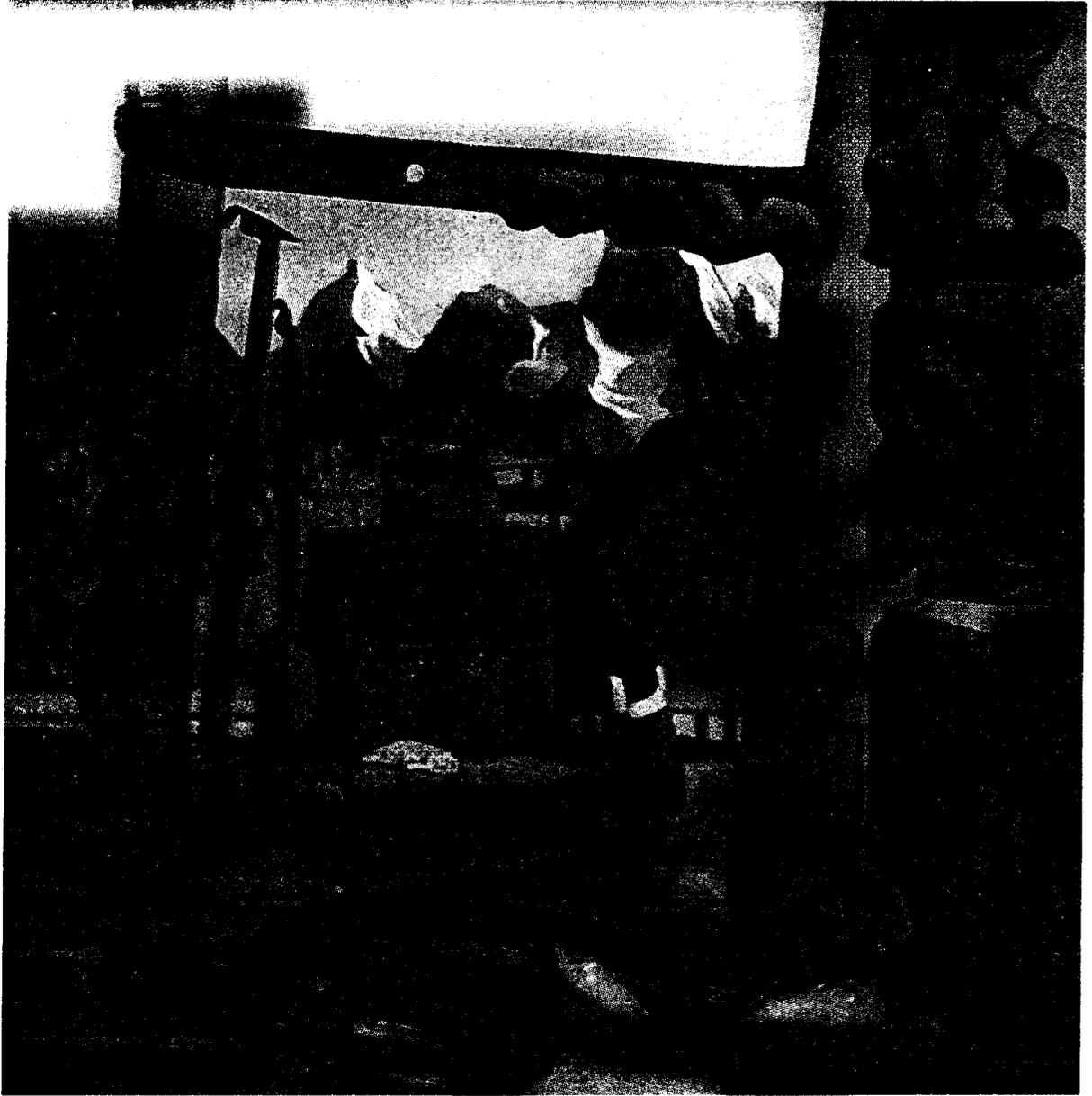
63. Edwin Holgate, **The Upper Skeena, near the site of Temlaham - the Good-land-of-yore**, [c. 1926 - 1927], dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 118.



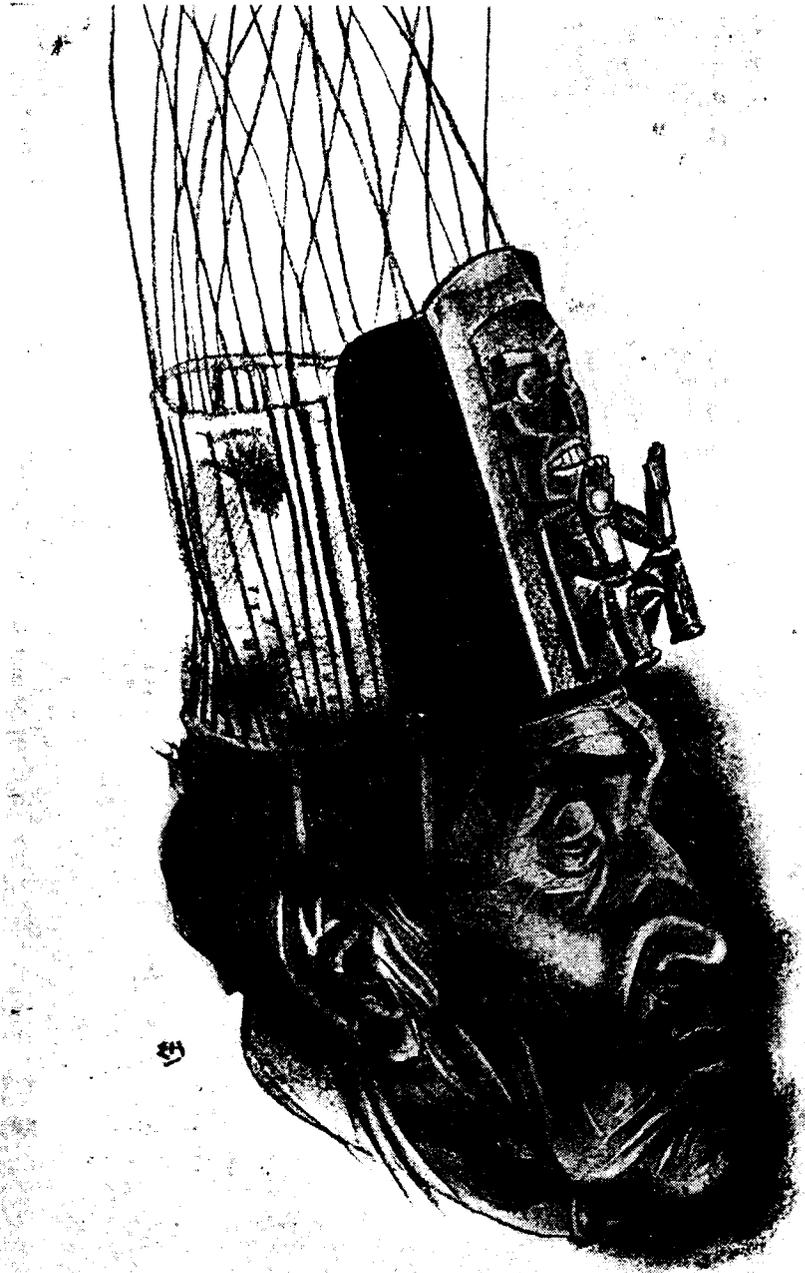
64. Edwin Holgate, **Young Gitksan Mother with a Cradle, at the edge of the Skeena**, [c. 1926 - 1927], dimensions and location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 142.



65. Edwin Holgate, **Totem Poles of Git-Segykla**, 1927, oil on canvas, 80.9 x 81.1, National Gallery of Canada. Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 167.

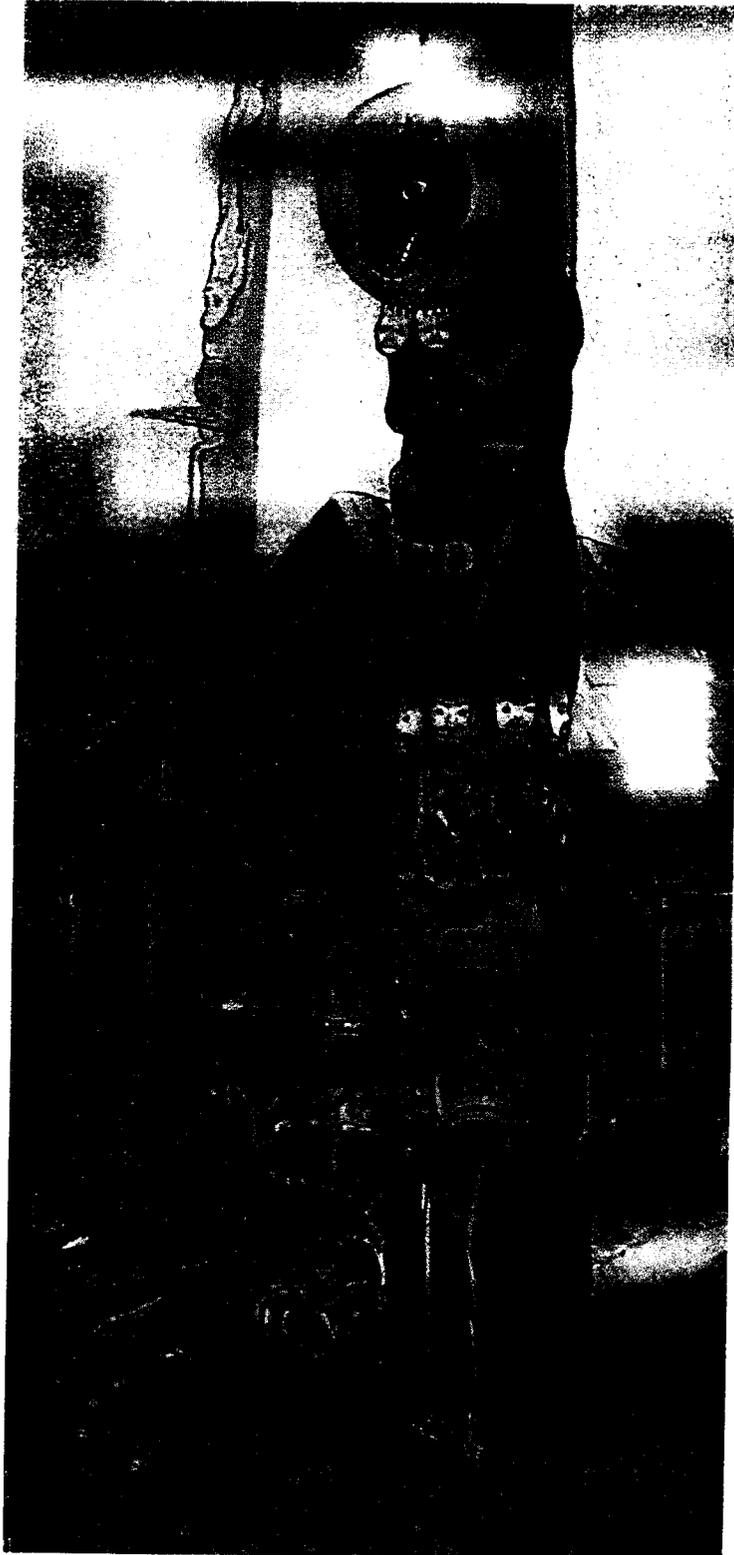


66. Edwin Holgate, **Qawm, "Covetous-person", a Chief of Kitselas, the Canyon Tribe**, 1926, black and red chalk on wove paper, 60.2 x 47.7, National Gallery of Canada.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 182.



67. Emily Carr, **The Totem Pole of the Bear and the Moon, at Kispayaks - the "Hiding-place"**, 1912, dimensions and location unknown.

Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 206.



68. Anne Savage, **Where the Native "Paradise Lost" of Temlaham used to Stand, on the Upper Skeena (near Hazelton)**, 1927, oil on panel, location unknown.
Source: Marius Barbeau, **The Downfall of Temlaham**, Toronto: MacMillan, 1928, p. 223.



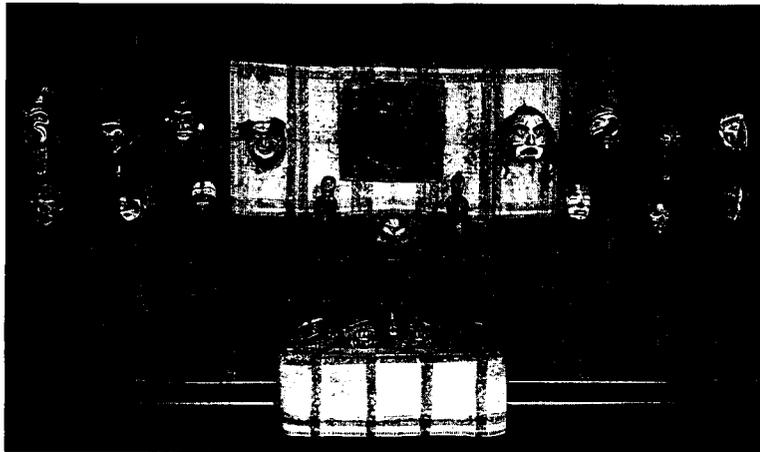
69. Installation, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern**, National Gallery of Canada, 1927.

Source: Diana Nemiroff et al., **Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, p. 21.



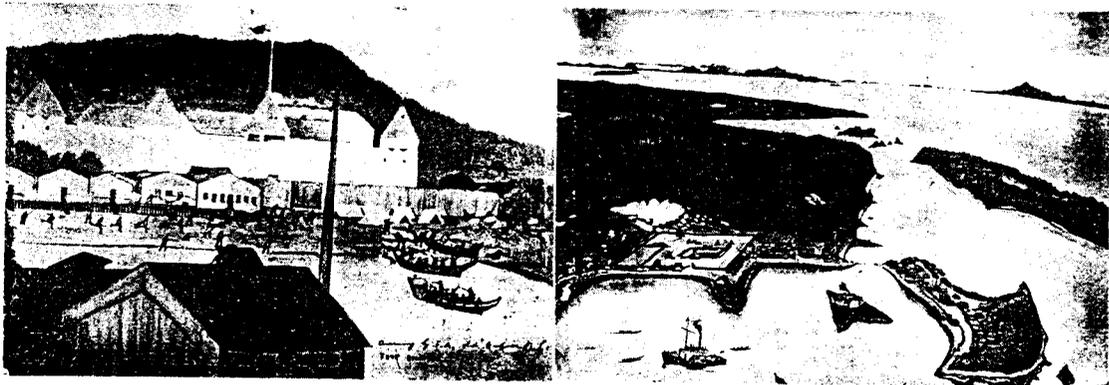
70. Installation, **Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern**, National Gallery of Canada, 1927.

Source: Diana Nemiroff et al., **Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada**, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, p. 22.



71. Frederick Alexie, two drawings of **Fort Simpson**.

Source: Marius Barbeau, "Frederick Alexie, a Primitive", in **Canadian Review of Music and Art**, Vol. 3, Nos. 11 and 12, (1945): 22.



(Marius Barbeau Collection)

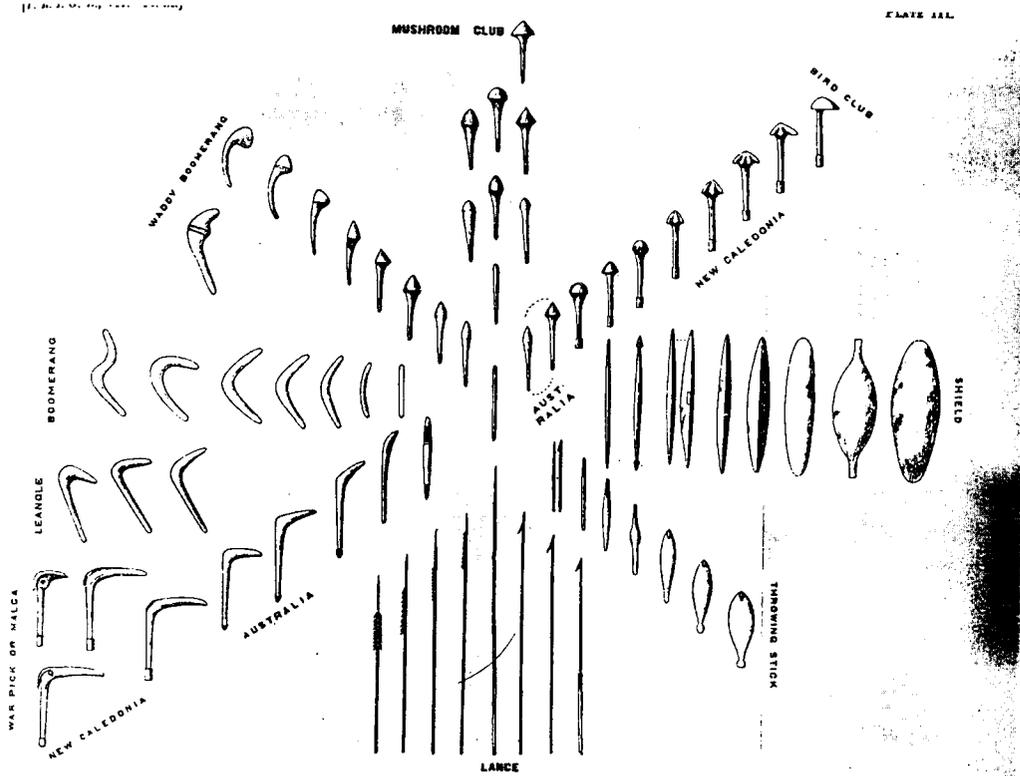
In oils—Size 26" x 32"

(National Museum Collection)

A drawing showing old Fort Simpson, with the Haidas in dug-outs, fighting the Tsimshians on the shore.

A panorama from the air of Fort Simpson and neighbourhood, showing the fort and Indian village with totem poles, as they used to be, in the 1850's, and the H. B. Co.'s small steamboat, *The Beaver*.

72. "The Evolutionary relationships of Australian Weapons."
 Source: Annie Coombes, **Reinventing Africa**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 118.



52. Plate showing the evolutionary relationships of Australian weapons. Augustus Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers, *The Evolution of Culture and Other Essays* (Oxford 1906).

73. Emily Carr, **Kispiox Village**, 1912, dimensions unknown, British Columbia Archives.
Source: Peter Macnair and Jay Stewart, **To the Totem Forests: Emily Carr and Contemporaries Interpret Coastal Villages**, Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1999, p. 32.



74. "Celebrations, Baron Byng at Hazelton, B.C. 1927."
Source: BCPA no. F-5297.

