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Engaging the Public Sphere: The Art and Advocacy of Elizabeth Wyn Wood and  
Paraskeva Clark Related to Their Debate Over the Artist's Role in Society

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of  
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In The School for Studies in Art and Culture

Art History: Art and its Institutions

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

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395 Wellington Street  
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*Your file* *Votre référence*  
ISBN: 978-0-494-68660-7  
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ISBN: 978-0-494-68660-7

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## **Abstract**

In 1937 Canadian-born sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Russian-born painter Paraskeva Clark fiercely debated the artists' role in society, a landmark discussion that reflected the concerns of their contemporary artistic community and also underlined the growing visibility of women artists in the public realm. Although Clark and Wood held diametrically opposed views, each woman challenged traditional notions of femininity. They advanced the women's movement by the practice of their art and through their political and social advocacy. They were part of a liminal generation of women who mediated between the pressures of a professional career and the responsibilities of marriage and family. Furthermore, each artist depicted women in new roles during the Second World War, representations which point to changing public perceptions of women. Their advocacy asserted women's abilities in the public sphere, as each negotiated her identity in society and sought recognition as a professional artist.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to genuinely thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Angela Carr, for her continual assistance and encouragement. I would also like to extend particular appreciation to my parents for their support and to André for his help and optimism. As well, I would like express gratitude to the staff at Library and Archives Canada, the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian War Museum, and Queen's University Archives. A special thanks goes to the daughter of Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Qennefer Browne, and the son and daughter-in-law of Paraskeva Clark, Clive and Mary Clark, for welcoming me into their homes and sharing their experiences and knowledge.

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## Abbreviations

ARC	Arts Reconstruction Committee
CAC	Canadian Arts Council
CNE	Canadian National Exhibition
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
CWAAF	Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force
CWAC	Canadian Women's Army Corps
CWM	Canadian War Museum
FCA	Federation of Canadian Artists
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
NFB	National Film Board
NGC	National Gallery of Canada
QUA	Queen's University Archives
WLL	Women's Labour League
WRENS	Women's Royal Naval Service

## **Introduction**

In the history of the twentieth century, there are significant accounts of women who championed women's rights, while there are millions of other women who by choosing to follow their dreams, destabilized social conventions that inhibited women's involvement and power in society. Artists Paraskeva Clark and Elizabeth Wyn Wood are two such women. While they were not part of explicitly feminist movements and perhaps would not have considered themselves to be feminists, both women contributed to the broader women's movement in Canada by choosing to assert their respective values on art and society and by representing strong women in their artwork. In the 1930s, Clark and Wood profited from the increasing liberty for women and improved recognition of women's artwork but they were not bystanders in the tide of events affecting women's freedom. This thesis proposes that Clark and Wood's art from this period as well as their social and political advocacy is evidence that each claimed a place in the male-dominated professional sphere which in turn contributed to changing cultural perceptions of women.

Even before Clark immigrated to Canada, Wood and her contemporaries were distinctly influenced by changing women's legal rights during their young adulthood. Just ten days before the 1929 stock market crash, the British Empire's highest court, the Privy Council, declared Canadian women to be legally and officially persons in what is commonly referred to as the Persons Case—the highlight of the 1920s women's movement. This campaign for the recognition of women as persons had started two years earlier. Henrietta Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby, later recognized as the “Famous Five,” led the charge towards the official declaration of personhood by applying to Canada's Supreme Court to interpret the

meaning of the word “person” under the British North America Act. The question arose when Emily Murphy was denied the right to be considered for appointment to the Senate on the grounds that women were not “persons.” At the time, requests for divorce had to be approved in the Canadian Senate and the group charged that decisions concerning women’s lives should be made at least in part by women representatives—which is why the five believed it was essential to have women in the Senate. At first the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared women were not persons under the British North America Act.<sup>1</sup> While the court’s decision was not unexpected, it was still a disappointment. Only when the five appealed to the British Empire’s Privy Council in London and successfully argued their case were women officially declared “persons” under Canadian law.

During the First World War, women had slowly gained more freedom and equality as they replaced male workers in factories and clerical jobs when men were posted to the war front. Between 1916 and 1920 women received the right to vote in all provinces except Quebec, where women were refused the ballot until 1940.<sup>2</sup> Despite this breakthrough for women, the 1930s and 40s are considered a period when the women’s movement was “put on hold.”<sup>3</sup> Women’s contributions had been eclipsed once the First World War was over, as women were often required to leave their wartime employment and return to the home. Then came waves of poverty and desperation during the Depression, followed by a second devastating war in less than a generation. This retrenchment for women was not universal in all aspects of Canadian society, however.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Sharpe and Patricia I. McMahon, *The Persons Case: The Origins and Legacy of the Fight for Legal Personhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Sharpe, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

During the 1930s women artists enjoyed increasing prominence in artists' societies and gallery exhibitions. Their achievements in the 1920s could not be ignored by the arts community. For example, after decades of electing women exclusively as associates, the Royal Canadian Academy recognized Montreal-born painter Marion Long as a full Academician in 1933.<sup>4</sup> It had been over fifty years since a solitary woman, Charlotte Schreiber, had been granted that distinction in 1880. Rebecca Sisler has written that although certain women had been recognized as associates by members of the Academy, "it was the idea of their presence in the living flesh within the inner sanctum of traditionally male enclaves, such as the committee room, that was difficult to assimilate."<sup>5</sup> This difficulty began to ease in the 1930s.

Faced with devastating economic and political struggles in the 1930s, artists were forced to justify their role in society. In Canada few artists portrayed the social realities of the Depression, preferring to continue the Group of Seven's legacy of landscape-inspired art. This particularly frustrated historian Frank H. Underhill. In a 1937 issue of the political and cultural periodical *Canadian Forum*, he reviewed the artist Bertram Brooker's *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* and harshly criticized the text for ignoring the realities of a society in collapse. Underhill urged artists to represent humanity's struggles.<sup>6</sup> But not everyone agreed with him. Toronto-based sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood was so dismayed by Underhill's criticisms that she responded in an article entitled "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield," also published in *Canadian Forum*. She mounted a

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<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Sisler, *Passionate Spirits: A History of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, 1880-1980* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin & Company, 1980), 285.

<sup>5</sup> Sisler, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Frank H. Underhill, "The Season's New Books," *Canadian Forum* 16 (December 1936): 27.

strong defence of landscape-based art and argued for the separation of politics from art.<sup>7</sup> This debate took another twist when Russian-born painter Paraskeva Clark, fuming over Wood's perceived naïveté and conservatism, responded to the sculptor in the leftist magazine *New Frontier* in 1937.<sup>8</sup> Clark urged artists to use their talents for political activism, an argument rooted in her Russian heritage and her belief in socially-engaged art.

In the years that followed, both Clark and Wood depicted female industrial workers during the Second World War—subject matter with some First World War precedents. Clark had requested and received a commission from Harry McCurry, director of the National Gallery of Canada to contribute to the Canadian War Art Program. She finished these works in 1947, marking one decade since her call for political and artistic upheaval. For her part, Wood created a sculpture of a woman war worker in the hope of a similar unofficial commission.<sup>9</sup> Clark's works honoured the role of women in Canada's armed forces while Wood paid tribute to women involved with wartime munitions manufacturing. These representations of working women are especially fascinating because of the great differences that the two artists had expressed in their understanding of the Group of Seven's landscape tradition and in Clark's case, her sympathies for the Soviet Union.

Today we can interpret the 1937 debate between Wood and Clark and their later depictions of women as sharing common ideological indices. Just as the debate can be seen as political, their art compels the viewer to take an ideological and ethical stance

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield," *Canadian Forum* 16 (February 1937): 13.

<sup>8</sup> Paraskeva Clarke [sic] and Graham McInnes, "Come out from Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," *New Frontier* 1 (April 1937): 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood: Tradition and Innovation in Canadian Sculpture* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1997), 77.

towards the way women were represented. The debate and the artwork are connected because both privilege art's engagement with ideology, founded on the power of cultural objects to convey personal experience and to inform political action—despite Clark's increasing silence on politics starting in the 1940s. Although Clark and Wood passionately held opposing views on art and society, both advanced the women's movement through their art and advocacy by reinforcing women's voices and abilities in a public realm.

### **Literature Review**

This study of Clark and Wood is possible through each artist's archives documenting their careers. Clark's son Clive and his wife Mary donated his parents' documents to Library and Archives Canada, including personal and business correspondence from family, fellow artists, galleries and patrons. Among the files are those that reflect Clark's involvement with the Spanish Relief Campaign and the Federation of Russian Canadians, the Russian Exhibition of Canadian War Artists, and the Russian Canadian Youth Organization.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, while Clark did not explicitly record her thoughts in a journal, her correspondence with National Gallery of Canada director H.O. McCurry, who commissioned her paintings of wartime working women, significantly informs the assessment of these works. The gallery has retained Clark's replies to McCurry, giving a clear account of how these paintings came into being and her process of creativity.

One of the first articles investigating Clark's life and work was published in *Canadian Forum* in August 1937. Written by critic and novelist Graham McInnes, who

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<sup>10</sup> Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, R2941-0-2-E, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

had previously assisted Clark in preparing “Come Out from Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield” in April of the same year, the biographical article chronicles the influence of Cézanne in Clark’s paintings. McInnes proposed that “her work has a combination of two qualities unusual in a woman painter—extreme sensitiveness and wiry strength.” He did not elaborate on why these qualities were supposed to be rare in women’s art or what it meant exactly in Clark’s painting.<sup>11</sup>

Over a decade later, art critic Andrew Bell published “The Art of Paraskeva Clark” in *Canadian Art* in 1949. He sympathetically acknowledged Clark’s other responsibilities in her life as a woman, “[Clark] is the wife of an Ontario government official, the mother of two sons, a ‘housewife,’ and still she manages to paint—not enough, of course, but when she does, [it is] to important effect.”<sup>12</sup> Bell was particularly impressed with Clark, whom he felt had successfully combined the Canadian landscape tradition with Cézanne’s aesthetic principles. In the following years, other short articles presented Clark’s work to the Canadian public.

Curator Charles Hill is credited with being the first art historian to examine the work of Clark in a scholarly fashion in his 1975 *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*. Until Hill’s research, the 1930s were often overlooked in Canadian art as historians focused on the development of abstraction in the post-war era or the earlier work of the Group of Seven during the 1920s. Consequently, Hill’s 1975 exhibition was regarded as a landmark in the rediscovery of several artists of the period, including Clark herself. Hill introduced many of the artists working in Toronto and their concerns, establishing Clark’s artistic environment. Clark’s *Myself* (1933) was selected for the cover of the

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<sup>11</sup> Graham Campbell McInnes, “Contemporary Canadian Artists.” *Canadian Forum* (August 1937): 166.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Bell, “The Art of Paraskeva Clark,” *Canadian Art* 7 (Christmas 1949): 43-46.

exhibition catalogue as well as for promotional posters, according Clark considerable recognition. As a sculptor, Wood was outside of this study and Hill did not discuss her work.<sup>13</sup>

In 1982, an exhibition at the Dalhousie Art Gallery examined Clark's life and career. Curator Mary MacLachlan wrote the accompanying catalogue, *Paraskeva Clark: Her Paintings and Drawings*, presenting an overview of her life and paintings for the first time. MacLachlan reviewed Clark's well-known works in comparison with other paintings from her career, adding social and political context. MacLachlan was the first to fully acknowledge Clark's career in light of her training in Russia with Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, who was aesthetically influenced by the Symbolists and Cézanne. She also situated Clark as part of the transition in Canadian painting from the Group of Seven to the rise of abstraction, and the changing values reflected in this shift.<sup>14</sup> Released at the same time, a film produced by Gail Singer and the National Film Board, *Portrait of the Artist as an Old Lady*, documented Clark's life, presenting her both as a woman and as a socially-engaged artist trying to gain acceptance in Canada's conservative art communities.<sup>15</sup>

Kathryn O'Rourke's 1995 M.A. thesis, "Labours and Love: Issues of Domesticity and Marginalization In the Works of Paraskeva Clark" explored Clark's biography and painting in relation to her roles as an immigrant woman working at home and raising children, and to the more public and common interpretation of Clark as a politically-driven artist. O'Rourke focused on how the artist's painting can be understood in the

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<sup>13</sup> Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Mary MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Her Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery Dalhousie University, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> *Portrait of the Artist as an Old Lady*, video recording, directed by Gail Singer (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1982).

context of the various challenges she faced. Notably O'Rourke underlined Clark's "implantation into an alien culture, domestic strife, [and her] stifled career aspirations" which form common threads throughout her life.<sup>16</sup>

More recently, in *The Social and the Real*, Natalie Luckyj's chapter "'Come out from behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield': The Politics of Memory and Identity in the Art of Paraskeva Clark" explored Clark as a wife and mother, and the conflicting desire for social activism expressed in her art and writing. This study focused upon Clark's outsider status as a Russian immigrant and the pressure to conform in Toronto's society circles.<sup>17</sup> Luckyj primarily examined these oppositions through Clark's more explicitly communist paintings: *Petroushka* (1937), *Presents from Madrid* (1937), *Portrait of Mao* (1938), and others. Luckyj did not consider Clark's relationship with Wood at any length, and did not touch on Clark's Second World War paintings.

Jane Lind's 2009 *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* is the first extensive biography on Clark chronicling her life and career.<sup>18</sup> Lind explored and documented Clark's struggles as a female artist. However she did not locate her text within the context of feminist art scholarship that problematized questions of gender and motherhood in relation to the professionalism of women artists. Lind touched upon the debate of 1937 from Clark's perspective, but did not address Bertram Brooker's involvement in the discussion or detail any background information on Underhill and Wood. Clark's war art is considered but Lind did not reflect on women's involvement in the Second World War

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<sup>16</sup> Kathryn O'Rourke, "Labours and Love: Issues of Domesticity and Marginalization In the Works of Paraskeva Clark" (M.A. thesis, Montréal: Concordia University, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg, eds. *Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2005), 223-240.

<sup>18</sup> Jane Lind, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2009).

or upon Clark's contributions within the broader context of women's work during the same period. Instead, Lind regards Clark's wartime work primarily within the context of her family life, delving into her son's battle with schizophrenia and how this affected Clark.

In comparison with the documentation on Clark, Wood's archives are less complete. Held by Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, the archival documents on Elizabeth Wyn Wood and her husband, Emanuel Hahn, do provide information regarding their lives and careers. Wood's archive includes business and private correspondence, proposals for commissions, newspaper clippings, as well as photographs and sketches of her work. Of particular interest is her campaign in support of Eric Brown, director of the National Gallery of Canada, and the Welland-Crowland War Memorial. This correspondence often reflects the technical nature of sculpting or reveals her organizational responsibilities. Overall, little in Wood's archives reflects her thoughts on her sculpture or any personal expressions about her career or life.<sup>19</sup>

Wood was the subject of few extended commentaries during her lifetime and since her death in 1966. Writing on Wood predominantly focuses on her sculptures of landscapes. The literature has not fully addressed her depictions of women or her involvement with arts advocacy in the public sphere.

Fellow artist and critic Bertram Brooker addressed Wood's sculpture in his article "Sculpture's New Mood" in *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*. This was one of the earliest publications to discuss Wood apart from newspapers chronicling the 1927 Winnipeg War Memorial controversy, which will be examined in the third chapter. Brooker was undoubtedly aware of the latter controversy because he was a resident of

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<sup>19</sup> Emanuel Otto Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

that city for some time before moving to Toronto. Praising her sculpture landscapes, Brooker situated Wood as a bridge between ancient and modern trends in art. He wrote, “[Wood’s] work has qualities that relate it at once to the most ancient and the most modern sculpture, so that she becomes a grand-daughter of the Sumerians and a sister of Brancusi.”<sup>20</sup> While Brooker lauded Wood’s sculpture, he could not resist presenting her as a grand-daughter or sister, which subtly implied she was a less distinctive creative individual than her male counterparts.

In his “World of Art” column for *Saturday Night* in June 1937 Graham McInnes quoted the views of W.G. Constable, art critic for the British Broadcasting Corporation. To mark the coronation of King George VI an unnamed sculpture by Wood was on display at the Royal Institution Galleries with other art of the British Empire. Constable described Wood as having made “an interesting attempt to parallel the aims and methods of the [Group of Seven] painters.” Her art was understood as a transformation of the Group of Seven’s methods into sculptural form, not as her own unique act in sculpture.<sup>21</sup>

The tendency to cast Wood in a subordinate role was even perpetuated by author and friend, Donat Marc LeBourdais, who presented Wood as the spouse of Emanuel Hahn in “Hahn and Wife, Sculptors” in a 1945 edition of *MacLean's* magazine. LeBourdais compared Hahn and Wood, referring to Hahn as the gregarious bohemian and Wood as the more formal and reserved of the couple. Despite omitting Wood’s name from the title, LeBourdais did acknowledge her creative and technical achievements, “She is best known for this form of [landscape] sculpture [...], a field in which she is pretty much alone.” As well, he noted her use of pure tin in *Northern Island* (1927): “tin

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<sup>20</sup> Bertram Brooker, *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929* (Toronto: MacMillan Company, 1929), 104.

<sup>21</sup> Graham McInnes, “World of Art,” *Saturday Night* (Toronto), 5 June 1937, np.

[...] until she tried it, [had never] been used for sculpture,” except as an ingredient in bronze casting.<sup>22</sup>

More recently, Wood’s sculpture has been the subject of a 1982 graduate research paper by Susan Hasbury, focusing on the artist’s production from 1925 to 1935. Her use of atypical materials such as pewter, cast tin and aluminum was noted as Hasbury explored the artist’s role in introducing geometric abstraction into Canadian sculpture, but she did not address the art and life of Wood in feminist terms.<sup>23</sup>

Natalie Luckyj explored Wood’s work in the 1983 exhibition *Visions and Victories: 10 Canadian Women Artists 1914-1945*, which was accompanied by a brief catalogue. Luckyj focused on Wood’s First World War monuments and her transition to socially conscious sculptures such as *Linda* (1932) but did not discuss the artwork at length.<sup>24</sup>

Victoria Baker’s 1997 catalogue *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood: Tradition and Innovation in Canadian Sculpture* is the principal text examining Wood’s life. The discussion introduces the artist and explains why she has received less critical attention since her death. Regarding Hahn and Wood, Baker writes, “Like many sculptors of their era, both artists have suffered from general neglect by art historians and from negative assessments by later critics and avant-garde sculptors of the 1950-60s who rejected the traditional modeling techniques and formal dependence on the human figure that were fundamental aspects of Hahn and Wood’s art.”<sup>25</sup> While Baker’s study

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<sup>22</sup> Donat Marc LeBourdais, “Hahn and Wife, Sculptors,” *MacLean’s Magazine*, 1 November 1945, 19-20, 42-45.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Hasbury, “The Sculpture of Elizabeth Wyn Wood” (Research essay, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1982).

<sup>24</sup> Natalie Luckyj, *Visions and Victories: 10 Canadian Women Artists 1914-1945* (London: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983), 85-86.

<sup>25</sup> Baker, 11.

introduced many of the challenges Wood faced, the author does not explore the specific difficulties Wood confronted as a female artist trying to establish herself as a professional in a patriarchal society. As well, Baker does not chronicle relevant issues in Wood's family life that influenced the sculpture.

In 2007 art historian John O'Brian discussed the work of Wood and Clark in relation to the Group of Seven in *Beyond Wilderness*. Examining Wood's sculpture in the chapter "Wild Art History," O'Brian was sceptical of the ideals of the Group of Seven with which the sculptor was implicated through her landscape representations. O'Brian recounted Wood's outrage and defence of the Group of Seven when Frank H. Underhill implied a connection between artists depicting the Canadian Shield and capitalist industrialization. O'Brian characterized Wood's position as a defence of the exploitation of Northern Ontario's natural resources by industrialists.<sup>26</sup>

Professor Rosemary Donegan's chapter in *Beyond Wilderness*, "Modernism and the Industrial Imagination," questioned the different perspectives proposed by Wood and Clark. Donegan suggested that their debate was one part of a much larger discourse in which artists were trying to understand new artistic approaches and the very nature of Canadian society during an economic collapse.<sup>27</sup> Donegan and O'Brian provide a recent perspective on the artists' dispute, studying their role in society, but neither writer examines the broader political debate in which the artists participated or the context of their works. Both essays are focused on the Group of Seven.

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<sup>26</sup> John O'Brian, "Wild Art History," *Beyond Wilderness* eds. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Donegan, "Modernism and the Industrial Imagination," *Beyond Wilderness* eds. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 146.

Other scholarship has examined the issues of women working in wartime industry or manufacturing. For example, Natalie Luckyj presented representations of such women in the aforementioned 1983 catalogue *Visions and Victories: 10 Canadian Women Artists 1914-1945*. In a short essay, Luckyj chronicled the key events for women artists from the First and Second World Wars and introduced questions of their acceptance and recognition during this period.<sup>28</sup>

Art historian Terresa McIntosh addressed several women war artists in Canada in her 1991 M.A. thesis, “Other Images of War: Canadian Women War Artists of the First and Second World Wars.” She studied women’s involvement in, and presentation of, the war on the battlefield and at home. McIntosh examined Clark’s war paintings but did not locate them within the larger political debates of the time. Wood’s sculpture of women during the war were not discussed, as Wood was not an official war artist.<sup>29</sup>

Documenting Clark and Wood’s contemporary art community, Anna Hudson’s 1997 doctoral thesis, “Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters, 1933-1950” explored the formation of the Canadian Group of Painters and their belief in the social value of art. Hudson looked at Clark’s best-known paintings, investigating the work within the broader artistic context of the time. Hudson aimed to shift attention to this previously neglected and misunderstood area in Canadian art history, a difficult task since the artists had no group manifesto or membership list. She chronicled the decline of socially engaged art as it became increasingly perceived as either sympathetic to

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<sup>28</sup> Luckyj, *Visions and Victories*.

<sup>29</sup> Terresa McIntosh, “Other Images of War: Canadian Women War Artists of the First and Second World War” (M.A. thesis, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1991).

Communism or as base political propaganda, facilitating the development of abstract painting which was not subject to these criticisms.<sup>30</sup>

Other contextual information can be found in the magazines *Canadian Forum* and *New Frontier*, which elucidate the contemporary context of Wood's and Clark's writing and art. *Forum: Canadian Life and Letters 1920-70* is a collection of key articles from *Canadian Forum* that summarizes the political debates that occurred, providing an important introduction to the political background, including various articles by Frank H. Underhill.

While Clark's career has received more critical attention than that of Wood, it is only from brief journals and surviving letters that historians have been able to assess how each woman lived and negotiated her life as a woman artist.

Wood's death in 1966, before the amplified interest in Canadian, and in particular women's art, has made it more difficult to understand her own perspective, in comparison with Clark, who was the subject of a retrospective exhibition, a film, and interviews into the 1980s. In the absence of extensive archival documents, particularly in Wood's case, the art and life of these artists has to be rebuilt through an understanding of each woman's contextual background in the 1930s and 1940s, through interviews with surviving family members, as well as by considering contemporary views of their artwork and certainly through the artwork itself.

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<sup>30</sup> Anna Hudson, "Art and Social Progress: The Toronto Community of Painters 1933-1950" (PhD diss., Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997).

## Methodology

Beginning with the feminist movement of the late 1960s, art historians Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews published a summary of the development of feminist scholarship in the Art History discipline in 1989.<sup>31</sup> They identified Linda Nochlin's landmark 1971 article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" as a pivotal point for feminist research.<sup>32</sup>

Nochlin proposed that traditional art historical analyses presented women artists in a marginalized position when compared to their contemporary male artists. Nochlin realized that "a feminist critique of the discipline is needed which can pierce cultural-ideological limitations, to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in regard to the question of women artists, but in the formulation of the crucial questions of the discipline as a whole." She challenged the very basis of art history by criticising the established canon of artists which was taught in universities and exhibited in galleries. By encouraging the study of artists through the examination of their own context and prejudiced institutional practises, Nochlin specifically aimed to understand the obstacles women faced in their daily lives.<sup>33</sup> Broadly speaking, Nochlin's work precipitated a more complex assessment of culture which studied how art is produced and evaluated, as well as an examination of the role of the artist in society to understand specifically how women artists lived. In the words of feminist art historian Griselda Pollock, Nochlin engaged "therefore much more than adding new materials—women and their history—to

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<sup>31</sup> Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History" *Art Bulletin* 69 (September 1987): 328.

<sup>32</sup> Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *The Feminist and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 229-233.

<sup>33</sup> Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

existing categories and methods. It has led to whole new ways of conceptualizing what it is we study and how we do it.”<sup>34</sup>

After Nochlin’s intervention, many art historians searched out institutional and familial challenges women artists faced in their lives and in their art practices. In particular, Pollock further questioned the formation of the art history canon in her 1988 *Vision and Difference* and the 1999 *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories*, characterizing it as a construct that tended to exclude women.<sup>35</sup> In *Differencing the Canon* Pollock reviewed different methodologies for understanding women’s art. The first strategy employed by feminist historians was to search out “great” female artists, the efficacy of which Nochlin questioned as early as 1971. Secondly, Pollock reassessed how methodology after Nochlin evolved into a much more sophisticated understanding of culture where feminist art historians sought to examine the totality of social relations influencing the creation and reception of women’s art. In particular criticism which denigrated women’s art in the past was re-evaluated, allowing for various aesthetic approaches to creativity in order to encompass the entirety of women’s artistic production. Pollock and Rozsika Parker have rejected traditionally masculine evaluative criticism in art history altogether, instead opting in the words of Gouma-Peterson and Mathews to analyse women’s “historical and ideological artistic position in relation to art, art production, and artistic ideology as a means to question the assumptions that underlie the traditional historical framework.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, “The Feminist Critique of Art History.”

Pollock outlined a third position where “feminism encounters the canon as a discursive strategy in the production and reproduction of sexual difference and its complex configurations with gender and related modes of power.” In other words, she asserted that this perspective is fundamentally different from previous interpretations because feminists have now demonstrated that the traditional canon was a masculine construct presented as a neutral universal expression of cultural achievement. In this sense, feminists insisted that the canon be interpreted as a gendered construct as well as a position that encourages gender differentiation in art historical discourse, which in turn reflects society through manifestations of masculine power and authority.<sup>37</sup>

Because women’s lives differ so radically from those of their male counterparts Barbara Caine has argued it is necessary to examine the biographies of women within a contemporary feminist framework. Her 1994 article “Feminist Biography and Feminist History” proposed that historical approaches to women’s lives should focus on the variety of women’s experiences instead of the “heroic victories” of great individuals “on the road to women’s emancipation.”<sup>38</sup> Caine argued that the history of great individuals is antithetical to the feminist project, which attempts to expose relationships of power in society. Furthermore, Caine believed that such an approach would demonstrate the various ways in which women asserted themselves in patriarchal society, what it meant to the women involved, and how their actions and beliefs related to broader socio-political ideas and objectives.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Caine, “Feminist Biography and Feminist History” *Women’s History Review* 3, 2 (1994): 247-261.

<sup>39</sup> Caine, 258.

As for the study of women artists in the context of Canadian art, early scholarship included the 1975 exhibition and catalogue by Natalie Luckyj and Dorothy Farr entitled *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada*. They chronicled a number of women artists and identified their principal exhibitions and memberships. Luckyj's work laid the foundation for feminist scholarship in Canadian art history through her publication of several texts, including among others, *Helen McNicoll: A Canadian Impressionist* and *Put on Her Mettle: The Life and Art of Jacobine Jones*.<sup>40</sup>

The first major survey of women artists in Canada was published by Maria Tippett in 1992. *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Canadian Art* attempted to rewrite the previous Canadian art history canon that neglected women artists. Dennis Reid's *Concise History of Canadian Painting*, for example, only illustrated the art of five women, whereas Tippett extensively chronicled Canadian women's art histories. She aimed to correct the past neglect of women, writing that "women artists have been ignored, forgotten and marginalized [for far too long]."<sup>41</sup> She explained, "*By a Lady* challenges the all-too-common view that women artists are second-rate, scaled-down versions of their male contemporaries, producing derivative and diluted examples of work in genres dominated by male excellence."<sup>42</sup> While Canadian galleries and art history increasingly included women artists as a result of feminist scholarship, Tippett's narrative was critiqued for not having explored the reasons for the neglect of women artists.

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<sup>40</sup> Natalie Luckyj, *Put on Her Mettle: The Life and Art of Jacobine Jones* (Manotick, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1999); *Helen McNicoll: A Canadian Impressionist* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Canadian Art* (Toronto: Viking Press, 1992), xi.

<sup>42</sup> Tippett, xiii

Tippett's research was widely acclaimed for bringing women's art to public attention, but the text was not without problems. Author and critic Susan Crean castigated Tippett in *Canadian Art* for her rudimentary understanding of feminism "devoid of philosophic depth." Crean noted that Tippett was "entirely uncritical of the broader cultural context in which her history unfolds." Focusing primarily on sculpture and painting by predominately middle to upper-class white women, Tippett "follows the well-established exclusionary view of art history."<sup>43</sup> Critic Joyce Millar shared similar concerns. Millar explained, by not identifying her selection criteria and privileging certain artists, Tippett "sustain[ed] the traditional hierarchies and continues the marginalization of women's art." Furthermore, Millar wrote there was not adequate space "to fully examine the effects of this marginalization on the artists and the works produced."<sup>44</sup>

In 2005, A.K. Prakash published *Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists*, intending to "raise awareness about the changing nature of the way we regard women artists."<sup>45</sup> He surveyed thirty-six women artists, noting the groups in which an individual participated, any awards received and a brief exhibition history.<sup>46</sup> Prakash divided the women in his study into two categories, "'Trailblazers,' [...] are those who changed Canadian art forever," and secondly, "'Masters of their Craft' [...] artists who created art with strength and authority, but did not seek to revolutionize Canadian art." Prakash has avoided some of the criticism Maria Tippett faced by focusing on a smaller

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<sup>43</sup> Susan Crean, "By A Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women," *Canadian Art* 10 (Spring 1993): 79.

<sup>44</sup> Joyce Millar, "By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women by Maria Tippett" *Woman's Art Journal* 16 (Autumn, 1995 - Winter, 1996): 47-49.

<sup>45</sup> A. K. Prakash, *Independent Spirits: Early Canadian Women Artists* (Toronto: Firefly Books, 2008), 19.

<sup>46</sup> Prakash, 20.

number of artists and by including an index of 564 professional women artists to assist in future research, although First Nations women were outside of his focus and are not included.<sup>47</sup>

More recent works have celebrated individual women artists or movements in which Canadian women were instrumental. For example, Barbara Meadowcroft's *Painting Friends: The Beaver Hall Women Painters* and Evelyn Walter's *The Women of Beaver Hall* examined ten women painters from Montreal who worked in the first half of the twentieth century. Substantial biographies continue to shed light on Canadian women artist's lives. Among other texts of particular relevance for this thesis are *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* by curator Cindy Richmond, and Laura Brandon's 2005 *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Canadian Painter*.<sup>48</sup> Both provide important contextual information about societal structures that influenced women's lives during the period under study. As well, Elspeth Cameron's *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* chronicles at length two women sculptors who were contemporaries of Wood.<sup>49</sup>

Further feminist studies have been undertaken by Verna Reid, whose 2008 *Women Between* examined the life and career of artists Aganetha Dyck and Mary Pratt, as well as authors Mary Meigs and Sharon Butala. Reid explored the context of their lives

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<sup>47</sup> Other surveys of Canadian women include Merna Forster's *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten* which traced the story of heroines in Canadian history—a practice which Linda Nochlin had discouraged. Nonetheless, Foster's intention is commendable as she has attempted to “celebrate the accomplishments of [...] women who made significant contributions to society.” Among the women featured are artists Mary Riter Hamilton, Helen McNicoll, and Emily Carr. Merna Forster, *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2004), 18.

<sup>48</sup> Cindy Richmond, ed., *The Art of Molly Lamb Bobak, a Retrospective* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993); Laura Brandon, *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Canadian Painter* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Elspeth Cameron, *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2007).

as “women between,” that is women of a generation in-between their mothers who remained at home and their daughters who are expected to seek employment outside of the home, albeit often retaining domestic responsibilities. Reid considered this group of women artists a “liminal” generation who stood on the threshold of dramatic changes within society brought about by the rise of feminism.<sup>50</sup> The liminality of the artists in Reid’s study is further nuanced between modernism and postmodernism as broad cultural and societal projects. Reid explained, “As artists, they occupy a liminal space between the modernist world of their mothers and the postmodern world of their female descendants, a world they inhabit but do not fully accept.”<sup>51</sup>

Reid quoted feminist scholar Carolyn Heilbrun, who reinterpreted the work of anthropologist Victor Turner and his scholarship on the liminal phase. Turner based his work on ethnographer Arnold van Gennep, who proposed the term liminal to describe the transitional period in cultural rites of passage. Turner elaborated on this idea and proposed that in a liminal phase, the participant is between the culture’s dominant classification, no longer part of the old the social order but not yet incorporated into a new classification. Heilbrun interpreted liminal as a way to understand women’s position in contemporary culture, as they negotiate the demands of familial responsibilities and managing a career.<sup>52</sup>

*Women Between* is central to this investigation as Clark and Wood, roughly a half a generation older than the women in Reid’s study, were in the vanguard of this liminal

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<sup>50</sup> Verna Reid, *Women Between: Construction of Self in the Work of Sharon Butala, Aganetha Dyck, Mary Meigs and Mary Pratt* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008), 19.

<sup>51</sup> Reid, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (London: Paul., 1960); Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Images and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Women’s Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988).

shift in women's lives. The two are examples of a generation of women who balanced a professional career and family life, whereas a generation earlier women often had to choose either to pursue family life or to follow their career goals.<sup>53</sup>

Reid's study also outlined how the art of Mary Pratt, in particular, valorized the domestic world, exposing the private sphere for public display and consideration. There is a rich history of feminist scholarship examining the concept of private and public spheres with regards to women's history and the feminist movement. Early feminist writing argued that women's universal oppression originated out of their forced confinement to domestic life, the private sphere. More recent analyses have confirmed that the relegation of women to the private sphere barred them from public debate until feminists initiated change.<sup>54</sup> The way that women negotiated the distinction between the private and public sphere is therefore a way to understand how feminism altered public discourse and changed women's lives and how feminism may continue to do so.

Further insights on the changing role of women in Canadian life and art have been offered by art historian Kristina Huneault. Her dissertation and related article in the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, "Heroes of a Different Sort: Gender and Patriotism in the War Workers of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle," provide a methodological precedent for this examination. Looking at the increase of factory-working women and their depiction during the First World War, Huneault unravelled the ideological structures of feminism and patriotism that enveloped the war work of Loring and Wyle. She

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<sup>53</sup> Scholars such as Susan Butlin have examined artists in the generation before Clark and Wood. Susan Butlin, *Florence Carlyle: Canadian Painters in the Age of Impressionism* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Women, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); Joan B. Landes, ed. *Feminism: The Public and the Private* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1-20.

examined the representation of women by women artists of the First World War period through the lens of contemporary feminist theory. In particular, Huneault quoted Teresa De Lauretis on gender and sexuality to support the idea that these artworks existed as a radical break from traditional gender conceptions in the representations of women.

Huneault has suggested that a contemporary interpretation would, at first glance, locate the artworks of Loring and Wyle as examples of early feminist critique of traditional norms. However, Huneault explained that the women war workers in the sculptures by Loring and Wyle were primarily viewed as symbols of patriotic support for the war effort and women's liberation was not discussed or even considered. While the "sculptures seem to indicate a new attitude [towards] women [... that outlook was] dissipated [and] co-opted, by the discourse of patriotism," concluded Huneault.<sup>55</sup> She paralleled the declining interest in these sculptures as the war ended, with the fact that woman workers were forced out of the workplace as soldiers returned from the war to search for employment.

Based on the insights of Nochlin and Pollock, this thesis seeks to characterize the careers of Clark and Wood as a negotiation of professional life, political actions, and their lives as women. As well, this study is nuanced by Caine's understanding of historical feminism and the variety of ways in which individual women contributed to a growing acceptance of women as professionals and as articulate participants in their chosen fields. This examination is further informed by Reid's understanding of the liminal generation of women who tried to reconcile the traditional responsibilities of women's domestic responsibilities with their own professional careers. Wood and Clark's lives are

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<sup>55</sup> Kristina Huneault, "Heroes of a Different Sort: Gender and Patriotism in the War Workers of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 15 (Summer 1993): 27-45.

considered as one aspect of twentieth century women's and feminist experience and their representations of women workers are understood as a fundamental part of the larger transition of women from the private arena into the public sphere.

In addition, this study considers Clark and Wood within the broader 1930s debate regarding the place of social commentary in art. Furthermore, while several scholars have examined the relationship of art, war, and the representation of women in the first half of the twentieth century, Clark and Wood's representations of women workers have not been discussed with regards to the broader women's movement and its contextual, theoretical and critical considerations. This examination applies feminist analysis to the scholarship on Clark and Wood, particularly their artistic production from the 1930s and 1940s.

Previously, the lives of Clark and Wood have not been examined as case-studies with respect to the varieties of women's experience within broader Canadian society. This thesis adds to the literature on Clark's painting and Wood's sculpture as well as to twentieth-century women's history and to the changing character of the Canadian cultural and social landscape.

### **Chapter Summary**

The first chapter analyses the public debate that took place between Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Paraskeva Clark in 1937 as one example of how that generation of women sought a more public role in the professional art community. The discussion will focus on all the participants, Bertram Brooker and Frank H. Underhill, as well as the major figures Wood and Clark. The discussion will consider how the debate on the nature

of art evolved into a broader discussion of how government could shape a vibrant national culture in the 1940s. Wood's involvement in the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Arts Reconstruction Committee will be examined as will Clark's commitment to a socially engaged art. The activities of both artists reflect a desire for recognition of their abilities and their perspectives as professional women artists.

Chapter Two examines Paraskeva Clark's paintings as well as her other political and social campaigns as a case study of the shift towards women's greater public presence in society. Clark's wartime paintings are considered to be indicative not only of her desire for a vibrant socially engaged art but also of her hope to become a fully modern artist. More specifically, her involvement in campaigns for Spanish and Russian Aid will be noted as will the relationship between Clark's artistic and political statements. Her deep-seated lack of confidence and her belief that women could not be great artists will be outlined as an expression of how Clark internalized societal prejudices against women.

The third chapter will focus on Elizabeth Wyn Wood and her decision to depict and include women in her monuments and sculpture. Her community and civic campaigns will also be examined as a contribution that underlined the abilities and strength of women. Finally, the criticism Wood faced as a woman at the Toronto Central Technical School and during the Winnipeg War Memorial competition and how this affected her later development as an artist will be chronicled. This chapter proposes that Wood's sculpture is an expression of her desire to claim a more public role as a professional woman artist in society.

## Chapter 1

### The Debate of 1937

In his work *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* Charles Hill has written that Canadian painting of that decade had “little overt political or social content.” Esther Trépanier has also noted that the overwhelming majority of artists in Montreal and Toronto were uncertain about producing social and political art, if not entirely opposed to the idea.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in connection with women’s art in the 1930s, Maria Tippett wrote that “there is little evidence of the social, political or economic turmoil that pervaded Canadian society at the time.”<sup>2</sup> Marilyn McKay likewise believes that few artists in Canada critiqued the global economic crisis because of the country’s relative conservatism and the comparatively small number of professional artists.<sup>3</sup> This lack of social content in the arts was suddenly overturned in 1937 when, frustrated by the country’s absence of political art, historian Frank H. Underhill harshly critiqued artist and author Bertram Brooker for ignoring the reality of the Depression. This was the beginning of a debate that led artists Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Paraskeva Clark to reach into the public realm, claiming space within the artistic community, and more broadly within Canadian society at large.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 21; Esther Trépanier, “Modernité et Conscience Sociale: La Critique d’Art Progressive des Années Trente” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 8, 1 (1984): 109.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Tippett, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Canadian Art* (Toronto: Viking Press, 1992), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn McKay, “Canadian Political Art in the 1930s: a Form of Distancing” *Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. Alejandro Anreus (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 71.

**Bertram Brooker's *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada***

The series of essays Bertram Brooker compiled in 1936 under the title *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* made only passing reference to the social climate of the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to political commentators at the time, he only briefly mentioned society's desperation. Brooker noted suffering of the period but insisted that art should not reflect this reality. "No sensitive man—whether artist or not—can remain unstirred by suffering on so gigantic a scale as grips the world at present. [...] The artist, like everybody else, should be prepared to do something about it. But, as artist, he should not argue about it. He should not preach about it. The moment he becomes a missionary he ceases to be an artist."<sup>5</sup> Brooker went on to opine about the role of the artist in society, "The usual view of art is that it follows life—copies life. And those artists are most revered who represent life as it is [... but] the poet does not deal with things as they are, but as *they might be!*" [his emphases].<sup>6</sup> In another section, Brooker explained, "The artist's value has often lain in the fact that he has been out of step with society."<sup>7</sup> Brooker believed that artists should be inspired by life—but not too intimately tied to realities such as the Depression.

Brooker condemned painters like Paraskeva Clark, whom he criticized as too left-wing and radical. Of Communist artists, he noted, "Today, quite naturally, therefore, a good many artists have swung violently to the Left. Many of them openly embraced the Communist faith—or lack of faith—however you choose to look at it. And among fanatical Communists an artist who does not use his gifts to further the cause of the

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<sup>4</sup> Born in 1888 near London, England, Brooker and his family immigrated to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba in 1905. He held various positions as a journalist before becoming editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He moved to Toronto in 1921 to serve as editor of the magazine *Marketing*.

<sup>5</sup> Bertram Brooker, ed., *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1936), xxii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

revolution is stigmatized as a sort of traitor to his generation.”<sup>8</sup> Brooker did not illustrate any overtly political or social artworks, but he did reproduce Clark’s *Still Life* (c. 1936) [Figure 1.1] and Wood’s *Woman Holding Skein* (1934-35) [Fig. 1.2]. Notwithstanding Brooker’s personal views, he did include Graham McInnes’s “Thoughts on Canadian Art” (reproduced from the magazine *Saturday Night*) in which McInnes recognized Clark as an “artist of the first rank.”<sup>9</sup>

The 1936 *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* was a sequel to Brooker’s previous *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* from 1928-1929. The earlier text was intended as an inaugural yearly publication exploring Canadian painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, fiction and poetry. It featured commentaries written by artists and others engaged in their respective fields, and included illustrations and short stories. The second volume was delayed for almost a decade because of the 1929 stock market crash, the subsequent Depression, and what Brooker called a lack of “material of outstanding merit.”<sup>10</sup>

As an artist, Brooker had already made his own contributions to the art world which had little to do with social commentary. In Toronto, just after the ground breaking Société Anonyme exhibition in 1927, Lawren Harris had encouraged Brooker to explore painting with a greater degree of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> The following year Brooker surprised and shocked the city with an exhibition of abstract art.<sup>12</sup> Both men were influenced by journalist Fred Housser’s interest in theosophy, a philosophy and religious belief

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Graham McInnes, “Thoughts on Canadian Art,” Brooker, ed. *Yearbook of the Arts* (1936), 222-227.

<sup>10</sup> Brooker, *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (1936), vii.

<sup>11</sup> Larry Pfaff, “Lawren Harris and the International Exhibition of Modern Art: rectifications to the Toronto catalogue (1927), and some critical comments,” *RACAR* 11, 1-2 (1984): 79-96.

<sup>12</sup> Roald Nasgaard, *Abstract Painting in Canada* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2007), 22.

encouraging the mix of art and spirituality. Through books and magazines, Harris also introduced Brooker to the work of abstract artist and fellow theosophist Wassily Kandinsky, who remained a significant influence in Brooker's painting.<sup>13</sup>

By the late 1930s, Brooker, influenced by theosophy, had developed a complex understanding of the purpose of art. For example in the 1936 *Yearbook* he wrote, "The artist is concerned with the way God runs the universe, and not with the way man proposes to run it [...] the proper material of art—as distinct from religion—is the recognition on the part of man that perfection involves an endless, day-to-day struggle upward out of what seems to us like imperfection [...] The greatest need of today is that the function and capacity of the soul should be made known again, through an awakening of the sense of harmony between man and the universe."<sup>14</sup> For Brooker, as Victoria Evans has written, "the artist's role was still primarily a vatic one, translating divine inspiration into a symbolic code that rendered God's celestial idiom intelligible on earth."<sup>15</sup> Likewise curator Ann Davis agreed that Brooker's belief in the interdependence of art and higher mystical ideals remained continuous throughout his painting career.<sup>16</sup> The goal of art in Brooker's view was to unite reality and the ideal with an uplifting mystical or spiritual message, not an exposition of the troubles of humankind as proposed by painters like Clark.<sup>17</sup>

Frank Underhill's review of Brooker's 1936 *Yearbook of the Arts* appeared in the 26 December 1936 edition of *Canadian Forum*. Underhill compared the 1929 and 1936

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<sup>13</sup> Dennis Reid, *Bertram Brooker 1888-1955* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1973), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Brooker, "Art and Society," *Yearbook of the Arts* (1936), vii.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Evans, "Bertram Brooker's Theory of Art as Evinced in his "The Seven Arts" Columns and Early Abstractions," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 9, 1 (1986): 28-44.

<sup>16</sup> Ann Davis, *Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 152.

<sup>17</sup> Evans, 35.

editions. “The first yearbook [...] fulfilled its purpose as a yearbook almost perfectly. It is full of the spirit of 1929. There is a challenge in the writing, the book itself is a manifesto.” He went on to observe, “Alas, as we look back, we can see that it was not so much Canadian art, actual or potential, which excited them in that intoxicating year of 1929, it was the [economic] boom.” Underhill believed that the 1929 text correctly represented the optimism and excitement of the 1920s but he chastised the artists and Brooker in particular for not representing the realities of 1936. “What has been the impact of the world-shaking events upon Canadian artists? I cannot find any evidence in this [second] volume. [...] There is not much sign that Canadian artists have been moved by the phenomenon of a civilization dissolving before their eyes.”<sup>18</sup>

Underhill believed that Brooker’s selection was not only socially negligent but also intentionally ideological. Underhill charged that the text promoted capitalist principles tied to the exploitation of natural resources implicit in its promotion of landscape artists. In short, Underhill’s commentary was a direct jab at the Group of Seven’s iconic images of wilderness which had dominated Canadian art for almost twenty years.<sup>19</sup> Underhill called the Group’s preoccupation with landscape a “rustic rumination,” which he felt was becoming increasingly irrelevant. Despite the criticism, however, Underhill recommended Brooker’s *Yearbook* for “every thinking Canadian.”<sup>20</sup>

Critical of monopoly capitalism, Underhill had founded the League for Social Reconstruction with law professor F.R. Scott in 1931. This organization sought increased

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<sup>18</sup> Frank H. Underhill, “The Season’s New Books,” *Canadian Forum* 16 (December 1936): 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

parliamentary action to solve social problems and inequality.<sup>21</sup> Both men then contributed to the Regina Manifesto and the founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in Calgary in 1932. The CCF aimed to unite and represent farmers, trade-unionists, intellectuals and other political leftists.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1930s Underhill worked as an editor and contributor to *Canadian Forum*. The *Forum* had originated as a University of Toronto student paper, the *Rebel*, founded near the end of the First World War. A group of students and young professors including Barker Fairley and Sam Hooke—all of whom were either born or educated in England—saw the *Forum* as a Canadian equivalent to the British *New Statesman*, a journal of opinion with political commentary and satire. The League for Social Reconstruction bought the *Forum* in 1936 from broadcaster and socialist Graham Spry, giving Underhill a great degree of editorial freedom in the magazine.<sup>23</sup> Throughout his political advocacy, Underhill continued to work as an academic, first at the University of Regina, then at the University of Toronto and finally at Carleton University later in life. In part, Underhill was familiar with Canadian art through his intellectual and socialist friends, who included artists, in particular Marian Dale, who had married F. R. Scott in 1928.<sup>24</sup>

Margaret Davidson has noted that the *Canadian Forum* had a complex history with the Group of Seven. At first in the 1920s, editors at the *Forum* were excited about the mix of nationalism and modernism through landscape representation, offering both encouragement and criticism and giving significant coverage to the Group's exhibitions.

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<sup>21</sup> Michiel Horn, *League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), vii-ix.

<sup>22</sup> Horn, vii-ix.

<sup>23</sup> William John Fenrick, "The Intellectual as Activist: A Study of the Canadian Forum in the Middle 1930s" (M.A. research paper, Ottawa: Carleton University, 1967), 1-10.

<sup>24</sup> Esther Trépanier, *Marian Dale Scott: Pionnière de l'art moderne* (Québec: Musée du Québec, 2000), 65.

Until his death in 1932, Group member J. E. H. MacDonald served as an editor, poet, and illustrator, while A. Y. Jackson occasionally contributed articles. Founder Barker Fairley secured the connection with the Group of Seven when he invited Thoreau MacDonald, son of Group of Seven member J.E.H. MacDonald, to illustrate and write articles when the publication was still known as the *Rebel*.<sup>25</sup> Davidson has suggested that the *Forum* was interested in creating “a flourishing artistic tradition in Canada” and was therefore excited by the painters’ goals. As the Group gained popularity, the artists also served the interests of the *Forum*, a sort of mutual dependency.<sup>26</sup> However, once the Group became established in the mid 1920s, the *Forum* also served as a place to discuss what some writers felt was the Group’s increasing conventionalism and lack of life.<sup>27</sup> Underhill’s critique of Brooker’s *Yearbook* was an extension of the growing criticism of the Group of Seven’s legacy in the *Canadian Forum*.

In February 1937 *Canadian Forum* printed Elizabeth Wyn Wood’s “Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield” in response to Underhill’s review. In the article Wood voiced her outrage at the suggestion that landscape painting was linked to railway profiteering and environmental exploitation by corporations such as International Nickel. In her view Underhill had dirtied the image of landscape artists, who were working in the interests of the nation.<sup>28</sup> Wood wanted Canadian artists to search for “spiritual stimulation and nourishment” from the natural world.<sup>29</sup> She included a list of past Canadian artists who she thought exemplified this excellence in landscape representation: artists like Cornelius

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<sup>25</sup> Hilda Kirkwood, “Remembering the Beginning: Barker Fairley on the Origins of the Forum,” *The Canadian Forum* 66 (January 1987): 6-9.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret F. R. Davidson, “A New Approach to the Group of Seven,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 4 (November 1969): 9-16.

<sup>27</sup> Davidson, 15.

<sup>28</sup> John O’Brian, “Wild Art History,” *Beyond Wilderness* eds. John O’Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>29</sup> O’Brian, 33.

Krieghoff and Paul Kane—albeit ignoring more modern artists like David Milne. She responded to Underhill with an *ad hominem* attack, claiming that he was like “a little boy who has taken the cat to the boiler room to tie a length of lead pipe to its tail.” Wood felt the concerns of society were irrelevant for the Canadian artist. She explained, “[the Canadian artist] has always had some doubt about the importance of civilization. He has only partly accepted it. He has walked off into the hinterland at every opportunity. [...] He has therefore leaned very heavily upon the wilderness for spiritual stimulation and nourishment, a fact Mr. Underhill has noted with scorn.”<sup>30</sup>

Wood’s decision to write the article must have been partly inspired by her close friendship with Brooker. Despite her reserved nature, she would have felt an obligation to defend him and their shared values. Hahn and Wood were very close to the Brookers. For example, Brooker painted a portrait of Wood in the mid-1930s.<sup>31</sup> As well, Hahn and Wood owned a second painting by him. A year after the debate, Brooker even purchased Wood’s sculpture *Linda* and donated it to the Winnipeg Art Gallery, a display of gratitude for her support and friendship.<sup>32</sup>

Because of the views Wood outlined in this article, she has become known as more of a traditionalist, supporting the *status quo* of the Group of Seven. She was perceived by some to be hostile to changing perceptions of art and society.<sup>33</sup> However, this is not a fair criticism. She endorsed art as an expression of creativity and individuality.<sup>34</sup> Both Wood and her husband Emanuel Hahn were sceptical of arguments

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” *Canadian Forum* 16 (February 1937): 13.

<sup>31</sup> Qennefer Browne (daughter of Elizabeth Wyn Wood) interviewed by the author, Orillia, Ontario, 30 January 2010.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Rosemary Donegan, “Modernism and the Industrial Imagination,” *Beyond Wilderness*, 146.

<sup>34</sup> Baker, 70-71.

from colleagues who promoted the involvement of artists in the social and political causes of the day.

According to curator Victoria Baker, Wood wanted to keep her independence and artistic freedom, believing that art should not become political propaganda.<sup>35</sup> As art historian Rosemary Donegan has recently noted, “Within such arguments about landscape—in the taunts, the stridency, and the anti-communist rhetoric—there [was] an egalitarian aspiration and commitment to the experience of Canadian modernity.” Wood praised “Canada’s ‘measure of classlessness and co-operation’” and as Donegan summarizes, “call[ed] for a new art of modernity, one that [included] culture and democracy”<sup>36</sup> Wood was not advocating an apolitical and purely aesthetic point of view. She argued against art used as propaganda. Wood believed art should inspire the Canadian public, writing, “here [...] is the ground where art might conceivably function socially, as art for all, for the first time in the history of the world, not for the propagation of an ideology but itself a treasure, an enrichment of life.”<sup>37</sup> Wood concluded by proposing “the long stride, the far vision, the free spirit,” to enliven the Canadian artist and public to appreciate artistic expression as a fully modern, democratic and independent enterprise.

Qennefer Browne, the daughter of Wood, remembers her mother remaining very opposed to communism from the 1930s into the post-war period. Qennefer believes that Wood saw communism as deceiving many people who had become disillusioned with capitalism because of the Depression. Qennefer also remembers reading drafts of letters in which her mother argued that Soviet communism was entirely “antithetical to the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Donegan, 146.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, “Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” 14.

individual—especially the creative individual.” Qennefer believes that her mother recognized that under communism, the abilities of artists went only to support the state and that all creative autonomy was lost. In this sense, Wood’s opposition to communism was only partly based on economic or political factors, but more on what she perceived as the loss of individuality inherent in Soviet communism.<sup>38</sup>

Reflecting on Wood’s article in 2007, art historian John O’Brian wrote, “By making explicit the relationship between the industrialization of the Precambrian Shield and the visual representations produced by the Group of Seven and other landscape artists, including Wood herself, Underhill put into doubt the claims made for the symbolic purity and mysticism of their work.”<sup>39</sup> O’Brian continued that in this case, “the abused cat in this scenario was the artist [Wood], of course, and the boiler-room the place of industrial manufacturing and financial deal-making where no self-respecting artist ought to be found.”<sup>40</sup>

Wood’s argument also stemmed from her affinities with the Group of Seven. The growing popularity of the Group of Seven occurred at the same time as Wood’s graduation from the Ontario College of Art in 1924. During her time at the Ontario College of Art, Wood studied under Arthur Lismer and J.E.H. MacDonald, both of whom instilled an early appreciation of landscape representation.<sup>41</sup> As well, Franklin Carmichael of the Group was a fellow Orillia native. The Group of Seven’s message of art combined with burgeoning Canadian nationalism was the predominant point of view

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<sup>38</sup> Qennefer Browne (daughter of Elizabeth Wyn Wood) interviewed by the author, Orillia, Ontario, 30 January 2010.

<sup>39</sup> O’Brian, *Beyond Wilderness*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> O’Brian, 33.

<sup>41</sup> Baker, 42-43.

in Toronto's art community in the 1920s.<sup>42</sup> A Y. Jackson considered that art based on geography would grow naturally into an expression of a unique national identity.<sup>43</sup> Other influences must have directed her inclination towards landscape depiction, such as memories from her childhood spent at her family's island cottage before her father's early death.<sup>44</sup>

Wood's *Northern Island* (1927) [Fig. 1.3] and *Passing Rain* (1928) [Fig. 1.4] both date from the height of the Group of Seven's fame and mark Wood's emergence as a professional sculptor. In feminist terms, Wood's landscape sculpture may have been a strategy to gain acceptance in a male-dominated field, as landscape was already widely acclaimed. Perhaps Wood believed it would be easier to establish herself by adopting popular aesthetic trends with her sculpture. However, she did not simply copy the Group's aesthetics, because transforming landscape into sculpture was an original creative act. Her article was a defence of these sculptures and her own accomplishment, the work for which she is best remembered today. Wood's training, her community of friends, the predominant contemporary discourse in Toronto and her own artwork motivated her to advocate for and defend landscape art.

The debate took another twist in 1937 when Paraskeva Clark responded to Wood's remarks in *New Frontier: Canadian Literature and Social Critics*. This short-lived periodical was founded, according to Canadian literature professor Candida Rifkina, because of a certain "leftist writer's dissatisfaction with the traditional verse of *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, but also with the radical Communism of *Masses* and the 'pale pink'

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Vipond, "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 7,1 (1980): 32-52.

<sup>43</sup> Hill, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Baker, 38.

reformist socialism of *Canadian Forum*.”<sup>45</sup> At the time Clark’s English writing abilities were still developing, leading Clark to seek the assistance of art critic and journalist Graham McInnes. Clark recalled in a 1973 interview with Charles Hill that someone asked her to critique Wood’s article because of her political views. Although she does not name that individual, it was probably McInnes since he was politically aware and active in literary circles.<sup>46</sup>

Clark was an obvious choice for this assignment because she felt politically engaged. Her Russian origin and the fact that she lived through the Bolshevik Revolution meant that her views were strongly held and widely known in her social circle. As well, her husband, Philip, bought Russian books for Paraskeva from New York City when he was away on business trips.<sup>47</sup> Clark also recalled that the idea of working towards a more political art came to her after viewing posters in support of Russia’s war effort.<sup>48</sup>

Clark was outraged by Wood’s commentary. Her response accused Wood of “careless thinking” and an “absolutely unexpected lack of insight.”<sup>49</sup> In her article Clark urged social commentary in the arts, writing, “For too long our artists have had their eyes resolutely fixed in the Pre-Cambrian Shield with its rocks and lakes and spruce [...] Canadian painters have plenty to paint in their very back yard. In metropolitan Canada lies a fertile field for the artists of today.”<sup>50</sup> Clark’s call to action in the article is often summarized by her conclusion that “It’s time to come down from your ivory tower, to

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<sup>45</sup> Candida Rifkina, *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 89.

<sup>46</sup> Paraskeva Clark, interview by Charles C. Hill, 18 October 1973, transcript, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* Exhibition Records, National Gallery of Canada Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Paraskeva Clarke [*sic*] and Graham McInnes, “Come out from Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” *New Frontier* 1 (April 1937): 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

come out from behind your pre-Cambrian Shield and dirty your gown in the mud and sweat of conflict.”<sup>51</sup>

In her commentary, Clark defined the role of the artist in society. “Paint the raw, sappy life that moves ceaselessly about you, paint portraits of your own Canadian leaders, depict happy dreams for your Canadian souls [...] Think of yourself as a human being and you cannot help feeling the reality of life around you, and becoming impregnated with it.” Contrasting sharply with Brooker, Clark viewed the apolitical as a dead-end for Canadian art, believing that anything that did not reflect humanity’s struggles was irrelevant to life.<sup>52</sup>

Clark’s article was not her last rebuke of Wood’s position. Painted over several months in 1937, *Petroushka* [Fig. 1.5] is a continuation of the ideas she formulated in the article. The painting symbolically mixes images from Clark’s childhood and the contemporary political state of affairs. The center of the painting depicts a red puppet theatre, which presents a real confrontation between the Chicago police force and striking steel workers. On the stage a policeman beats a worker who is lifelessly bent over the stage. To the right of this pair, a capitalist holds his money bags and encourages the policeman to beat the worker. The foreground is filled with spectators, some of whom are outraged, while other regard the scene ambivalently or do not watch at all. Writer Jane Lind considered that Clark had successfully proved Wood wrong with this painting: “one Canadian artist, at least, did have the ‘appetite’ for depicting ‘the academic capitalist with his paunch and silk hat.’”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jane Lind, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2009), 113.

However, Clark was not just proving Wood incorrect in *Petroushka*, she was also taking a jab. Clark included Wood in the painting, as the woman on the upper left-hand side in a muted green and yellow dress. While Clark never explicitly said who was depicted in the painting, Wood's daughter Qennefer Browne, recognized her mother immediately as the woman on the upper left-hand side when she first viewed the painting in the 1980s. She explained, "I realized it was a very sardonic gesture, even a caricature of my mother."<sup>54</sup>

Qennefer bases this interpretation on a painting of Wood executed in the mid-1930s by Bertram Brooker and given to the Hahns, probably in exchange for a sculpture. Qennefer remembers that the pose of the head, the dark hair in "ballerina" hairstyle, and the dress in Brooker's painting was very similar to the woman in *Petroushka*, who even wears Wood's favourite colour, a light muted "chartreuse" green. Unfortunately the Brooker painting was stolen some years after her mother's death, leaving Qennefer on her own to support this perspective. As well, Qennefer has suggested that the woman with her baby is the only onlooker who is not outraged or else indifferent like the other citizens, but rather it is as if the woman approves and feels the abuse is suitable for her child's amusement.<sup>55</sup>

Lind believed this woman to be Paraskeva herself, carrying her son Clive, with his older brother Ben peeking out behind the stage.<sup>56</sup> However Clark's son Clive also disagreed with Lind's interpretation. He said, "I always had my doubts, because Mother never did her hair like [the women in the green dress]. It was always hanging more

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<sup>54</sup> Qennefer Browne interview.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Lind, 112-113.

loosely.”<sup>57</sup> As well, when the painting was completed, Clive was four years old—considerably older than the infant the woman is holding. Qennefer was born in 1937, so she would have been the appropriate age for the infant in *Petroushka*. She also notes that childhood photographs of herself resemble the robust baby.

Clark’s radicalism, rooted in her Russian background, was encouraged through her contact with activist and physician Norman Bethune and her friendships with fellow artists Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Marian Scott, who were equally committed to such views in the 1930s. Clark had been exposed to leftist causes since her adolescence in the Russian Revolution, when she became a full-time student at Petrograd’s Free Studios (originally the Russian Imperial Academy of Art in Saint Petersburg). Her education gave her the opportunity to work in theatre design, where she met her first husband, and through his parents she was able to move to Paris after his premature death.

Although Clark had left-leaning friends in Canada, there is no evidence that she had active political affiliations before meeting Norman Bethune in 1936.<sup>58</sup> Curator Mary MacLachlan noted that “it is unlikely that her personal experience of those years [in Russia] would have left her with any clear idea of the ideological significance of those events. It was only after coming to Canada, when she had the opportunity and leisure to think, that she was in a position to put together her life, her origin and experiences in the light of her new environment.”<sup>59</sup> Clark was at times less clear on when and how long she was interested in politics. She recalled in a 1973 interview, “Naturally, fundamentally I was Russian red without being trained politically. With my soul and my mind, and all the

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<sup>57</sup> Clive and Mary Clark (son and daughter-in-law of Paraskeva Clark) interviewed by the author, Toronto, Ontario, 31 January 2010.

<sup>58</sup> MacLachlan, 23.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

attitude. Because you see, all my childhood, more than childhood—I was almost twenty-four when I left Leningrad. I just belonged there and I never changed.”<sup>60</sup> Clark did not specifically elaborate on her political views, but it is likely that she supported the Marxist-Leninist ideals of the early communist period in Russia.

Clark’s relationship with Bethune led her into an active stance on the Spanish Civil War, when fighting started four months after their first meeting. Shortly after the beginning of the conflict, Clark joined the Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. The organization was dedicated to fundraising for medical supplies and to aid the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion of Canadian volunteers. They were fighting with the democratically-elected Republicans against a military coup d’état that was supported by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.<sup>61</sup> In October 1936 Bethune left his career at a Montreal hospital in order to set up a mobile blood transfusion network for the wounded in Spain. Clark and Bethune kept in touch during this period, and Clark even painted the gifts he mailed her in *Presents from Madrid* (1937).

Nourishing Clark’s leftist views, Bethune encouraged the expression of her political values, and in 1937 the two shared a friendship and romantic affair. At this time Clark’s commitment to communism strengthened, not only because of Bethune’s influence but also with the support of her friends MacLeod and Scott. Natalie Luckyj has observed that as an amateur painter himself, “Bethune’s fundamental belief in the power of the artist to transform society seemed to have rekindled in Clark memories of

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<sup>60</sup> Clark, interview by Hill.

<sup>61</sup> Lind, *Perfect Red*, 98-104.

revolutionary ferment from her student days in St. Petersburg [Petrograd] and renewed her sense of personal agency in the public sphere.”<sup>62</sup>

Bethune and Clark shared similar views on art. In 1937 Clark corresponded with Bethune in Spain and read about his struggles to run a medical clinic for the wounded soldiers and civilians.<sup>63</sup> During his time in Spain, he wrote:

The function of the artist is to disturb. His duty is to arouse the sleepers, to shake the complacent pillars of the world. He reminds the world of its dark ancestry, shows the world its present, and points the way to its new birth. He is at once the product and preceptor of his time. After his passage we are troubled and made unsure of our too-easily-accepted realities. [...] In a world terrified of change, he preaches revolution—the principal of life. He is an agitator, a disturber of the peace—quick, impatient, positive, restless and disquieting. He is the creative spirit working in the soul of man.<sup>64</sup>

Bethune’s call for artists to preach revolution corresponds to Clark’s beliefs, suggesting he encouraged Clark’s view on art in society.

Clark’s position also reveals the influence of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, her teacher at the Petrograd Academy. Petrov-Vodkin wrote, “In art, there is a fundamental law for the artist: what you do not need, nobody else will need. If your work does not make you better; it will have no power to make any one else better; for the artist has no other social problem than the problem of improving humanity.”<sup>65</sup> Clark studied with Petrov-Vodkin after the 1917 Russian revolution, when the Imperial Fine Arts Academy reopened as the “Free Studios.” Under the new regime classes were free, including a weekly student allowance.<sup>66</sup> Clark enrolled full-time. Although there were no official programs of study

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<sup>62</sup> Natalie Luckyj, “‘Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield’: The Politics of Memory and Identity in the Art of Paraskeva Clark,” *The Social and the Real*, 226.

<sup>63</sup> MacLachlan, 26.

<sup>64</sup> MacLachlan, 26 quotes Roderick Stewart, *The Mind of Norman Bethune*, (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company 1977), 72.

<sup>65</sup> MacLachlan, 26.

<sup>66</sup> MacLachlan, 11.

and no degrees or diplomas were granted, students came and left as they pleased. Clark stayed from 1918 to 1921.<sup>67</sup>

Like Clark, Pegi Nicol MacLeod became politically involved during her time in Montreal in the early 1930s, and remained interested in politics throughout her life. Art historian Laura Brandon accurately suggests that, “[MacLeod] had little aptitude for political theory, but a natural sympathy for the underprivileged made her responsive to any whiff of injustice or exploitation.”<sup>68</sup> In Montreal, MacLeod’s values were influenced by her friend and artist Marian Dale Scott, who was married to F. R. Scott, co-founder with Frank Underhill of the League for Social Reconstruction. There was a larger community of socially aware artists in Montreal. For example, communist painter Fritz Brandtner held an exhibition in support of the Canadian League Against War and Fascism in the early 1930s and shortly afterwards made friends with Norman Bethune. In 1936 the two men established a Children’s Art Centre, which gave underprivileged children access to painting and drawing. After Bethune left Montreal, Marian Scott continued the centre with Brandtner.<sup>69</sup> As well, Communist and painter Fred Taylor and the Scotts were friends, even living on the same street in Montreal.

In 1934, Pegi Nicol MacLeod moved to Toronto where she befriended Clark. The following year, MacLeod began to illustrate and write articles in the *Canadian Forum*, where in time she became the art editor. MacLeod’s work with the *Forum* kept her in touch with Underhill, who provided a link back to her friends, the Scotts, in Montreal.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Paraskeva Clark “Memo for File of Mrs. Clark, excerpt from letter from Mrs. Clark to Mr. McCurry dated 3 June 1944.” Paraskeva Clark, clippings file, National Gallery of Canada Library, Ottawa.

<sup>68</sup> Laura Brandon, *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nicol MacLeod* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 96.

<sup>69</sup> Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 213.

<sup>70</sup> Brandon, 96.

When Bethune visited Toronto in 1936, MacLeod phoned Clark and asked if they could visit the Clark home, along with Fritz Brandtner.<sup>71</sup> Although it was a brief visit and Bethune returned to Montreal shortly afterwards, Clark and Bethune wrote to each other, until Bethune visited again in 1937. Clark had fairly regular contact with MacLeod in Toronto, and occasionally was visited by Marian Scott when she came to Toronto.

Although she emigrated, the Russian revolution was generally a stimulus for Clark, and naturally fostered her support for socialist causes. Bethune's influence rekindled Clark's socialist beliefs and her Russian past, and finally her friendship with MacLeod and Scott provided a supportive community to cultivate her political ideas.

Despite the paucity of political activists in the Toronto arts community, Clark and her friends were not the only women in support of leftist politics, as some Canadian women did champion communism or other socialist causes as one way to attain gender and class equality. Members of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) viewed capitalism as the primary cause of women's oppression. In 1922, the CPC established a Women's Department led by Florence Custance in Toronto. Custance revived the Women's Labour Leagues (WLL), originally founded by supporters of socialism before the First World War, and reorganized them into the Canadian Federation of Women's Labour Leagues.

The Women's Division of the CPC continued into the 1930s, when the primary goal was to organize wage-earning women, primarily in the garment industry. The local groups of the WLL, whose members were predominately housewives, raised funds for the CPC, striking workers, and legal defence for trade unionists.<sup>72</sup> The WLL also encouraged women to buy products made by a unionized workforce, to reduce school

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<sup>71</sup> Clark, interview by Hill.

<sup>72</sup> Light and Pierson, 347.

fees and supply free textbooks and to end children's "militaristic education."<sup>73</sup> Articles in *The Woman Worker* speculated on what would happen in a Communist future where women's work could be socialized.<sup>74</sup> Another organization, the Popular Front, gathered women of differing socialist and communist views into a loose partnership based on social reform.<sup>75</sup>

In the late 1930s, the Housewives Consumers Association aimed to appeal to the working class family. It promoted ways to ease housework, intending to allow more women to take part in political actions.<sup>76</sup> For example, in the Popular Front's paper, the *Daily Clarion*, the association provided household hints and recipes, not to relegate women to the kitchen but to help women save time and "[fight] for a higher standard of living."<sup>77</sup>

While the Communist Party of Canada advocated change through outright revolution, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) founded in 1932 by socialist and other leftists like Scott and Underhill was critical of capitalism but believed gradual change was possible through parliamentary politics. Even in leftist politics, political work was still divided along gender lines, with women rarely working as union organizers, party theoreticians or spokespersons.<sup>78</sup> However, the CCF was generally accessible to women, with Thérèse Casgrain becoming national vice-president in 1948, the first woman to hold a high position in a national political party. Although the CCF

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<sup>73</sup> Joan Sangster, "Consumer Issues," *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna R. McLean, and Kate O'Rourke (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 242.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 241-42; Light and Pierson, 347.

<sup>75</sup> Sangster, "Consumer Issues," 242.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, "Consumer Issues," 243 quotes *Daily Clarion*, 7 November 1936.

<sup>78</sup> Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 8.

was sympathetic to women's issues such as birth control, equal pay and price controls for basic goods the party's primary goal was to attract workers and farmers, and some women still felt their concerns were undervalued.<sup>79</sup>

In order to represent issues important for women, leftist organizations were established to articulate these concerns. For example, the Canadian League against War and Fascism was organized by members of the CPC and CCF for several reasons, which included a desire to expose the anti-feminism of fascism that was gaining strength around the world. Union organizer Annie Buller warned that fascism meant women would be removed from the workplace and forced into the kitchen to "rank as man's slave."<sup>80</sup>

Nothing in Clark's archive or public statements suggests that she was involved with these organizations, which raises the question why she did not join. Her career as an artist, familial duties, and her other activities such as lectures on Russian art may have made her life too hectic to join official Canadian political organizations. Or perhaps she felt that joining a socialist or communist party would attract police attention or threaten her husband's career advancement with the provincial government. In this respect, Clark seems to have been very selective. Her focus was art, and she promoted socialist views through her art and art writing. Clark's call for revolution in "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield" remains distinctive in Canadian art, and more broadly among the women's leftist movements, as women increasingly sought an equal forum to express their views.

Despite Clark and Wood's different perspectives, their relationship may not have changed significantly as a result of their participation in this debate. In the 1970s Clark

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Light and Pierson, 348.

claimed she was “great friends” with both Wood and Hahn, explaining that “we sort of still carried on [after the dispute].”<sup>81</sup> A year following the debate Clark painted *On Hahn’s Island* based on sketches made during a visit to an island Hahn owned in the Pickerel River. Clark particularly recalled this painting and the train trip to Parry Sound because a man persistently and irritatingly tried to make advances towards her, claiming she looked just like the actress Greta Garbo.<sup>82</sup> Hahn had bought the island in 1924 and built the cabin for yearly summer vacations and he and Wood often invited other artists to visit.<sup>83</sup> Clive Clark remembers that his mother could have disagreements with people but “it didn’t mean that she wouldn’t be friendly with them afterwards.” Clive also suspects that although his mother might have viewed their works as somewhat academic or dry, she would have appreciated Hahn’s and Wood’s professionalism.<sup>84</sup>

### **1941 Kingston Conference**

The 1937 debate between Wood and Clark was not the end of the discussion. The 1930s exploration of new artistic ideas continued while the present and future goals of Canadian society were frequently discussed.<sup>85</sup> These debates exploring the nature of art came to the fore at the Kingston Conference of 1941, where artists from across the country were invited to participate and to share their views. Artist André Biéler originally suggested the conference of Canadian artists at Queen’s University to discuss the roles of the artist in society, precisely the concern raised four years earlier in the debate between Clark and Wood.

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<sup>81</sup> Clark, interview by Hill.

<sup>82</sup> Clive and Mary Clark, interview.

<sup>83</sup> Qennefer Browne, interview.

<sup>84</sup> Clive and Mary Clark, interview.

<sup>85</sup> Rosemary Donegan, “Modernism and the Industrial Imagination,” 146.

The conference was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, and Biéler invited government officials and Canadian artists to discuss artists' role in society. The special guest was American regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton. Along with Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry, Benton was an advocate of American Regionalism, which depicted common, everyday scenes in the Midwestern United States. According to art historian Erika Doss, Benton openly rejected European modernist trends in art, and instead focused on "American art aimed at widespread popularity, an art intelligible and meaningful to all citizens, an art grounded especially in the values of the American republic."<sup>86</sup>

While Biéler did not intend the conference to support a regionalist aesthetic in Canada, he was sympathetic to Lawren Harris's concerns that Canada urgently needed a national artists' association to lobby the government for greater arts support.<sup>87</sup> At the conference, with many artists fearing the rise of fascism in Europe, the discussion was centered on how artists could enrich life and strengthen citizens' commitment to democracy and freedom, a goal quite distinct from what Clark had advocated.<sup>88</sup>

The conference ended by agreeing to create a permanent committee that would work to promote artists' concerns, satisfying Harris's goals. Significantly, Clark asked why there were not any women included on the resolutions committee, as approximately one-third of the conference attendees were women. Arthur Lismer responded by saying he could not change the committee. However in the end sculptor Frances Loring was

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<sup>86</sup> Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Bell, ed., *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston, Ontario: Agnes Etherington Centre for Arts, 1991), viii.

<sup>88</sup> Bell, vii.

added to the group.<sup>89</sup> Clark's request is an example of how she promoted women's involvement, in order to achieve a more public role for women in society.

The Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) was founded as a result of the Kingston Conference.<sup>90</sup> At first the FCA lobbied the government to hire artists to record the war, calling for a program comparable to the Canadian War Memorials Fund that had existed in the First World War. The committee also tried to establish a constitution on which all members could agree that would clearly define the role of the FCA.

The Federation ran into problems shortly after its inception. Working under wartime constraints restricted the efforts of the group, since the large FCA annual meetings were limited to every other year. Communication by mail to a large number of members made it difficult to discuss the details of the organization.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the FCA's constitution proved to be dysfunctional, and the goal of uniting all artistic fields under the FCA was not practical. Even the executive council did not operate as originally intended.<sup>92</sup>

The FCA, and its president Lawren Harris in particular, petitioned for a decentralization of the National Gallery of Canada, to be replaced by a network of community centres that would include exhibition and performance space, libraries and Second World War memorials. A national art structure was only required for planning and transporting exhibitions. This proposition made the FCA's broader plans more difficult, as it alienated H.O. McCurry, director of the National Gallery, who was concerned he would lose authority and control in the framework of community centres.

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<sup>89</sup> Lind, 132.

<sup>90</sup> Bell, ix.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., xii-xiii.

As well, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Toronto, which were already successful institutions with their own histories and objectives, were not interested in giving up control to a decentralized federal organization.<sup>93</sup>

While all these events were taking place, Elizabeth Wyn Wood proposed “A National Program for the Arts in Canada” which was published in the country’s only national art magazine, *Canadian Art*, in March 1944. She advocated for the importance of a “Ministry of Fine Arts,” a national department that would increase the relevance of art in everyday life, as well as enhance the “spiritual life of the nation” and “the prestige of the nation,” and which would foster economic growth by creating work for all types of creative professionals.<sup>94</sup> Wood also proposed that this Ministry should develop foreign policy to promote “the best examples of our culture by special exhibitions and concerts” in a way similar to that of the British Foreign Office and the State Department of the United States, which worked to promote their respective countries’ cultural accomplishments.<sup>95</sup> Wood proposed ten functions for the Ministry of Fine Arts, ranging from a non-profit national publishing house to the establishment of a state theatre suitable for professional productions.

Wood received considerable support for the proposals outlined in her article. Dorise Neilson, member of the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, invited Wood and other representatives from Canada’s professional artists’ associations to make a presentation to the Committee.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., xiv-xv.

<sup>94</sup> Wood, “A National Program for the Arts in Canada,” *Canadian Art* 1 (February-March 1944): 93-98, 127-128.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Wood to H.O. McCurry, 19 April 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 7.1, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Two months after the publication of the article, Wood met with artist Ernest Fosbery, president of the Royal Canadian Academy and representatives from Canada's sixteen national arts associations to discuss the cultural aspects of post-war rebuilding, forming the Arts Reconstruction Committee (ARC).<sup>97</sup> The group included representatives from the FCA. In addition to Wood, co-founder of the Picture Loan Society and theatre costume-designer Erma Lennox Sutcliffe was treasurer of the group, and among the other members were historian and novelist John Murray Gibbon, who also founded the Canadian Authors Association, composer and conductor Ernest MacMillan, watercolourist Garnard Kettle, architect Forsey Page, architect W. L. Sommerville, pianist and teacher Norman Wilks, and playwright Herman Voaden.

Within two weeks, the Art Reconstruction Committee agreed on material to present to the Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment, which studied proposals for post-war reconstruction. ARC advocated three main initiatives: "the formation of a government arts agency, the establishment of a network of community cultural centres, and several initiatives under the heading 'the arts in national life' including the improvement of industrial design, and the development and research in the arts and crafts."<sup>98</sup>

Wood and artist Fred Taylor of the FCA started this initiative on amicable terms. He initially wrote and applauded her proposal in *Canadian Art*: "It is ever so sound and

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<sup>97</sup> The groups represented were the Arts and Letters Club, the Canadian Authors Association, the Canadian Group of Painters, the Canadian Guild of Potters, the Canadian Society of Graphic Art, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and Town Planners, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour, the Dominion Drama Festival, Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers, the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Music Committee, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, the Sculptors' Society of Canada, the Society of Canadian Painter. Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "Art Goes to Parliament," *Canadian Art* 2 (October-November, 1944), 3-5, 41-42.

<sup>98</sup> Baker, 81.

good [...] and altogether excellently expressed. I am tremendously encouraged and delighted that you feel as you do and that [the article] has been published.”<sup>99</sup> Taylor ended the letter by inviting Wood to join the Toronto branch of the FCA—an offer she later declined. However, things soon turned sour as the FCA felt threatened by ARC’s influence with the government.

In particular Wood’s views clashed with those of Taylor and Lawren Harris who helped to build the FCA. Her article and the meeting of the art societies contradicted the goals of the FCA, as the national arts associations were exclusive, only offering membership through invitation, whereas the FCA intended to represent all professional and amateur artists working in Canada. Harris wrote to Taylor, “Peter Haworth was very disturbed all the week by the fact that the Acad[emy] was calling the meeting, or rather might be the convening body for the Ottawa meeting. He felt that [the] Federation should be doing it, and that all the kudos would go to the Acad[emy] and all the hard work of the Fed[eration] was being handed over.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore members of the FCA felt that the other societies were not truly national. Ernest Lindner noted that the FCA “is the only national organization I know which [is] on the road to becoming a truly national and democratic organization. I am very unimpressed by the “national” aspect of those 16 organizations of the brief. [...] To me they are purely local cliques who have one time or another managed to get a charter because of their vicinity to Ottawa and their

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<sup>99</sup> Fred Taylor to Elizabeth Wyn Wood, 27 March 1944, Federation of Canadian Artist Files, Box 1, File 6, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>100</sup> Lawren Harris to Fred Taylor, 7 May 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 1, File 4, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

connections.” Many of the societies, he continued, “are very little known and completely inactive outside of their headquarters.”<sup>101</sup>

Wood was particularly concerned that any national organization for the arts would only work if it included French-Canadian artists. Taylor, who combined privileged connections with communist sympathies, worked to co-ordinate ARC’s Montreal members with those in Toronto, a similar responsibility to one he held in the FCA.<sup>102</sup> Despite Taylor’s mandate the FCA lacked Quebec support for several reasons. For example, the FCA’s plan for community art centres was criticized by those who felt it contradicted Quebec’s control of education, since education was a provincial matter, not a federal one. In addition, some in Quebec viewed the centres as an affront to Catholic parish churches, which already managed community centres.<sup>103</sup> Quebec artists were skeptical about the national goals of the FCA and already had in place a similar association for themselves. Taylor’s role brought him into conflict with Wood and he even wrote in a letter to the former director of Arts and Crafts at Upper Canada College and FCA Executive Secretary Horace Garnard Kettle claiming that Wood lacked “knowledge of French Canadian ways and means, politics and so on” and noted that, “naïve is the only word [to describe her].”<sup>104</sup>

Further displeased with the situation, Harris wrote, “the ideas of Wood [...] were not suitable for reconstruction” because her goals were too lengthy and did not address immediate post-war concerns. Referring to Wood as a “difficult woman,” Taylor wrote to Harris, “Her trouble is that she approves of us in theory but not in practice and resents

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<sup>101</sup> Ernest Lindner to Lawren Harris, 21 November 1945, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 1, File 6, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>102</sup> John Virtue, *Fred Taylor: Brother in the Shadows* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 114.

<sup>103</sup> Bell, xvii.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

many of us executives individually. It is too bad that I lost my temper with her and I am ashamed of myself—but good may ultimately come out of the mess. We are now on the basis of diplomats of estranged nations—superficially individually friendly and with clubs and knives under our clothes.”<sup>105</sup> The correspondence does not address why or when Taylor clashed with Wood but the two seem to have made amends. Regarding their differences of opinion, Taylor wrote to Wood, “The whole thing is summed up in your phrase, ‘we have essential work to do in common,’ and more of what you say in this connection is extremely important.”<sup>106</sup> Wood and the FCA were able to come to a compromise, and the FCA presented to the House of Commons committee along with the other arts societies in the ARC.

Journalist and professor John Virtue has suggested that Taylor’s participation in the FCA mirrored his involvement with the Canadian Communist Party. Taylor openly supported communism and was heavily involved with the party’s organization, while with the FCA, Taylor worked to coordinate individuals in attempts to build consensus and bring forth action. He enjoyed the offstage coordination work where he could project his influence.<sup>107</sup>

Soon disappointment and anger turned away from Wood and toward National Gallery of Canada director Harry McCurry, whom Taylor dismissed as “first and always a civil servant.”<sup>108</sup> Taylor explained that McCurry blocked significant portions of the agreed-upon plan for community centres and post-war reconstruction to accommodate his

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<sup>105</sup> Fred Taylor to Lawren Harris, 21 July 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 1, File 4, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>106</sup> Fred Taylor to Elizabeth Wyn Wood, 8 July 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 2, File 3, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>107</sup> Virtue, *Fred Taylor*, 99.

<sup>108</sup> Fred Taylor to Lawren Harris, 21 July 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 1, File 4, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

own wishes. According to Taylor, Wood had to “agree to changes, deletions and modifications—a whole series of them” until “all the claws were drawn [out]” leaving the proposal fundamentally powerless and ineffective.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, Taylor believed there was evidence that McCurry deliberately tried to divide and confuse artists. Taylor wrote, “The FCA’s name was used as the big stick to move the [Royal Canadian Academy] to action in May and June. McC[urry] who is a terrible thorn in the side of the FCA, is quoted as saying that the ‘[Academy] had better do something or else the FCA will be calling the tune.’”<sup>110</sup>

McCurry and Taylor had a tumultuous relationship. In addition to Taylor’s frequent requests urging McCurry to help organize a war art committee and to support the FCA’s plans, he also petitioned McCurry for funding to document the Alaska Highway construction, which was completed in 1943. At one point, after not getting the response he expected, Taylor remembered in a 1977 interview “almost gripping Harry McCurry by the throat and saying ‘you so-and-so.’”<sup>111</sup>

Wood wrote about her experience with ARC in “Art Goes to Parliament” in *Canadian Art* in November 1944. She recalled, “It was an impressive hearing. More members of Parliament and the Press were present than at any other similar hearing, and the brief was extremely well perceived.”<sup>112</sup> Overall, the success of ARC and the goals of the FCA both led to a permanent successor. At ARC’s last meeting, on 5 December 1945, the Canadian Arts Council (CAC) was established, a permanent successor to lobby the government to support artists’ concerns. Playwright and arts activist Herman Voaden was

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<sup>109</sup> Fred Taylor to Lawren Harris, 8 October 1944, Federation of Canadian Artists Files, Box 1, File 5, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Virtue, 111.

<sup>112</sup> Baker, 81.

selected as CAC chairman and Wood was appointed to the Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>113</sup> Despite Wood's work in organizing the group members and establishing its objectives, she was left with a subordinate position, a frequent occurrence for women at the time who saw their proposals taken up by men.

The FCA eventually ceded its national power to the CAC. The Council's growing achievements and the lingering problems with the FCA's structure, such as its inability to unite all artists, left the FCA unsustainable over the long term. While the Federation did foster discussion of Canadian art, the organization ultimately did not reach its goals. Among other problems, as art historian and curator Michael Bell explained, "the exigencies of the war-time made any new venture tenuous [...]. The FCA took too long to decide whether it was a union or not. [And] no satisfactory relationship was worked out with the existing artist societies."<sup>114</sup> The Federation remained a loosely based coalition of regional groups, without any national program. However, the FCA did present a brief to the Massey Commission in 1950, an updated version of their original 1944 proposal, which helped create today's Canada Council for the Arts.<sup>115</sup>

While Wood campaigned for the separation of art and politics in 1937, she later nuanced her views. She believed in the importance of a national arts board, as a framework to more fully incorporate art into everyday society. These same ideas resurfaced once the Second World War ended. Wood saw the need for a government-sponsored organization to unite the diverse arts organizations and to make art more relevant to the public. On the other hand, while Clark remained firm in her Communist views, she made no further public statements regarding her beliefs for some time. Mutual

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Bell, xxi.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., xx.

hostility between the Soviet Union and the West increased after Germany's defeat, and particularly when Soviet spy Igor Gouzenko defected to Canada in the fall of 1945. In 1956 communist support was further shaken by the Soviet invasion of Hungary and greater awareness of the horrors of Stalin's regime. Communist and leftist activity, already regarded as highly suspicious and in some cases illegal, as with Quebec's Padlock Law, became increasingly difficult in the 1950s.

Elizabeth Wyn Wood's "Art and Pre-Cambrian Shield" and Paraskeva Clark's "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," advocated diametrically opposed views. However, each article has a broader significance with regards to the women's movement, as women began to participate in arts discussions and political debates. The public advocacy of the two women continued as the ideas explored in their articles were revisited during the 1941 Kingston Conference discussion on the role of art in society. The conference in turn influenced Wood to continue her exploration of these ideas, and her involvement with the Art Reconstruction Committee is an extension of these concerns. Her goals came to fruition in the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, chaired by Vincent Massey which led to the Canada Council for the Arts in 1958. In terms of the women's movement Wood's involvement in these campaigns is evidence of women increasingly searching for public recognition and authority. However, for Clark, society's growing hostility toward communism after the Second World War made her more circumspect. For both Clark and Wood, the debate of 1937 was an example of each woman reaching out into the public realm, claiming her own space within the arts community, and more broadly speaking, at large in society.

## Chapter 2

### Paraskeva Clark and the Desire for Recognition in the Public Sphere

Clark remained politically and socially aware after her 1937 article “Come Out From Behind The Pre-Cambrian Shield.” In the late 1930s and during the Second World War, she was committed to several social campaigns and political organizations. While fundraising was considered a natural extension of women’s maternal responsibilities, Clark’s activism was an opportunity to further express her values, to assert her own opinions and to extend that sense of self into the public realm of Canadian society. Clark’s wartime paintings such as *Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar* (1945) reflect a desire to commemorate the place of women in the wartime workforce, a socially engaged subject that Clark had advocated in her writing. However, with these wartime works, Clark also tried to present a modern aesthetic, because she wished to be recognized as a fully modern artist. The latter aspiration led to a profound sense of disappointment, however, as she repeatedly asserted that her family responsibilities prevented her from becoming an artist at least in her understanding of the traditional masculine and Western conception of that idea. As part of a liminal generation, Clark reflected a negotiation between the conventional understandings of womanhood and those of the professional artist, two concepts which Clark eventually came to feel were irreconcilable. Clark’s activities during these years provide a glimpse of her determination to establish herself as an individual both within and beyond her artistic practice.

Clark’s involvement with the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy begun after Dr. Norman Bethune left for Spain in November 1936, has already been noted. The Committee was sponsored by left-wing sympathizers, intellectuals, a handful of church

officials, and other concerned citizens. In 1938 Clark helped to organize exhibitions that raised funds for Spanish Aid at the Heliconian Club and the following year at the Lyceum Women's Art Association.<sup>1</sup> Clark was also part of the welcoming committee for the returning MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion who had volunteered to fight with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

During the Second World War, Clark's family and several friends in Russia faced severe hardship, so she again devoted herself to raising funds, this time for Russian aid.<sup>3</sup> In 1942, after Russia joined the Allies, the sale of her *Self-Portrait with Concert Program* to the National Gallery funded a donation of \$500 to the National Council for Canadian-Soviet Friendship. Kathryn O'Rourke has suggested that "Clark's ferocious stare at the viewer [in this portrait] dares the spectator to read the pamphlet Clark holds, a program from a concert for Russian aid."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the portrait challenges the viewer to take a political position on Clark's radical activity. Later that year, she exhibited 27 paintings through Douglas Duncan's Picture Loan Society, raising another \$500 for the Canadian Aid to Russian Fund for medical supplies and food.<sup>5</sup> O'Rourke has questioned if Clark's support for Russian aid was partly in response to the guilt she felt for having left her family in Petrograd. A *Toronto Star* article quoted Clark as lamenting, "Sometimes I feel

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<sup>1</sup> The Heliconian Club was a Toronto-based women's arts and letters club established as the women's counterpart to the Arts and Letters Club where the Group of Seven met.

<sup>2</sup> Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Burrett, "Paraskeva Clark: Portrait of the Artist Betrayed by 'The Artist,'" *Raven Papers: Remembering Natalie Luckyj* (Manotick: Penumbra Press, forthcoming), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Kathryn O'Rourke, "Labours and Love: Issues of Domesticity and Marginalization in the Works of Paraskeva Clark" (M.A. Thesis, Montreal: Concordia University, Montreal, 1995), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Burrett, 24.

I should be working side by side with the women of my homeland. Since this is not possible I must help them in any way I can.”<sup>6</sup>

The following year Clark helped to organize the Congress of the National Council for Soviet Friendship, as well as an exhibition of photography, arts, and crafts. She was part of the committee that welcomed Lyudmilla Pavlichenko, the Russian sharpshooter celebrated at the time for killing 309 German soldiers. Clark painted Pavlichenko’s Toronto reception in *Pavlichenko and Her Comrades at the Toronto City Hall* (1943), even including herself in the bottom right-hand corner.

In 1944, Clark became vice-president of the Federation of Russian Canadians, a position she held for two years. She contributed articles on art to the organization’s Russian-language magazine *Vestnik*. On behalf of the Council for Soviet-Canadian Friendship, she lectured on the history of Russian art in several cities.<sup>7</sup> For example, in November 1944 at the Art Gallery of Toronto she spoke about the development of Russian art from the tenth century to modern times.<sup>8</sup> O’Rourke considers Clark’s involvement with these groups as one way the artist sought to reconnect with other Russian immigrants “Her involvement in the Russian community of Toronto was indubitably of great importance to her as it helped to acclimate her into what she must have viewed as a hostile community.”<sup>9</sup> In April 1945 she discussed contemporary Soviet painting at the Heliconian Club.<sup>10</sup> Her activism defined an independent role outside the home, giving her an outlet to express her political views. Her commitments to these

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<sup>6</sup> “Woman Artist Hopes to Aid Native Russia By Her Paintings,” *Toronto Star*, 4 December 1942.

<sup>7</sup> Burrett, 24.

<sup>8</sup> “Russian-born Artist to Speak on Soviet,” *Toronto Star*, 28 November 1944.

<sup>9</sup> O’Rourke, 38.

<sup>10</sup> “Contemporary Soviet Painting,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 13 April 1945.

groups underlined Clark's desire for recognition and acceptance uniting her heritage with her commitment to her career.

During this same period Clark published "Thoughts on Canadian Painting," in 1943 in *World Affairs*, as well as the "The Artist Speaks: A Statement by Paraskeva Clark" in the *Canadian Review of Music and Other Arts* the following year. "Thoughts on Canadian Painting" is a central document revealing Clark's understanding of Canadian art and society. She described her continuing dissatisfaction with artists in Canada, explaining that the Group of Seven's landscape tradition had left artists unprepared to depict the upheaval of the Second World War: "In our overgrown 'pioneering' delight in our wilderness, we neglected the study of the 'pioneer' or the man. And we must not continue to make this sad mistake. The Post-War Art, if it wishes to be a strong, great, inspiring factor in the building of a new life, will have to be useful, clear [and] human above all."<sup>11</sup>

Ironically, Clark's article was accompanied by an illustration of her painting *In the Woods* (1939), a landscape, owned by the most conservative of institutions, Hart House at the University of Toronto. Nevertheless, Clark was not alone in her proposal for artists to record the war. Since the 1941 Kingston Conference Lawren Harris and other members of the Federation of Canadian Artists like Fred Taylor had been campaigning for a government-sponsored war art project.<sup>12</sup> As for the nationalist landscape school that Clark so vehemently rejected, Lawren Harris for one had long since moved from

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<sup>11</sup> Paraskeva Clark, "Canadian Artists," *World Affairs* 8 (February 1943): 16.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Bell, ed., *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Centre for Arts, 1991), ix; Brian Foss, "Molly Lamb Bobak: Art and War" *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* ed. Cindy Richmond (Regina, MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993), 93-94.

Toronto, first to the United States then to Vancouver, where he painted non-objective works inspired by his beliefs in theosophy.

In her 1943 article Clark recognized that there was an urgent need to record the war effort for future generations, but believed that this art had to focus on the human being. She elaborated, “We see that Art is able to be a powerful force in war time in the service of the nation, as the agent of inspiration, teaching, criticism, chastisement, or glorification. But it has to be, of course, an art depicting the human being, human action, in order to produce in people’s minds and hearts the desired effect. And here is where Canadian Art in war-time should take its lesson.”<sup>13</sup> Clark convincingly expressed the need for war representation, perhaps harking back to her Russian training that privileged the human figure. Clark’s 1943 article may reflect the direction of the discussions on socially relevant art at the Kingston Conference but seems still to venture beyond this. Her newfound nationalism championed the socially engaged art she had always advocated. However, in “Thoughts on Canadian Painting” Clark took a more jingoistic position compared with “Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield.” In the former article, Clark advocated socially engaged art as an expression of her support for leftist causes. In the latter she called for social meaning in art as a way to promote patriotism in the face of rising fascism.

During 1941 and 1942, an exhibition entitled *Britain at War* had been exhibited in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and London, Ontario. It featured artworks, commissioned by the British War Artist’s Advisory Committee.<sup>14</sup> High attendance and positive reviews helped to convince Canada’s High Commissioner in London, Vincent Massey, and Major

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<sup>13</sup> Clark, “Canadian Artists,” 16.

<sup>14</sup> Foss, 93.

C. P. Stacey, Historical Officer at Canadian Military Headquarters, to lobby the federal government for an equivalent in Canadian art. National Gallery of Canada director Harry McCurry had also written to the Department of Defence urging them to hire artists to depict the war.

After the sudden death of former director Eric Brown in 1939, McCurry became director at the gallery almost by default. McCurry had worked as Brown's assistant, slowly building a strong influence in the gallery's upper management.<sup>15</sup> During his sixteen years as director, McCurry continued the path established by Eric Brown, albeit quietly purchasing French Impressionist paintings that Brown had previously criticized. Both men viewed contemporary trends in art with some suspicion and neither director was particularly interested in modernism. However, Brown did face condemnation because of his support for the Group of Seven, who were criticized by the more traditional Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. In 1946, McCurry referred to the gallery as a "bureau of standards" serving as a "base of good taste for all people." Brown had articulated a similar view of the gallery years earlier.

In a *Liberty* magazine profile, Harry McCurry was described as having a "character [that was] the antithesis of flamboyant" with an "unmarred circumspect career" with which he "could model for a civil service textbook."<sup>16</sup> Historian Douglas Ord believed that "McCurry had been largely unsuccessful in raising the Gallery's profile in Canadian society, or in making it seem accessible [to the public]."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, when McCurry retired in 1955, a Canadian edition of the New York City-based *Times*

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 96

<sup>16</sup> Ord, 96, quotes Alan Philips, "Liberty Profile: Harry O. McCurry" *Liberty*, 22 June 1946, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Ord, 130.

*Magazine* noted that the gallery was “a crusty, dark, and forbidding institution” and downright “tomb-like.” It continued, “the dedicated few who chose to venture inside roamed through gloomy galleries under the cold eyes of suspicious guards.”<sup>18</sup>

McCurry’s reputation as a stolid civil servant seems to contrast with his support for Paraskeva Clark, an avowed radical often at odds with her Toronto contemporaries. Perhaps he simply recognized her enthusiasm and commitment, as she was one of the few Canadian women artists who called for official representation of Canada’s war effort.

With plans devised by Vincent Massey, the federal government finally approved the war art program early in 1943. Fifteen artists were initially selected by the Canadian War Artists Selection Committee, on the recommendation of A.Y. Jackson, Charles Comfort and Edwin Holgate. Sixteen other artists were added to the approved group before the war’s end.<sup>19</sup> Artists were instructed by the committee to “vividly and voraciously” depict soldiers, equipment and the events taking place. Specifically, the committee stated that the artist “is charged with the portrayal of significant events, scenes, phases and episodes in the experience of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those which cannot be adequately rendered in any other way.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Women’s Involvement in the Second World War**

To combat a shortage of new recruits, the three arms of the Canadian military developed women’s divisions: the Canadian Women’s Army Corps (CWAC), the Royal Canadian Air Force, Women’s Division or the Canadian Women’s Auxiliary Air Force

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<sup>18</sup> Ord, 130 quotes “New Fixture” *Times* (New York), 1 August 1955.

<sup>19</sup> Foss, 93-94.

<sup>20</sup> “Instructions for War Artists,” *Art or Memorial? The Forgotten History of Canada’s War Art*, ed. Laura Brandon (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 93.

(CWAAF), and the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRENS). The air force was the first branch of the military to recruit women in Canada, starting on 2 July 1941. Women were initially able to choose from eight trades: "clerks, cooks, equipment assistants, fabric workers, hospital assistants, motor transport drivers, telephone operators" and another option called "general duties," which included typing, filing and other administrative tasks.<sup>21</sup> By the end of the war 65 occupations were accessible to women, and over 17,000 women enlisted for the CWAAF, demonstrating the competence of women to undertake tasks formerly presumed to be the exclusive domain of men, although women remained barred from active combat.<sup>22</sup>

To be officially recognized, artists had to be enlisted in the armed forces. Because women were not assigned to combat, women could not be part of the official war art program. Until the only woman, CWAC Molly Lamb Bobak, was officially commissioned by the War Art Committee. However, she went to Europe as the war ended. In part, it took the committee so long to support a woman artist because many in the military considered European postings too dangerous for women. This was unlike Russia, where female fighter pilots, snipers and anti-aircraft gunners became models of women's heroism.

Based in Vermillion, Alberta, Lamb worked on a mural presenting the various activities of CWAC members there. When she was transferred to Ontario, she spent time on technical drawings. Lamb's fortunes changed for the better when her painting *Meat Parade, Hamilton Trades School* (1943) [Fig. 2.1] tied for second place out of 300

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<sup>21</sup> Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women At War (1939-1945)* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991), 85.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack! Canadian Women during the Second World War—at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1985), 75.

submissions in the Army Art Show organized by the National Gallery of Canada, which toured across the country.<sup>23</sup> In particular McCurry and Jackson appreciated Lamb's work, and the selection committee recommended Lamb for official acceptance into the War Art Program. McCurry ensured this would happen by purchasing four paintings and five drawings by Lamb for the National Gallery collection. These were transferred to the Canadian War Museum in 1971.

Initially Lamb was not a ranking officer within CWAC and therefore she did not meet the requirement to become a war artist. After officer training in Ste. Anne de Bellevue to become a second lieutenant, Lamb was confirmed as an official war artist on 24 May 1943.<sup>24</sup> Lamb was the only woman to be officially selected to represent the efforts of the war, and she did not participate in any combat roles, only leaving Britain to visit the European continent for six weeks in the summer of 1945.<sup>25</sup>

### **Establishing the Commission**

At the start of the war, Clark found her loyalties divided. Russian relations with Western countries were strained after Germany and Russia signed a pact of non-aggression in 1939. The two countries then conquered and divided Poland. When Germany invaded Russian-held lands in 1941, however, Russia joined the Allied forces. The 1930s fears regarding communism were put aside for a time, as Canadians grew more curious about Russia as a wartime ally. Clark benefited from this increased interest, as her lectures on Russian art attest.

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<sup>23</sup> Foss, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 106.

Clark found it difficult to focus on her art during the war years because of family emergencies and illness. Her son, Ben, was hospitalized and eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. Clark also worried about her parents and extended family in Russia.<sup>26</sup> In 1944, she wrote to National Gallery of Canada director Harry McCurry to convey her dissatisfaction with her work and a lack of inspiration. She expressed her disappointment at not being chosen as a war artist, especially with her support for socially engaged art and her family in the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

The correspondence between Clark and McCurry began on 8 May 1944. The letters are worth quoting at length because they shed light on the expectations of McCurry and Clark, clarifying how Clark was hired by the Gallery and not directly by the Department of Defence. The gallery had already purchased Clark's *Self-Portrait with Concert Program* (1942) [Fig. 2.2] and McCurry mailed Clark the payment for this work.<sup>28</sup> She responded shortly afterwards, enthusiastically thanking him and explaining, "the fact that the National Gallery acquired some of my portrait work is particularly significant to me and gives me all the courage to attack again and again that subject." Despite this eagerness, Clark acknowledged she had difficulty painting with "very little time, and mainly no subject matter as I didn't go out of Toronto for the last three summers."<sup>29</sup>

Clark and McCurry had previously discussed Clark's possible appointment as a war artist but this information was not in their correspondence. Clark simply noted, "I thank you again [for my name on the list of the potential RCAF artists]—and would like

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<sup>26</sup> MacLachlan, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Lind, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2009), 203.

<sup>29</sup> Paraskeva Clark to H.O. McCurry, 17 May 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

to inform you that first A.Y. [Jackson] notif[ied] me about the possibility of my becoming a war record artist.” She understood that there was “very little chance,” as the Forces would definitely not “take any more civilians [as] they have 450 [sic] of their own artists! And they really have some good ones!” Although, she acknowledged that it would have been a positive experience, “The adventure would be great and would have done [a] lot of good to my painting—but on the other hand I was worried about my family.”<sup>30</sup>

Three days later, McCurry responded to Clark explaining that he had supported her “for work with the RCAF but the military has a queer prejudice at times. However if the war continues for any length of time our pressure is sure to be effective. In the meantime if there is anything you would like to do, especially any activity relating to the RCAF women’s division, please let me know and we will commission you as a civilian.”<sup>31</sup> McCurry did not explain the military’s “queer prejudice.” It may have been against taking women artists, hiring more civilians, or against Clark’s political beliefs—or possibly a combination of the three. While McCurry was not a reactionary, why he would consider the military’s actions peculiar remains a mystery considering his often cited conservative character, even more so at a time when Canadians were expected to give the military full unquestioning support. Nonetheless, McCurry made good on his promise on 14 September. He asked Clark to record the work of the CWAC, the WRENS and the air force women’s division. He wrote,

I have not succeeded in getting any women appointed to work under the direction of the War Artist’s Committee but the National Gallery itself has a little money now, not very much it is true but probably sufficient for what we want to do. Could you find time to make contact with these three services especially in Toronto and see what you can produce, something

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> McCurry to Clark, 22 May 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5 File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

that would effectively signalize this great development (as I think it is) of Canada's women taking their place in the fighting forces. I should like three or four canvases or watercolours or whatever you would like to do, or even more if it goes well, for which the National Gallery will be glad to pay. I have already secured the services of Pegi Nicol MacLeod who is working in Ottawa and producing some very good stuff.<sup>32</sup>

Clark responded immediately, "The promptness of my reply to your letter of September 14<sup>th</sup> indicates how great is my excitement about your idea of getting some material on Women, War Services, and doing some painting on the subject." She continued, "Right from the beginning of the War I thought how this is the subject for a woman painter and later particularly so—seeing how this subject is almost completely neglected."<sup>33</sup> In a further letter to Clark, just over a week later, McCurry revealed that he had already taken the steps to allow access for a female artist to the RCAF women's division on a base near Toronto, provided Clark was still interested.<sup>34</sup>

This was not the end of the discussion. In the following months, McCurry continued to campaign for Clark to become an official war artist. On 22 November 1944 he wrote to Group Captain K. B. Conn of the Department of National Defence Air Services, "We have been unable to secure the immediate appointment of suitable women as war artists because of lack of vacancies, and as the work of the women's divisions is one of the most noteworthy developments of the war, I think it is most desirable that this work be recorded by the best artists we can find."<sup>35</sup> He continued, "If there is a vacancy in the RCAF establishment for war artists, the Committee would strongly recommend

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<sup>32</sup> McCurry to Clark, 14 September 1944, Paraskeva and Philip T. Clark fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>33</sup> Clark to McCurry, 19 September 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5 File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>34</sup> McCurry to Clark, 26 September 1944, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>35</sup> McCurry to A. F. Duguid, 26 December 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5 File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

that Mrs. Paraskeva Clark [...] be appointed for this special work. Appointment of six months would probably be sufficient.”<sup>36</sup>

There is no letter from Clark to suggest what she thought of the six-month term, but in a letter to Col. A. F. Duguid, McCurry wrote that he had succeeded in getting Clark the term, but that she turned down this offer. McCurry continued, “Mrs. Pegi Nicol MacLeod has done a very good piece of work here in Ottawa but the undertaking should be broadened. For this I propose to have secured the service of Mrs. Paraskeva Clark of Toronto. She is an outstanding artist, and while she could not accept a commission, owing to other obligations, she is prepared to devote a large part of her time to the work.”<sup>37</sup> Certainly Clark would have had difficulty leaving her family for six months, in particular because of Ben’s poor health. However, Clark told a different story in a 1979 interview. She claimed that the military had refused her appointment because they believed she could not go out of town and leave her family for such a long period.<sup>38</sup>

Clark’s recollection reveals the conflicts she must have felt. Despite Ben’s health, Clark might have welcomed the six-month opportunity, if one is to judge from the excitement in her letter to McCurry when she accepted the shorter commission. In the same vein, Clark had already submitted an application for a one-year Guggenheim fellowship in New York City in 1942, so she likely considered leaving her family for some period of time.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> McCurry to K. B. Conn, 2 November 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5 File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>37</sup> McCurry to A. F. Duguid, 26 December 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5 File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>38</sup> Paraskeva Clark, interview by Joan Murray, 15 March 1979, transcript, Paraskeva Clark files, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.

<sup>39</sup> Burrett, 21.

While McCurry and Clark were establishing the terms of the commission, McCurry suggested several possible subjects to paint. In a December 1944 letter, he particularly encouraged Clark to work in the WREN or CWAC sections.<sup>40</sup> However, he outlined some conditions and preferences: “Personally I am not awfully anxious to have more studies of girls working in kitchens, offices, and that sort of thing, but please do not let me prejudice you. Look the ground over and let us have your ideas.”<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, he still recommended, “A few canvases of shall I say, an inspirational nature, a company or two of the girls on the march, would appeal to me. But it is quite possible you may have a better point of view.”<sup>42</sup> While McCurry did not want to force Clark to accept a specific topic, he provided clear proposals on what kind of subject matter she should choose, which may or may not have influenced her decisions. McCurry continued his suggestions in a 20 December letter,

I do not believe I would over emphasize the hospitals in your work, although they certainly have a place. However, they will be here for a long time, but the girls themselves will be demobilized very quickly once the war is over. What I should like to see is something that will signalize the great human advance which has been made in the English-speaking world at all events by the admission of women to the fighting forces. However, I will leave this in your hands, and perhaps we may have a talk later.<sup>43</sup>

In these letters, McCurry was partially reacting against the views of Wing Officer W. Taylor, at the Trenton base, who drew up a list of suitable subjects—such as nurses working in hospitals—which McCurry forwarded to Clark.<sup>44</sup> Both McCurry and Group

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<sup>40</sup> McCurry to Clark, 9 December 1944, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> McCurry to Clark, 20 December 1944, Paraskeva and Philip T. Clark Fond, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>44</sup> W. Taylor to Kenneth Conn, 14 November 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Captain K. Conn felt that this list was unsatisfactory, which is presumably why McCurry considered it necessary to detail other possible subject matter.<sup>45</sup> Conn, Taylor's supervisor, was responsible for ensuring Clark's free access to the base.<sup>46</sup>

McCurry entrusted Clark with a considerable amount of freedom. She was granted the liberty to set her own wages and to negotiate her own time. McCurry noted, "We will pay for your work on whatever basis you wish, either time or by individual canvases."<sup>47</sup> He explained that Pegi Nicol MacLeod had received the same rate of pay as the male artists. However, MacLeod was able to work full-time and McCurry acknowledged that this might not be the case for Clark because of her familial commitments. McCurry encouraged Clark to make her own decisions notwithstanding his clearly specified expectations. As well, McCurry's recognition of women's movement into the military as a "great human advancement" suggests he may not have been as conventional as his reputation suggests.

### **Clark's War Effort Representations**

Clark prepared for a one-week visit to the Trenton Air Force base in January 1945. *Contact*, the RCAF Trenton periodical, captured Clark, preparing the sketch for *Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar # 6, Trenton RCAF, Station*. [Figs. 2.3 and 2.4] The caption of the photograph acknowledged Clark's freedom on the base: "Depicting on canvas the lives of women of the Royal Canadian Air Force takes Mrs. P. Clarke [sic] of

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<sup>45</sup> Conn to McCurry, 15 November 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>46</sup> Conn to McCurry, 6 December 1944, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>47</sup> McCurry to Clark, 9 December 1944, Paraskeva and Philip T. Clark Fond, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

the National Gallery of Canada into almost every section of the Stations she visits.”<sup>48</sup>

Two months after her visit to Trenton, in March, Clark spent time in Galt, Ontario, where WRENS trained in a converted girl’s rehabilitation school named “HMCS Conestoga,” before beginning work four weeks later with the navy at HMCS Cornwallis near Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, or HMCS St. Hyacinthe close to Longueuil, Québec.<sup>49</sup> After visiting the bases, Clark felt there was nothing exciting happening, but nonetheless she had fond memories of these visits later in her life. She said, “[The women] were all very friendly [...] all very kind.” She was particularly impressed with the food on the base, since food for civilians was rationed and some items were difficult to obtain.<sup>50</sup>

In a letter dated 23 March 1945 McCurry encouraged Clark to send anything she had completed. After Clark expressed some disappointment with her work, McCurry promised that she would be able to have the paintings returned if desired.<sup>51</sup> Clark responded the following day that she would send *Maintenance Jobs # 6, Trenton RCAF, Station* along with *Bed-time Story*.<sup>52</sup>

The workers in *Maintenance Jobs* barely appear to be women because of their overalls; it takes a second glance to recognize their hair tied back and the subtle curves of their breast and waists. Wearing similar light brown and grey overalls, the mechanics are individually distinguished by the varying shades of dark hair. Each women works on a separate section of the airplane and the configuration of the workers’ bodies seem to

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<sup>48</sup> J.W. Sergeant, ed., “People, Places, Planes,” *Contact* (February-March 1945): 9.

<sup>49</sup> Doris Hope, “A Wren Remembers - Recollections of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.” *CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum*  
[http://www.navalandmilitarymuseum.org/resource\\_pages/pavingtheway/dorishope.html](http://www.navalandmilitarymuseum.org/resource_pages/pavingtheway/dorishope.html) (accessed 11 December 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Clark, interview by Murray.

<sup>51</sup> McCurry to Clark, 23 March 1945, Paraskeva and Philip T. Clark fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>52</sup> Clark to McCurry, 24 March 1945, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

become one with the aircraft. For example, one woman curves around the nose of the plane to repair or assemble the propeller, while another inspects the plane's wing. Unlike a typical mechanic's shop, the entire scene appears very clean and efficient: the red and blue floor is evidently free from dirt. The background blends into the foreground and large windows with square window planes outlined in black give a strong sense of order and rationality to an otherwise dynamic scene of activity, perhaps reflecting Clark's interest in Cézanne and Cubism.

Kristina Huneault has examined the representation of women in the First World War in the sculptures of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle. In Loring's *Girls with a Rail* (1919) [Fig. 2.5] Huneault suggested that the female workers' bodies were defeminised as a strategy to underline the fact that women should be viewed as equal contributors in the workforce. As Huneault revealed, the sculptures were not understood at the time as challenging gender roles. Conversely, they were celebrated as an index of the patriotic war effort. However, once the war was over, the sculptures were viewed as inappropriate as the project of post-war "normalization" began and women were forced to resume their pre-war roles.<sup>53</sup>

Molly Lamb Bobak's representation women in her Second World War works also appear to deemphasize women's femininity. In *Canadian Women's Army Corps Officer Cadets and N.C.O.'s Waiting for the Montreal Train* (1945) [Fig. 2.6] the soldiers' gender is only identified through their mid-length skirts, while the women's torsos' and bodies are stylized and combined into an unidentified mass of individuals.

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<sup>53</sup> Kristina Huneault, "Heroes of a Different Sort: Gender and Patriotism in the War Workers of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle" *Journal of Canadian Art History* 15, 6 (1993): 26-49.

When Clark sent *Bed-time Story* to the National Gallery in March 1945, she described it as a “composition of slightly humorous character—6 women in housecoats—brushing hair—buttons—shoes (RCAF uniforms) in the evenings.”<sup>54</sup> McCurry believed the painting was of fine quality and he lent it to the juried Canadian Group of Painters annual exhibition in 1946. Despite McCurry’s support Clark refused to allow the work to be viewed publicly.<sup>55</sup> Having seen the work hung for display, Clark approached the president of the Canadian Group of Painters to remove it from the show, insisting that the exhibition already held four of her other canvases and that this work was not required.<sup>56</sup>

Subsequently, Clark wrote McCurry asking for *Bed-time Story* to be returned, explaining that the work had “bad proportions” and “incompetent drawing.”<sup>57</sup> McCurry acceded to her request, “If you really feel you must withdraw *Bed-time Story*, I will agree. I always thought it was a little sophisticated for the purpose, but there is a very good painting in it.”<sup>58</sup> Clark explained in a letter to McCurry, “I planned to use that canvas to make a smaller one by cutting off part of it and repainting certain parts and possibly using it either for [a] Montreal show or for [a] show at Eaton’s.”<sup>59</sup> There are no known references to the work after this period and no reproductions are known to exist of the original composition, so the merit of Clark’s concerns are difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless, Clark’s comments suggest that she wanted to be known as judging the

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<sup>54</sup> Clark to McCurry, 23 March 1945, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>55</sup> Clark to McCurry, 14 November 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>56</sup> Clark to McCurry, 13 September 1945, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>57</sup> Clark to McCurry, 14 November 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>58</sup> McCurry to Clark, 16 November 1945, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, Box 4, File 32, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>59</sup> Clark to McCurry, 21 February 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

success of her paintings by their aesthetic composition, when perhaps the more mundane subject matter may have seemed at odds with her desire for social relevance, previously expressed in “Thoughts on Canadian Painting” and through her more explicitly Communist paintings such as *Portrait of Mao* (1938) [Fig. 2.7].

Although never publicly displayed, *Bed-time Story* is a significant painting documenting Clark’s exploration of a more informal subject matter. It reveals her artistic process and her state of mind during this timeframe, in particular her lack of confidence in the composition. As well, McCurry’s judgement of the work and its acceptance into the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition suggest Clark was too critical of her ability to portray working women’s war efforts.

After *Bed-time Story*, Clark lost enthusiasm for the war art project. She seemed to feel that her abilities were inadequate for the project. During a family vacation in Tadoussac, Québec, she wrote to McCurry describing her overall dissatisfaction with the assignment.<sup>60</sup> By this time, the war had been over for two years, and even when Clark initially visited the military bases she claimed not to find the excitement she was hoping to experience—or perhaps the “drama” McCurry wanted.

Clark moved on to other projects, including most notably *Portrait of Murray Adaskin* (1945), a long-time friend of the Clarks, and *Boats in Tadoussac* (1946). This lapse in inspiration explains why she did not complete the NGC commission until 27 January 1947, starkly contrasting with her initial enthusiasm.

*Parachute Riggers* [Fig. 2.8] was sent to replace *Bed-time Story*, along with an additional painting, *Quaicker Girls* [sic] [Fig. 2.9]. Regarding *Parachute Riggers*, Clark noted in her documents, “Parachutes are handled by the five air women who operate

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<sup>60</sup> MacLachlan, 37.

Trenton's Parachute Section.”<sup>61</sup> The women appear vibrant with speckled light illuminating their face and arms. Their femininity is expressed primarily through their hair, and unlike *Maintenance Jobs* there is no ambiguity about their gender—they are women. Their faces suggest intense concentration while the workers exercise their refined technical skills.

Clark privileged the women's work and their dedication primarily by the compositional elements of the paintings and less by a focus on the woman themselves. For example, Clark captured the energy of the Trenton base and the women's work with a strong diagonal focus. The parallel tables and the parachutes' suspension lines guide the eye from the front right-hand foreground to the opposite back corner. Clark positions the viewer high above the scene, looking down on the workers.

Curator Mary E. MacLachlan related *Parachute Riggers* to Clark's three paintings of Russian bathhouses completed over a decade starting in 1934. These featured women and children changing and bathing in Petrograd's bathhouses. In this series Clark explored the female body and human interaction in large figural groups, concerns she had also examined in *Petroushka* [Fig. 1.5]. In particular, the intricate arrangement of the women suggests that there is a compositional relationship between this work and *Public Bath—Leningrad* (1944) [Fig. 2.10].<sup>62</sup> MacLachlan wrote that Clark “applied lessons learned about the inter-relationship of human figures in a perspectival space from the Russians bathhouse paintings of 1934, 1936, and 1944.” Indeed, the viewpoint is similar between *Parachute Riggers* and *Russian Baths* (1936) [Fig. 2.11], as Clark has created an interior space where the viewer looks down from above on busy women whose bodies

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<sup>61</sup> Untitled note, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, Box 3, File 42, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>62</sup> MacLachlan, 37.

contrast with strong diagonal lines in each painting. The compositional relation between these works emphasizes Clark's focus was on the aesthetic elements. Stability is created in *Parachute Riggers* with the women's bodies. MacLachlan explains, "The figures of the women, and particularly the pattern created by their arm movements, form an effective zigzagging cadence rising through the composition."<sup>63</sup> Highlights of red and green in the parachute fabric create stability as well as visual harmony in the overall brown-toned painting.

As with other women war workers, soldiers in the Women's Division of the Air Force folded parachutes so that men could be deployed to the front. A journalist with Montreal's *La Presse* expressed the view that women folded parachutes more carefully than men, knowing that they were in a position to potentially save a man's life if their work was done properly. In comparison, men regarded the task as part of a tedious everyday routine. The journalist believed that "[the woman soldier] takes a very special interest in her work and probably does it with much greater diligence and devotion than a frustrated flier would," or so he believed, as women were not interviewed in the article.<sup>64</sup> The journalist reflected the conventional view of women as nurturers, a socially conditioned ideal that extended into the military operations.

In Britain women working with parachutes even directly handed the parachute pack to each pilot before he flew, the last person the pilot saw before his flight. An unnamed journalist quoted by the British Ministry of Labour remarked, "As I looked at that woman handing out the parachutes, deftly, swiftly helping the men into their harness, making sure that everything was in perfect order [...] I thought of the inspiration those

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Gossage, 89 quotes *La Presse* 1 August 1943.

women must be, with their reminder of home and all that life holds dear to men who fly by night.”<sup>65</sup> While this refers to the British context, similar training would have likely taken place on the Trenton airbase when Clark visited.

In later years, Clark was critical of *Parachute Riggers*, “the design of the [woman’s] head is not very good, as I saw it afterwards.”<sup>66</sup> Despite her discontent this work was exhibited various times during Clark’s lifetime and is often considered her most successful war representation of working women.<sup>67</sup> Clark’s chronic lack of confidence despite McCurry’s support and encouragement is a common theme in her life. She often remained self-critical, as she internalized the prejudice that women could not become great artists. Nevertheless, MacLachlan has claimed that the composition of *Parachute Riggers* is one of Clark’s best.<sup>68</sup> Clark’s regret over her design of the women’s head suggests that she judged the paintings in an aesthetic manner, rather than primarily by their social relevance as a commemoration of the women’s role in the wartime workforce as McCurry had suggested.

McCurry commissioned only two paintings from Clark, however she added *Quaicker Girls* because she felt guilty for the two-year delay in completing the work. “*Quaicker Girls* I am sending to ‘put into the bargain’ because I took such a long time to give you a second canvas, paid for already in 1945.”<sup>69</sup> The use and origin of the word “quaicker” is disputed, but as MacLachlan wrote, “quaicker” may be derived from the

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<sup>65</sup> Madeleine E. DuQuemin, “A Sense of Duty: Four Canadian Women War Artists in the Second World War” (Research essay, St. Catharines: Brock University, 1990), 108-09 quotes Ministry of Labour News Release, 18 February 1943, RG 7, Vol. 2350, file 101, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>66</sup> Paraskeva Clark, interview by Charles Hill, 18 October 1973, transcript, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* Exhibition Records, National Gallery of Canada Fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

<sup>67</sup> MacLachlan, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Clark to McCurry, 20 January 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

sound of clicking a telegraph key, although this was not a common expression.<sup>70</sup> This explanation is further supported by a note in Clark's personal letters suggesting a caption for the work, "Keeping in touch with the boys up in the sky."<sup>71</sup> In *Quaicker Girls*, Clark captures women's administrative contribution to the war effort. Three women work at desks with telegraphs and other machinery as a man stands over them. Everyone appears tired, and muted colours dominate the image, creating an impression of discord, agitation and exhaustion. However, Clark does develop some compositional harmony with the blue floors and orange-brown desks. The sky with its bright airplanes provides the most colour, suggesting a spirit of hope heralding an end to the war's destructive madness.

Despite Clark's "Thoughts on Canadian Art" and her earlier advocacy for social relevance in art, her comments imply that she had shifted the focus of her work toward a more aesthetic approach based on the modern conception of the artist. Clark appears to be mediating her previous desire for social meaning with the modern paradigms of visual art which privilege aesthetics above subject matter. This mediation reflects a liminal position, as Clark explores different ways of presenting herself as a professional artist.

Art historian Deborah Burrett has studied how Clark constructed her identity as a modern artist in her application for a Guggenheim fellowship in 1942, which would have supported several months of work and study in New York City. The application is particularly interesting as Clark retells her story as an artist and the challenges she faced. Clark frequently referred to the difficulty she faced in finding time to paint. "There is great difficulty to find continually regular days or hours to work—the ideas constantly

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<sup>70</sup> MacLachlan, 68.

<sup>71</sup> Untitled note, Paraskeva and Phillip T. Clark Fonds, Box 3, File 42, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

broken—and sometimes with no painting at all.”<sup>72</sup> As Burrett explained, Clark “carefully constructed her image as a modern artist, [but] her account began to fracture under the stress of her attempts to reconcile this image with the competing demands of her life as wife, mother, and homemaker.”<sup>73</sup> Clark’s application was unsuccessful but it nonetheless provides insight into her mid-career outlook. A recurrent topic in the proposal (and throughout Clark’s life) is how she had been able to steal time away from her housework for painting. Clark’s focus on the composition of the war paintings suggests that she aimed to be a fully modern and professional artist.

Despite her commemoration of women’s work, Clark remained disappointed with her canvases because of their supposed compositional weaknesses, perceptions which reflect Clark’s sense of failure with her identity as a modern artist. Notwithstanding her fears, this does not diminish their value as documents of women’s work during the war. In total, Clark spent a period of three years questioning how to represent the women’s war contribution, a significant period of her life. Her duties as a mother and a wife made work difficult, and she clearly expressed this struggle as a woman and an artist in her letters. At one point Clark even claimed to be unqualified to represent women’s war efforts because of her family responsibilities.<sup>74</sup> She wrote, “I had very difficult times with these works and realize now that it was beyond my abilities. Besides, my complicated family life does not present a very suitable atmosphere for a job that is so difficult for

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<sup>72</sup> Burrett quotes, “Guggenheim Application, 1941,” section 2:4.

<sup>73</sup> Burrett, 14-15.

<sup>74</sup> Clark to McCurry, 20 January 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

me.”<sup>75</sup> Her commitments to her family combined with feelings of guilt caused by the delay made it problematic for her to feel positive about her creative work at all.<sup>76</sup>

In a letter to McCurry, Clark added more details of her situation, “I had a very hard year—and feel very guilty about the slowness of my war work—but I am convinced that in the end you will not be disappointed [in] having given me the commission.”<sup>77</sup> Apart from her feelings of inadequacy, her excitement for the project ended shortly after her visits at Trenton and Galt, because she did not find the emotion and excitement that she believed McCurry expected at the beginning of the commission. As Terresa McIntosh explained, “McCurry’s desire for works of an inspirational and dramatic nature about the women’s divisions of the armed forces also caused Clark consternation because she believed that there was no drama there.”<sup>78</sup> Regarding war women’s activity, Clark explained to Charles Hill in 1973, “There was nothing exciting about it. [...] It wasn’t anything heroic.”<sup>79</sup> Again, Clark was overly critical and unable to appreciate her own achievements.

Clark’s belief that nothing exciting was happening at the bases may have been partly influenced by the women themselves. Historian Carolyn Gossage explained, while most enjoyed their newfound careers, “many servicewomen left on Canadian soil felt a certain sense of frustration and disappointment at having been passed over by the luck of the draw [to work in England].”<sup>80</sup> Much of the work available for women in Canada was repetitive and tedious, such as work in a “Newfoundland air station [...] watching and

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Clark to McCurry, 11 May 1945, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>77</sup> Clark to McCurry, 20 January 1947, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>78</sup> McIntosh, 82.

<sup>79</sup> Paraskeva Clark, interview by Hill.

<sup>80</sup> Gossage, 172.

listening for enemy aircraft hour [after] hour.”<sup>81</sup> While some women may have felt their work was tedious or dreary, this should not suggest that Clark’s paintings are uninspiring. Throughout her life, Clark seemed to internalized the expectations of others in her work and did not find her own painting successful.

Clark’s lack of enthusiasm for women’s military service, shared by many of the enlisted women, may also originate from the fact that the work allocated to women was often considered work that was less important or work that men did not want because it was tedious or unexciting. As well, Clark would likely have been comparing herself to the situation for Russian women, and in particular the woman sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko whom she had met and painted in 1943.

In fact, the commissions from the National Gallery of Canada provided Clark with benefits that she may not have acknowledged. MacLachlan believes Clark’s trip to Trenton and Conestoga offered the artist a much needed break from her family responsibilities. Indeed, after years of difficulty, the summer following her visits was particularly fertile. As MacLachlan has noted, “the trip yielded at least twelve paintings that summer, of which *Boats in Tadoussac* and *Ben* are examples, and supplied her with a wealth of landscape images she would repeat in following years.”<sup>82</sup>

These issues are central themes in the understanding of Clark’s war work. Despite Clark’s disappointment with the quality her paintings, a letter written on 9 August 1945 is an important reflection exploring women’s war experience, as well as her own concerns as a woman separated from her family in Russia. She hinted at her difficulty in painting the involvement of women and explained the complexity of depicting their war

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> MacLachlan, 38.

contribution, “dramatic subjects in Canadian Women’s life was not among the CWAC but among the millions of women who stayed in their homes, carrying [*sic*] on some jobs, some responsibilities, plus their usual home duties—with their hearts full of constant pain and sorrow, for the men gone fighting.”<sup>83</sup>

While Clark was capable of expressing women’s war duties on military bases, she believed the greater challenge facing women was carried by those who stayed home and tried to continue their lives with constant worry for their husbands or sons. She even stated that it was an easier choice for women to join the armed forces. She explained, “Tearing off the eternal chores and drudgery of women’s life—women entered a regulated orderly life, with one duty set upon each, for so many hours each day, with the glory and glamour of uniform to top it!”<sup>84</sup> In this letter, Clark highlighted an issue of gender politics, seeming to suggest that heroic actions or campaigns were in fact easier to document and commemorate than the experiences of thousands of women who tried to continue to live full of fear and distress. The letter is evocative of the emotional impact of war on women and is representative of women’s wartime experience. It is also suggestive of Clark’s experience of the Second World War, as she continued with the “drudgery of women’s life” while worrying about her son at home and her family in Russia.

Clark’s frustration with her wartime paintings reflects her dissatisfaction as she tried to identify as a modern artist. This sense of disappointment can be explained as Clark tried to balance her family and career in a liminal generation, where women had to re-evaluate their responsibilities and sense of self as they strove for professional status and acceptance. Clark’s focus on the aesthetics of her wartime paintings instead of the

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<sup>83</sup> Clark to McCurry, 9 August 1945, Canadian War Artists (Clark, Paraskeva), Box 5, File 42-C, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

social relevance of women's work indicates her own desire to fit into the Western paradigms of the artist dedicated to art above other aspects of life. However, as she could not devote herself to art above her family responsibilities, her sense of disappointment increased.

### **Clark Struggles as a Woman Artist**

Clark often wrote of the great difficulty throughout her life in finding time to paint between household and familial duties. As a consequence, she claimed during interviews that women could not be great artists because, in her view, women's biological responsibilities as mothers prevented them from playing a significant role in art or society. Her view of women artists is further complicated by her whole-hearted belief in the Western concept of the great artist, fully devoted to art above other concerns—something women with family obligations could not possibly achieve. Clark's comments are suggestive of the liminal generation of women challenged by balancing a career and motherhood. As Clark wanted both a career and a family, she felt herself excluded from traditional definitions of what it meant to be both a woman and an artist. Clark's deep-seated dissatisfaction can be understood in these terms, by her displacement from both groups.

Clark often reported that she had little time to paint. Like many women, she only had free time between preparing meals, housekeeping and caring for her two children. Clark explained to curator Charles Hill, "It's complicated [a] woman's life... and there's so much involved and once you have a child, you're just forever with him. It's just there, and particularly when you have a child who at twenty [became] schizophrenic. I'm [a]

mother... it has nothing to do with any decision.”<sup>85</sup> On another occasion, Clark summarized a woman’s life, referencing the grocery stores she frequented, “There’s just cooking, cooking, cooking—Loblaws, Dominion, Loblaws, Dominion, Loblaws.”<sup>86</sup> At another point she told an interviewer, “If I were a man, I could be hard-hearted and selfish, and paint modern art. But I’m not and I can’t.”<sup>87</sup>

Clark’s most telling statement came in an interview where she discouraged women from trying to become professional artists:

It’s a hell of a thing to be a painter. I would like to stop every woman from painting, for only men can truly succeed. The majority of women who have really succeeded have not married or had children, but I don’t envy them. I believe that women, by their very nature and emotional make-up are so absorbed by their natural duties and responsibilities that they cannot truly father that great volume of creative effort needed for truly great works of art.”<sup>88</sup>

At times Clark even held God responsible for making women’s life difficult. In a 1979 interview with Adele Freedman, Clark claimed that she hated “God for making Adam first and then for making Eve just to produce more Adams.”<sup>89</sup> Clark consistently downplayed the quality of her own work, “People tell me I am successful but I don’t see it in myself. I always hope that some miracle will happen. I guess I have improved a little bit.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> MacLachlan, 35 quotes Paraskeva Clark, interview by Charles Hill, March 1980, transcript, courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada, Montreal.

<sup>86</sup> Adele Freedman, “Film Captures artist’s delight in life, living and grumping,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 20 January 1983.

<sup>87</sup> “Portraits were Artist’s Biography,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 12 August 1986.

<sup>88</sup> Paraskeva Clark, *Eclectic Eve*, (Toronto, no publisher, 1974).

<sup>89</sup> Adele Freedman, “In the Shadow of the 1930s: The Winter of Paraskeva Clark,” *Toronto Life* (February 1979), 129.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence Sabbath, “Paraskeva Clark” *Canadian Art* 17 (September 1960): 291-93.

Despite Clark's frequent criticism of capitalism, she did not challenge the family structure in capitalist society. In Burrett's words, "Her upbringing in pre-revolutionary Russia, her early experience of widowhood and sudden sole responsibility for an infant, the later illness of her eldest son as well as the predominant attitudes towards the domestic responsibilities of women in middle-class Toronto—the world to which she had to adjust—all contributed to her belief in the inevitability of her situation." Clark simply viewed these pressures and her role in the family as natural. Clark negotiated her life in relation to a marriage which provided security, physical comfort, as well as social benefits for herself and her children.<sup>91</sup>

In the view of Kathryn O'Rourke, Clark's concept of the artist allowed her to take certain risks, such as her open support for far-left politics. Clark was already on the margins of Canadian art society, she had little to lose if rejected. Furthermore, O'Rourke argues that Clark directed her anger towards capitalism because it was not possible in Clark's conception of the world to challenge women's status in the role of the family. She explains, "As an avowed Bolshevik, she allied herself with the forces battling capitalism, not patriarchy. This was not atypical for someone raised in revolutionary Russia. Her life under the Communist regime had not been difficult because she was a woman. Indeed, not as a woman but as an equal, she had received many benefits, such as an arts education."<sup>92</sup>

It was not possible for Clark to challenge her understanding of what it meant to be an artist and she fully internalized contemporary Western notions of the artist, a concept that denigrated women and their work. Clark's frequent outbursts that women could not

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<sup>91</sup> Burrett, 27.

<sup>92</sup> O'Rourke, 71.

be artists seemed to contradict the idea that she advanced of women's liberty. However, by striving for fulfillment and success in the public realm of patriarchal society, Clark challenged the cultural assumptions that inhibited women's lives.

Clark's belief that the artist must be single-mindedly devoted to art above other concerns did not ultimately benefit her.<sup>93</sup> As her life continued, her sense of disappointment amplified and she frequently voiced complaints that women could not be great artists, despite a considerable amount of public success.<sup>94</sup> Her articles "Come-out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," "Thoughts on Canadian Painting," her political and social campaigns of the Second World War and certainly her paintings *Parachute Riggers* and *Maintenance Jobs* which validate women's contribution to the war, all attest to Clark's belief in women's capacity to contribute to society.

Regardless of Clark's sense of failure, the paintings of women wartime workers are a validation and recognition of women's work in the public arena of the military. As well, they reflect a shift in Clark's painting as she negotiated her career in terms of modern paradigms, instead of politically ideological ones, as she had done in the 1930s. While Clark felt there was no drama on the bases, Harry McCurry recognized women's roles in the workforce as a great advancement for humanity; a development that temporarily at least granted the ability for women to choose the type of work they wished to do. Clark's wartime paintings challenge the conception of women belonging to the private realm, as the viewer is confronted with women who have transcended traditional gender conceptions. In this sense the women Clark painted mirror her search for recognition in the public sphere. Clark and the women recruits search out respect for their

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<sup>93</sup> Burrett, 28.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 26.

abilities beyond the home, outside the domestic realm. While many of the women soldiers understood their employment was only temporary, Clark and the women represented each chose to work outside the home, challenging traditional conceptions of women's work and their abilities.

Although the end of war saw the forced return of women to the home, the fact that thousands of women had successfully fulfilled responsibilities that were previously considered men's work gave women confidence to believe that they could participate equally in society. Jeff Keshen has proposed that while most women did return to the private realm, there were thousands of other women who remained employed. He has argued that the social upheaval during the war resulted in permanent changes for women. While women were coerced into returning to their domestic roles, the advances made in the public sphere could not be completely undone.<sup>95</sup> Clark's painting of successful women working in challenging tasks is part of a cultural shift that subsisted after the war ended. As Clark negotiated social conventions in her life and artwork as part of a liminal generation, she facilitated the acceptance of women into the professional world.

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<sup>95</sup> Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

### Chapter 3

#### Elizabeth Wyn Wood and the Advancement of Women's Recognition

Elizabeth Wyn Wood graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1924, and returned for post-graduate work in 1926.<sup>1</sup> One week after her marriage to Emanuel Hahn, Wood registered for a course with New York City's Art Students League, under direction of French-born American sculptor Robert Laurent. She returned to Toronto permanently in 1927, where she established a studio with her husband and Guelph, Ontario-born painter Alfred Mickle. Elizabeth Wyn Wood faced prejudice as a working woman in particular at two main points in her early career. In accordance with contemporary norms, she was primarily judged by her status as a married woman during her hiring at the Toronto Central Technical School and at the Winnipeg War Memorial competition.

Wood's "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield" and her role in the Arts Reconstruction Committee strongly suggest a woman who believed in the importance of women's contributions to society. Her monuments and sculpture, such as *Linda* (1932), the Welland-Crowland War Memorial (1934), and *Munitions Worker* (1944), include important representations of women. Wood's sculpture and her participation in public discussions demonstrate how as an artist and a woman she claimed a public role in society. As Elizabeth Wyn Wood searched for greater professional recognition, she, like Clark, mediated the conventional roles of woman and artist. This negotiation reflects Wood's place among a liminal generation where cultural norms were shifting.

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood: Tradition and Innovation in Canadian Sculpture* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1998), 45.

In 1930 Wood was offered a teaching contract at the Toronto Central Technical School, a controversial decision because she was a married woman whose husband was already fully employed at the Ontario College of Art. The *Toronto Star* reported the story on 28 May 1930. As the *Toronto Star* reported, “married women, as a rule, are barred from the employ of the Toronto board of education if their spouses are able to work.”<sup>2</sup> Wood’s hiring had been debated and then referred to a subsequent meeting because of her “matrimonial complications.” One member of the committee asked, “Is it not possible to get some woman who is not married?” A trustee identified in the *Toronto Telegram* only as Hilton stated, “We are opposed to having both a man and his wife employed.”<sup>3</sup>

To many, the employment of Wood when her husband was already earning an income was an affront to those who lost their jobs in the Depression. Historian Catherine MacLeod has chronicled the public outrage regarding married women who worked during the 1930s. She noted that J.D. Montieth, the Ontario Minister of Public Works and Labour, received several letters during this period, claiming that married women working outside the home were taking away jobs from men who were expected to support their families as well as from single women who did not have income from parents or a partner. MacLeod suggests many women continued to work under their maiden names to avoid public criticism, which may partly explain why Wood preferred to use her maiden name publicly.<sup>4</sup>

After much debate, the committee finally granted Wood the position based on the merit of her artwork. Dr. A.C. McKay, director of technical education, supported Wood,

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<sup>2</sup> “School Trustees Break Own Ruling,” *Toronto Star*, 28 May 1930.

<sup>3</sup> “Favor [sic] Breaking of Rule,” *Toronto Telegram*, 5 May 1930.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine MacLeod, “Women in Production: The Toronto Dressmakers’ Strike of 1931,” in *Women at Work: 1850-1930*, eds. Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith and Bonnie Shepard (Toronto: Canadian Women’s Educational Press, 1974), 314-315.

“This lady is an outstanding artist.”<sup>5</sup> Another trustee on the hiring committee acknowledged that Wood was the best sculptor for the position: “The interest of the students is safeguarded in this [hiring].”<sup>6</sup> Credit should be given to the board of trustees, as in the 1930s municipal and provincial governments, many school boards, and several companies routinely fired women when they married.<sup>7</sup> While she was granted the position based on the quality of her work, Wood was still subject to gender bias when she became a *cause célèbre* for public debate and interest in the Toronto newspapers. Notwithstanding this controversial beginning Wood remained at the school for twenty-eight years, until she retired in 1958. By choosing to work, Wood identified herself as a creative independent individual at an early stage in her career.

### **The Winnipeg War Memorial Commission**

As Elizabeth Wyn Wood began her career a controversy over the Winnipeg War Memorial was a defining event. It was her first major successful competition, despite her ultimate loss of the commission. The events were sufficiently remarkable to be chronicled in newspapers across Canada.

In 1925 a competition was launched for a new war monument in Winnipeg to replace a small cenotaph built immediately after the war ended. Wood’s husband, Emanuel Hahn, was among 47 entrants from across Canada. The competition judges recommended Hahn to the war memorial committee. Before a final decision was made, however, Hahn’s biography was published in the press. It included information regarding

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<sup>5</sup> “School Trustees Break Own Ruling.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Joan Sangster, *Earnest Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 122.

his immigration to Canada from Germany in July 1888 at the age of six. The announcement of Hahn's German birth unleashed a "reservoir of hatred that had been dammed up since the last [war] atrocity lecturer," according to J.H. Gray, who recounted the controversy in *Canadian Forum*.<sup>8</sup> Veterans' organizations opposed Hahn winning the commission but Gray believed the strongest opposition came from the Winnipeg Board of Trade, the Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire, and the War Widows Association.<sup>9</sup> Making military references, he wrote, "At the sounding of the tocsin the hundred-per-centres arose unanimously to condemn the designers, the judges and the committee as vile debasers of the memory of the sacred dead."<sup>10</sup>

Gray suggested that Winnipeg's two local newspapers were sympathetic to Hahn.<sup>11</sup> In particular the Canadian Club of Winnipeg, an organization encouraging Canadian patriotism, defended the beleaguered artist. In a statement to the press, the Club's executive committee recalled that by coming to Canada, Hahn had "accepted the responsibilities of his new citizenship and agreed to give Canada his whole-hearted allegiance." Claiming that there was no reason to question his loyalty, the author continued, "It has now been suggested that we introduce a reservation and discriminate against him because of his birth. Such an attitude would menace the status of our naturalized citizen [...] [and] the mind and heart of the community."<sup>12</sup> Hahn offered to rescind his submission, but the committee refused his request, opting instead to suspend the final decision for nine months in the hope that the uproar would cease.

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<sup>8</sup> J.H. Gray, "Battle of the Winnipeg Cenotaph," *Canadian Forum* (November 1934): 61.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "German-born Artist Defended by Club," *Ottawa Journal*, 11 March 1926.

During the postponement, interest in the memorial remained high as the Winnipeg city council debated the proposed site. The city opted to change the location, a convenient way to annul Hahn's winning submission without appearing to concede anything to either group. When the memorial committee met again in May 1927, they set aside Hahn's submission, but still awarded him the first-prize money. The committee then decided to initiate a new competition—this time stipulating that it was only open to sculptors and architects born in Canada. Freshly out of school, Wood seized this opportunity and submitted a proposal [Fig. 3.1].

Wood's submission for the Winnipeg War Memorial was her first attempt at sculpture on a monumental scale, and on 11 November 1927 her proposal was selected out of 49 entries. Eva Jones, the only woman on the selection committee, said, "The judges were unanimous in their desire to obtain for our city such a distinguished piece of statuary, arresting and dignified."<sup>13</sup> Wood did not face discrimination at this stage of the competition. Reception for women artists was positive. Jones noted that she "was delighted when we heard that it was [to be] executed by a woman sculptor, and my fellow-judges were most enthusiastic."<sup>14</sup> The Winnipeg Board of Assessors acknowledged that the design was "remarkable in originality and, by its heroic proportions, bound to arrest the attention of the passer-by. It avoids the similarity of so many War Memorials already erected... [and is] well suited to the site."<sup>15</sup>

This praise was not enough to ensure Wood's triumph. The public learned from the press that she was married to Emanuel Hahn. A second uproar ensued, and many

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<sup>13</sup> Eva L. Jones to Wood, 10 November 1927, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 4, File 10, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> R.H. Waugh to Wood, 11 November 1927, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 4, File 10, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

found reasons to condemn Wood after realizing her marital status. Curator and art historian Victoria Baker explained, “The same group of opponents from the 1925 competition circled around this new scandal, calling for the artist’s disqualification.”<sup>16</sup> Some claimed that “the design in no way agrees with the popular idea of how our dead heroes should be remembered in a monument.”<sup>17</sup> Another thought that the “sculpture was Teutonic in conception; it may be artistic but it is not typical of how we British people viewed the war, and the effects of the war.”<sup>18</sup> Some even suggested the design was Hahn’s, a blatantly sexist and prejudiced view against Wood, as it implied that a woman could not produce a great work of art. Others suggested that the proposal “did not impress them with the sense of loss which a monument must express.”<sup>19</sup> Wood was also criticized for using her maiden name, which was viewed as deliberately deceitful. The controversy surrounding the war memorial centered on two forms of discrimination. The first was the public bias against Hahn’s German background. The second was that while Wood was accepted as a female sculptor, her work and her identity were elided with that of her husband.

Although the judges initially praised Wood’s work as a female artist, the committee buckled under public pressure and disqualified her from the competition because she was married to Hahn. This prejudice was justified afterwards by aesthetic attacks on Wood’s monument—a clear change of position after Wood became identified with her husband and his heritage. The *Winnipeg Free Press* noted that although the rejection of Wood was regrettable, it would be “more unfortunate to erect a permanent

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<sup>16</sup> Baker, 52.

<sup>17</sup> W.A. Deacon, “The Cenotaph Selected Must Not Be Erected,” *Saturday Night* 7 (26 November 1927), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Deacon, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Rejection of Model Laid to Prejudice,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, 3 December 1927.

memorial from a design that evidently did not meet with general approval.”<sup>20</sup> The discrimination that Wood faced was not based on her status as a women sculptor, but rather on the disrespect she faced because she was married to a man born in Germany. Her husband was viewed as more important than her own creative work.

Fellow female sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle offered their support to Wood in the press. Loring explained, “It is a great pity to let any national prejudice interfere with the acceptance of good design. [...] I have seen sketches of the work and think that it has much dignity, and shows strong dramatic feeling.”<sup>21</sup> Wood remained out of the public eye for most of the debate, although at one point she worried that her reputation was in jeopardy based on inaccuracies put forward as justification for her disqualification from the competition.

Wood finally made her own position clear in a letter to the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* published in December 1927, explaining her intentions and clarifying the public’s misunderstandings of the instructions for the monument.<sup>22</sup> For example, many criticized Wood’s proposal because it was not a cenotaph. However, in the proposal the city specifically asked for a war memorial and not a cenotaph. In a second article she explained that she did not apply under Hahn’s name because she simply never used his name as an artist. She also emphasized her Canadian heritage that went back several generations. The article assured readers that Hahn had previously worked on several war memorials across Ontario, such as Toronto’s South Boer War Memorial with Walter Allward.<sup>23</sup> Baker suggested that this moment was decisive for Wood as “the power of the

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<sup>20</sup> “The Cenotaph Decision,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 December 1927.

<sup>21</sup> “Rejection of Model Laid to Prejudice.”

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Miss Wood’s Design for Cenotaph,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 December 1927.

<sup>23</sup> “Mrs. Hahn Thinks Husband’s Nationality Lost Her Award,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, 5 December 1927.

press in shaping artistic debates was thus early made very clear to her, and she would use it in later years to bring such issues into the public arena.”<sup>24</sup>

The committee justified their change of heart by awarding Wood \$500, the first-prize money. The third-prize winner was chosen, architect Gilbert Prafitt, a British-born Winnipeg resident. Second place winner A.M. Eadie was also skipped, probably because Prafitt had connections with the local government. Prafitt was later hired as provincial architect.<sup>25</sup>

The committee justified its position on Wood by stating that their decision was based on popular opinion, and that a war memorial must represent the wishes of veterans and the public.<sup>26</sup> Certainly the public’s concerns are understandable as the memorial is a monument to those who were killed by German soldiers, but there was no validity to the opposition facing Hahn as a naturalized Canadian citizen nor to Wood’s treatment. After this fiasco, in order to avoid further accusations that her submission was not her own design, Wood entered competitions alongside Hahn, as was the case with the Welland-Crowland War Memorial.

The controversy surrounding the memorial did not end after Wood lost the commission. The new site for the monument was described as a “frog pond underneath the scaffold in the back yard of the jail.”<sup>27</sup> A policeman was required to guard the monument in the days leading up to the official unveiling after several acts of vandalism. The tarpaulin covering the statue was set on fire before the unveiling, black paint was

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<sup>24</sup> Baker, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Gray, 64.

<sup>26</sup> “The Cenotaph Decision,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 3 December 1927.

<sup>27</sup> Gray, 64.

thrown on the memorial, and part of the statue's bronze detailing was torn off, indications perhaps of the public's frustration with the city's handling of the decision.

### **Women's Representation and the War Effort**

As the economy deteriorated in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, the dominance of landscape representation in Canada continued to weaken. Some artists represented the sombre realities of society during the Depression, but most did not criticize the government or the capitalist system. Wood, having sculpted several landscape scenes, altered her themes to include morose women, suggestive of the difficult times. While she never directly addressed this change in her work, it is likely that the landscape became less appealing and less socially acceptable as many were struggling for the basic necessities of life.<sup>28</sup> In the 1930s Wood predominantly depicted women with sculptures such as *Linda* (1932), *Woman Holding Skein* (1934-35); *Immigrant (Pioneer)* (1935), and *Regeneration* (1938). These works emphasize women's strength and courage. Wood also represented women's contribution in the First World War, with the Welland-Crowland War Memorial (1934), and recognized the importance of women's efforts in the Second World War, with *Munitions Worker* (1944). The latter recorded women's roles in industry during the Second World War home front effort. Wood's sculptures of strong women mirror her own search for equality as a working female artist and visibly reinforce her example of women's equal status in society.

Most notable during this period is *Linda* [Fig. 3.2], seen by one critic at the *Toronto Observer* as an iconic celebration of women's role in the settlement of Western

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<sup>28</sup> Charles C. Hill, *Canadian Painting in the 1930s* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975).

Canada.<sup>29</sup> *Linda* is a transitional piece in Wood's career, marking the shift from landscape-based influences in her work, such as *Passing Rain* (1928), to subjects asserting women's strength and independence. *Linda* stands barefoot, wearing a roughly cut one-piece dress. Her feet appear calloused, broad and strong, giving a sense of the woman's difficult life as well as establishing a base for the massive sculpture. The figure's strong body is reinforced by thick legs and arms, the hands pulled behind her back. While her face, legs and feet appear rough and androgynous, or even traditionally masculine, the viewer recognizes her femininity through her breasts and curved hips. Her stern facial expression and determined look contrast with a smooth subtlety in her cheekbones that serve to further reinforce her femininity. Wood intended the over-life-sized work to be cast either in a coloured silver metal or a light green bronze. However, the sculpture remained in plaster due to financial constraints. A bronze cast now at the Art Gallery of Hamilton was executed posthumously, fulfilling Wood's original intentions.

While Wood does not seem to have ever discussed *Linda* or explained her intentions, contemporary critics recognized *Linda* as a symbol of the modern woman. Viewers better appreciated women's role in society through the sculpture.<sup>30</sup> An unnamed journalist at the *Winnipeg Free Press* noted that *Linda* "is not one of the clinging vine variety 'frailty thy name is woman'" but rather, *Linda* "stands up to life, courageous and her attitude should be an inspiration to many of us." The same critic proposed that *Linda* should be understood as a new immigrant in Canada, "Think of her coming from hag

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<sup>29</sup> Brandon Art Gallery Souvenir Booklet (1933), 26, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 2, File 4, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>30</sup> "Mr. Brooker's Gift," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 22 November 1938.

ridden Europe, of having had to sup of the devil's brew and all the bitter memories of homeland!"<sup>31</sup>

Another unidentified critic wrote of *Linda* in the *Toronto Observer*, "I was fascinated at once, as I think everyone is, by this figure of a peasant girl; one felt instantly that one was in the presence of the heroic: but the impressiveness deepened as one looked and returned again to look."<sup>32</sup> Despite the statue's praiseworthy attributes, however, it was also the perceived simplicity and poverty that drew attention, "On this humble and (one feels) lonely woman, not of brilliant intellectual powers, has been suddenly thrust the necessity of some difficult decision or some hard task from which she shrinks but the way in which the unshod feet, set wide apart, grip the earth."<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the critic's idealization of the women's apparent lack of intelligence, *Linda* was seen as articulating women's strength and courage in the face of adversity.

Wood rarely addressed the subjects or intentions in her work. Playwright and critic Herman Voaden suggested that inherent in Wood's sculpture was the "subdued and austere feeling of strength, the purity of intention" visible in the sculpture itself. In the case of *Linda*, Voaden noted, "it is the quiet nobleness of earth. Always it is the power, the dignity, the worth of man; the beauty of his creative vision of the universe," an odd and somewhat chauvinist comment considering Voaden was discussing a sculpture of a woman created by a woman.<sup>34</sup> However Voaden did acclaim this piece: "It is the best work she has yet done—over life size, a study of a country girl that is deeply, searchingly, mightily felt. It is the product of an imagination that reaches toward great

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<sup>31</sup> "Untitled," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 November 1938.

<sup>32</sup> Brandon Art Gallery Souvenir Booklet (1933), 26, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 2, File 4, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Herman Voaden, "Elizabeth Wyn Wood," *Maritime Art: A Canadian Art Magazine* 2 (July 1942): 149.

and simple things. We have gone beyond ‘The Man with the Hoe.’ The soil gives greatness, strength and power. *Linda* looks toward a more heroic norm of womanhood.”<sup>35</sup>

*Linda* was exhibited several times in the early 1930s, including at the Sculptors Society of Canada exhibition in 1932 and at the National Gallery of Canada in 1933.<sup>36</sup> As well, it was on display twice at Toronto’s Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in 1932 and 1938. Impressed by this piece, Bertram Brooker purchased and donated *Linda* to the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1938—perhaps he was also pleased that Wood defended his point of view in the 1937 debate with Frank Underhill. Brooker would likely have seen *Linda* at one of these exhibitions, presumably at the 1938 CNE show, since that was the year he purchased the sculpture.

Victoria Baker fittingly compares *Linda* to *Rollande* (1929) [Fig. 3.3] by Montreal-born painter Prudence Heward. *Rollande* represents another strong and iconic farm woman. However, in Heward’s work the subject is French-Canadian.<sup>37</sup> Breaking away from the Group of Seven’s landscape traditions, *Rollande* and *Linda* are part of a 1930s interest in figurative art which saw an increase in women’s representation, by both men and women artists. In the 1936 *Yearbook* Graham McInnes characterized the development of art during this period in the following terms. “The pendulum of our art has swung too far in the direction of pure landscape [...] those who are [...] experimenting with portraiture, still life, formal design, street scenes and figure painting are taking the harder [and more interesting] road.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Voaden, 147.

<sup>36</sup> Baker, 120.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, 66-67.

<sup>38</sup> Graham McInnes, “Thoughts on Canadian Art” Bertram Brooker, ed. *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1936), 225.

Women were also increasingly successful as artists, compared with earlier periods. Prudence Heward and Lilius Torrance Newton were particularly well-received as figural painters in the 1930s. Newton in particular relied solely on her painting to earn a living. Scholars Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj have concluded that women, since the 1920s, had become more prominent in artistic communities, and that “a change in the general artistic climate which saw the expansion of the Group of Seven into the Canadian Group of Painters in 1933 did much to encourage women artists.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the expansion of the Group of Seven into the Canadian Group of Painters gave woman painters more opportunities to exhibit. Farr and Luckyj explain, “An awaking interest in subjects and styles outside the rather narrow range of the Canadian landscape tradition permitted public acceptance of themes previously neglected. The gap between what formerly might have been termed ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ subject matter slowly narrowed with the emphasis on figurative and narrative themes.”<sup>40</sup> The increasing respect for women artists in the 1930s facilitated Wood’s career, while at the same time Wood’s portrayal of strong women spoke to women’s changing societal status.

During this period, Wood submitted proposals for various public memorials and won the competition for the Welland-Crowland War Memorial [Fig. 3.4]. The citizens of Welland, Ontario, and the surrounding township of Crowland, raised funds for the construction of a memorial to mark lives lost in the First World War and the home front war efforts. The community wanted to integrate the monument with the Welland Ship Canal. Park land beside the canal was reserved for the monument, linking the wartime sacrifice to the industrial and commercial success of the recently enlarged canal,

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<sup>39</sup> Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women’s Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston, Ontario: Queen’s University Press, 1976), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Farr and Luckyj, 2.

completed in 1933. The community waited for the canal's completion to construct the memorial and because of the delays, it was the last major First World War memorial completed in Canada. In July 1934, the commission invited proposals. The scale of the project attracted submissions from twenty-two architects and sculptors across Canada, including Walter Allward, Frances Loring, Florence Wyle and Wood's husband, Emanuel Hahn.<sup>41</sup>

Proposals were judged according to two main criteria. The committee wanted a sculpture that would be recognizable as a war memorial without any inscription being necessary. The sculpture "should by its form or by definite symbolism clearly indicate its character [...] it should tell the story and indicate its Canadian ancestry."<sup>42</sup> As well, the jury thought the sculpture should be visible from all directions, in particular for passengers travelling along the canal. "There is a very large travel movement by boat and it was considered important by the jury that any monument that was erected should be visible and intelligible to the passengers on the slow-moving boats."<sup>43</sup> Wood designed her scheme to smoothly emerge from the surrounding flat landscape. The sculpture was to rest on top of a long and narrow base which gently rose from the land on one side where, at the summit of the pedestal, a man and woman stood. In her formal submission, Wood emphasized the importance of the two figures: "The group consists of two symbolic figures—man the Defender, woman the Giver—against a background of growing grain and young red pine. The intention is to honour not only those who fought

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<sup>41</sup> "Board of Assessor's Report, Welland Memorial Commission," November 1934, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 3, File 13, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

overseas, but those who served in any capacity or those who gave in any way.”<sup>44</sup> Wood’s inclusion of the woman, whom she called *The Harvester*, was an important statement, which few other war memorials considered. Herman Voaden noted that Wood, “pressed for time with the Welland monument, [...] worked as many as eighteen hours a day in a converted factory finishing it—while carrying on with other tasks as well.”<sup>45</sup> This period was particularly busy for Wood. While managing her career and teaching twice a week with three sessions throughout the day and into the evening, she also became pregnant in 1937.

The committee chose Wood’s submission, noting that the design was “fine in mass, beautifully balanced and in its conception was dignified and poetic in its suggestion. There was nothing theatrical to mar the beauty of the composition.”<sup>46</sup> The committee enjoyed the gently rising base of the sculpture, which they viewed as “an integrated part of the composition taking its shape from the essential rhythm of the whole.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, they recognized the importance of Wood’s decision to include women’s contribution to the war effort, explaining, “Woman the Giver—in a beautiful movement of the body with head slightly bowed and turned in the opposite direction from the man’s, [is] leaning against him in an attitude of support and willing sacrifice. The suggestion of grief in this figure is slightly indicated, symbolic of her devotion and of the serious nature of the sacrifice on the part of the man.”<sup>48</sup> Wood’s previous experience with

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Description of Proposed Monument,” not dated, Emanuel Hahn-Elizabeth Wyn Wood Fonds, Box 3, File 13, Queen’s University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

<sup>45</sup> Herman Voaden, “Elizabeth Wyn Wood,” *Maritime Art: A Canadian Art Magazine* 2 (July 1942): 148.

<sup>46</sup> “Board of Assessor’s Report.”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Wood, “Description of Proposed Monument.”

sculptures of landscape proved valuable as the committee enjoyed “the handling of the grain and pine motifs, the latter typifying the Canadian scene.”<sup>49</sup>

Wood’s sculpture of the soldier entitled *The Recruit* (1937) can be seen as bearing a resemblance to Norman Bethune [Fig. 3.5], an idea first proposed by National Gallery curator Charles Hill in the 1970s. While the foreheads are dissimilar, the sculpture shares likenesses around the eyebrows and bridge of the nose as well as around the tip of the nose, lips and chin. A connection between Bethune and the Welland soldier would be surprising, given Bethune’s communist advocacy and Wood’s belief in the separation of art and politics. While a resemblance could simply be coincidence, it is true that the sculpture was created through several stages of enlargement during the period from 1934 to 1937, and overlaps with dates when Bethune visited Toronto. Wood’s daughter, Qennefer Browne, considered the resemblance to be only conjectural, but acknowledged that examination of plaster maquettes from different stages and dates could provide useful evidence.

Qennefer suggested one reason why Wood might have used Bethune as a facial prototype based on her mother’s emotional and psychological makeup. Qennefer describes Wood as an extremely private and reserved individual who absorbed strict bourgeois codes of behaviour from her family upbringing.<sup>50</sup> In light of Wood’s friendship with Clark, who must have appeared to Wood so free and uninhibited, especially considering her affair with Bethune, Qennefer has suggested, “maybe Elizabeth had mixed feelings about Paraskeva’s affair with Bethune. She probably disapproved, because it was so adulterous, but maybe she was somewhat envious,

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<sup>49</sup> “Board of Assessor’s Report.”

<sup>50</sup> Qennefer Browne (daughter of Elizabeth Wyn Wood) interviewed by the author, Orillia, Ontario, 30 January 2010.

because it was so dramatic, so passionate, so engaged and unashamed.”<sup>51</sup> Qennefer emphasized that this is a psychologically speculative interpretation and is not based on evidence from Elizabeth Wyn Wood.

Regardless of any resemblance, the Welland-Crowland Memorial fulfilled the committee’s criteria: it balanced the needs of the monument as a celebration of the canal’s industrial-commercial significance, incorporated a sense of Canadian identity into the work and most importantly, it commemorated the sacrifice and war efforts of Canadian men and women. It was a very public acknowledgment of the important place women had in the history of Canada’s First World War contributions.<sup>52</sup>

Welland city council unsuccessfully tried to arrange the monument’s unveiling by King George VI during his visit to Canada in 1939, reinforcing the community’s high regard for the monument and its connection to the Welland Canal which symbolized industry, commerce and patriotism.<sup>53</sup> Wood’s speech at the opening on 2 September 1939 expressed the hope that this would be among the last war memorials. Unfortunately this was not the case, as on the following day Britain declared war on Germany because of its invasion of Poland.

The late 1930s was a difficult period for Wood, as she and Hahn rearranged their lives to accommodate the birth in 1937 of their daughter Qennefer. While both had had continued employment as well as professional success throughout the Depression, their

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> In the 1950s, Wood again reinforced women’s status in society by including Elizabeth Simcoe in a monument dedicated to the accomplishments of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Baker, 89.

<sup>53</sup> “Board of Assessor’s Report.”

life was a finely balanced combination of work and social activity and had not included plans to have a family, with the additional household demands of a child.<sup>54</sup>

Hahn had been very supportive of Wood up to this point. Qennefer recalls personal comments from her father, that Hahn admired Wood's innovation and her creativity. Of the two, Hahn felt he was more traditional and academic with his sculpture, whereas Wood demonstrated the 1920s spirit, more imaginative and modern. However, Qennefer surmises that their relationship fundamentally changed when she was born. In particular, decades after Wood's death, a family friend commented that Hahn had initially berated Wood after she became pregnant. He felt that by having a child Wood was ruining her artistic career, and she would become like traditional women whose only life is to bear children. For his part, Hahn had vivid memories of this kind of family life—his mother had had seventeen children in all, although only twelve survived into adulthood. Ten immigrated to Canada. He disliked growing up in a family where his mother was seemingly perpetually pregnant, and burdened by the extra work so many children required.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, once Hahn encountered his own newborn daughter, he became a doting and attentive parent.

Prior to Qennefer's birth, Wood's household had been managed by a live-in servant, a Japanese man, but right after the birth he announced his resignation as he did not want to be involved with children in the house. Wood had to reorganize at short notice, and also hired a nanny for Qennefer's first two years. Along with the nanny, there was always the live-in housekeeper, with additional outside help for laundry, grocery delivery and garden care. Wood's teaching and studio work kept her busy, and she

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<sup>54</sup> Qennefer Browne interviewed by the author.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

delegated all domestic tasks.<sup>56</sup> While Qennefer understands the 1930s as a relatively prosperous period for her parents, after she was born, their relationship was never quite the same.

Perhaps influenced by an occasionally unsympathetic husband, in later years Wood suffered from a quiet, inward depression. As Hahn aged, she took on more financial responsibility and authority. Qennefer believes her mother, as a very private and dignified individual, was unable to talk openly about her problems which in turn only increased her sense of isolation, her personal disappointments and disillusionment.<sup>57</sup>

Wood's preoccupation with women's representation continued into the 1940s, although she also represented men throughout this period, such as in the sculptural relief *Manitoba* (1946-1948) for the Bank of Montreal building in Toronto. During the Second World War bronze and other metals were rationed as foundries were converted for war production, making casting difficult. Artists moved to plaster as a consequence. In Wood's case, her *Munitions Worker* [Fig. 3.6], first exhibited as *Factory Worker* in March 1944, was made of plaster, painted green and silver to simulate a bronze appearance. The broad-shouldered woman in this piece wears overalls that appear heavy and masculine. Her breasts are merely hinted at under the heavy clothing. The woman's hair is wrapped safely out of the way with a scarf, except for a row of bangs that are visible—the only conventionally feminine characteristic remaining in the worker. A large industrial clamp behind the woman evokes the physical labour she completes. *Munitions Worker* is different from Wood's previous depictions of women: the worker is intricately

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

involved with the mechanical fabrication of war. The woman's expression is neutral with a hint of discontent, implying that her work is repetitive, mechanical and tedious.

Baker has suggested that Wood completed this work in the hope that it might be purchased as part of the war art program, or at least by the National Gallery of Canada which commissioned war art from Clark and Bobs Cogill Haworth.<sup>58</sup> In an article published in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, Wood noted her disappointment that no sculptors were asked to contribute. "No one thought it worthwhile to commission any Canadian sculptors as war artists." However, Wood acknowledged this did not stop sculptors from depicting wartime events: "a few of them did make some records, on their own initiative, of munitions-workers and other manifestations of the war at home."<sup>59</sup> It is probable that Wood created *Munitions Worker* to compensate for the lack of official wartime sculptures.

Judging by Wood's "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield" article, *Munitions Worker* must be regarded as separate from any official political ideology. However, she does reinforce women's changing status in society.<sup>60</sup> At the time, one critic viewed the female figure as the representation of a vital component of the entire war experience.<sup>61</sup> More recently Baker has observed, "Yet, while *Munitions Worker* carries a political message in representing women as a central symbol of defence and strength on the industrial home front, it is one that is personally inspired, without formal ties to any state or official ideology."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Baker, 77-78.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "Ten Years of Canadian Sculpture," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 25 (September 1948): 15-19.

<sup>60</sup> Baker, 72.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

While the sculpture appears today as a clear political message advancing women's equality, it was not necessarily the case for viewers in the 1940s. As Huneault has noted in her article "Heroes of a Different Sort?" the sculpture of First World War women war-industry workers articulated a message of wartime patriotism, and not a progressive step for women's freedom to choose a career. Huneault wrote "working women [...] instead of being regarded as outsiders seeking to encroach on masculine domains of social and economic privilege, women workers were suddenly valued as patriotic subjects whose labour freed men for the fight overseas."<sup>63</sup> The same could be said for the Second World War. It is likely that Wood's *Munitions Worker* was viewed in the same way, although her intention, as in her other work, must have been to depict strong and noble women, and in so doing, help to raise the prominence of women in society.

*Munitions Worker* is quite different from the woman in the Welland-Crowland Memorial, although both sculptures honour women's contributions to the war effort. The woman in the memorial, as Wood wrote, represents "the Giver" of life, and she appears demure, holding a shaft of wheat, crouched behind her protector, the soldier. *Munitions Worker* represents the harsh reality of industrial fabrication, the woman is stoic, and her gaze is resilient, with hints of fatigue in her expression. Baker wrote that the *Munitions Worker* is part of the "vital components of a mechanized modern society: the symbolic sheaf of wheat is replaced by an industrial clamp, its sickle shape alluding to the insignia of Soviet Russia, a war ally. Indeed, Wood's heroic style and emphasis on the common citizen formally resembles contemporary Socialist Realist sculpture." If one is to judge

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<sup>63</sup> Kristina Huneault, "Heroes of a Different Sort?" *Journal of Canadian Art History* 15 (Summer 1994): 27.

by her views expressed in “Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield” Wood would not have intended the sculpture to reflect Socialist Realism, the aesthetic style used by the Soviet Union to advance the state’s goals. Rather, she would have refuted any link to political ideology, particularly an approach to art used to denigrate individuality. Regardless of the interpretation one takes, Wood makes clear that the woman is a symbol of “defence and strength on the industrial home front.”<sup>64</sup>

Wood’s *Munitions Worker* differs greatly from Paraskeva Clark’s *Parachute Riggers* or *Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar*, where the women appear to take pleasure in their work. Clark illuminated the worker’s faces suggesting pleasure and satisfaction with their duties. Both artists support women’s roles in the workforce, although they advocate this in different ways. Clark shows the benefits and skills of working women in a positive manner, while Wood highlights the challenges women take on in physically difficult occupations. Her *Munitions Worker* suggests that this task is essential however tedious it may be. Wood’s focus on women’s representation during 1930s and 40s emphasizes her commitment to the pursuit of women’s equality in Canadian society. *Linda* was understood as a recognition of women immigrants in the settling of Western Canada, while the Welland-Crowland Memorial marked the contribution of women during the First World War, and *Munitions Worker* symbolized the role women served in the Second World War home front effort. Wood’s sculpture acknowledges women as important and strong contributors in society.

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<sup>64</sup> Baker, 77.

## Women's Involvement with the War

Wood and Clark created representations of working women during a highly charged discussion concerning the movement of women into industry and the armed forces. The military advertised for women recruits, and magazines such as *MacLean's* and *Chatelaine* featured articles on women's roles in the factory. The Still Film Division of the National Film Board (NFB) captured the life of one munitions worker, in a series named "Mrs. Jack Wright." The unnamed photographer followed Mrs. Wright (whose first name is not given) as she balanced industrial work during the day and her duties as a wife and mother in the evenings and weekends [Figs. 3.7 and 3.8].<sup>65</sup> Another series depicted Veronica Foster as *Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl* [Fig. 3.9], a cultural icon appearing in several studies of women's Second World War work. *Ronnie* was followed throughout her day as an employee at a Toronto munitions factory and into her evening dancing the jitterbug.<sup>66</sup> Published in 1943 by MacLean Publishing, *Women at War* promoted the movement of women into the work force with images of Mrs. Jack Wright and Veronica Foster from the NFB.<sup>67</sup>

Government officials and military officers feared that the high number of men working in the Armed Forces would lead to devastating shortages of basic goods and war machinery. To ensure this did not occur, National Selective Service was charged with controlling Canada's military recruitment and civilian labour distribution. Encouraging women to work to sustain essential production, the National Selective Service urged

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<sup>65</sup> Carol Payne, "Guns, Gams & Glamour: Vernacular Photography, Women Munitions Workers and Historical Discourse," Universities Art Association of Canada Annual Conference, York University, Toronto (November, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> "Canadian War Industry during the Second World War." Library and Archives Canada. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/war-industry/025010-2014-e.html#pp19> (accessed 24 August 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Payne. "Guns, Gams & Glamour."

women in a widely publicized campaign to “Roll up your sleeves for Victory!”<sup>68</sup> In order to recruit women, the service had three main goals: “to attract the necessary numbers of women into industry; to convince potential employers and male co-workers of the need for their services; and to reassure the general public that war work was a patriotic duty for women, on a temporary basis,” writes historian Jean Bruce.<sup>69</sup>

The campaign was successful at employing women. By the end of the war in 1944, the Department of Labour recorded that over one million women were directly working in the armed forces or in industrial manufacturing.<sup>70</sup> However, it was not a complete and triumphant step for woman’s equality, as many women faced slanderous and baseless allegations because they chose to work. One factory worker in the 1940s recalled that workers were regarded as “rough and ready,” in other words, tough and uncivilized.<sup>71</sup> As well they were often forced into low-wage and poor ranking positions and at the end of the war they faced a strong initiative to remove women from the labour force, returning to the traditional domestic occupations considered appropriate for them.<sup>72</sup>

Wood’s *Munitions Worker* differs from *Linda* and the *Harvester* in the Welland-Crowland Memorial because the *Munitions Worker* is a commemoration of women’s work in the public sphere. With *Harvester* Wood chose to rely on rather stereotypical conventions of womanhood, as in the war memorial the woman is presented as the “Giver” of life. While certainly women’s nurturing and agrarian work is valid as a subject matter and worth commemorating, *Munitions Worker* is different because the munitions

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<sup>68</sup> Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack! Canadian Women during the Second World War—at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1985), 55.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 111.

<sup>72</sup> Ruth Pierson, *They’re Still Women After all”: the Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

woman has broken away from these traditional conventions of femininity. In other words, the factory working woman assertively marks her presence in the public sphere.

As with Clark and her military women, Wood's *Munitions Worker* signals a search for acceptance and recognition in the public sphere. Neither woman is guided by the traditional conventions that confined women to the private realm of society. In this sense, Clark's and Wood's life and artworks speak to similar issues. The wartime artworks can be seen to reflect each woman's search for personal recognition.

### **Artistic and Political Advocacy**

Not only did Wood advance the women's movement with her sculpture, she also did so with her artistic commitments and political writing. On 8 December 1932, for example, a group of Canadian artists, including George Reid and Homer Watson published an article announcing a boycott of the National Gallery of Canada, attempting to force a public inquiry and "radical change" at the institution. The group of 118 artists alleged that Director Eric Brown and the National Gallery of Canada favoured the Group of Seven, because of the supposed large proportion of exhibitions featuring their work and the great number of their paintings purchased for the permanent collection. Part of the artists' frustration lay in their loss of patronage during the Depression, when the Gallery was one of the few institutions still purchasing art. The debate was fought predominately between the older generation of academic artists and their supporters who felt threatened by the modernism of the Group of Seven.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Charles C. Hill, *Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada and McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 277-281.

Wood came to the defence of the Group of Seven and Eric Brown in a *Canadian Forum* article, later reprinted in the *Ottawa Citizen* on 11 March 1933. To gain support Wood and two other women, sculptor Frances Loring and Louise Comfort, wife of painter Charles Comfort, canvassed art organizations across Canada and gathered a group of artists in support of the National Gallery. Wood and others from the Group of Seven, in particular Lawren Harris, felt insulted by the accusations, believing that the dissidents were deceiving the public and promoting confusion.<sup>74</sup> In Wood's article, she reviewed the main concerns of the protestors and tried to ease tensions. Wood wrote that the protesters did not represent the majority of Canadian artists, "the outburst was very startling to the many who hold the National Gallery in high esteem as one institution whose co-operative policy is felt and appreciated in all parts of the country." She continued, "Some of the one hundred and eighteen malcontents are emotionally in a state which is more deserving of compassion than of censure. Many of them have fallen prey to false rumours to such an extent that they actually think they have legitimate grievances."<sup>75</sup> Confident that the Group would prevail, Wood wrote of the conflict, "It has an element of desperation in it—the desperation of a disappointed and dying order."<sup>76</sup> Her bold response in this affair was an important episode that helped to establish her national reputation as a strong independent professional. After the fiasco, Eric Brown had little involvement with Canadian art, and the National Gallery discontinued its annual Canadian art exhibitions. The artist societies had been strongly divided, leading A. Y. Jackson to resign from the Royal Canadian Academy and Lawren Harris with all the sculptors (Wood, Hahn,

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<sup>74</sup> Hill, *Group of Seven*, 281.

<sup>75</sup> Wood, "The National Gallery," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 March 1933.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Florence Wyle, Frances Loring and Jacobine Jones) to resign from the Ontario Society of Artists.<sup>77</sup>

Wood's work with the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Arts Reconstruction Committee and her organization and management skills led her to be selected for the UNESCO-sponsored International Association of Plastic Arts, held in Vienna, Austria in 1960. The commission discussed copyright, tariffs and taxation.<sup>78</sup> She was also active in other organizations such as the Sculptors' Society of Canada, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and the Canadian Guild of Potters.<sup>79</sup> Wood's participation in such organizations reinforced the importance of women in advocacy work. By challenging traditional structures that excluded women from participation, Wood asserted women's equal position in society.

Wood advanced women's equality and freedom in Canadian society by including women in monuments such as the Welland-Crowland War Memorial that unmistakably recognized the role of women's work on the home front during the war, albeit somewhat stereotypically. Her work during the 1930s such as *Linda*, *Woman Holding Skein*, and *Munitions Worker* reflect the importance of women's contributions in farm, industrial, and family life. However, most importantly, her *Munitions Worker* acts as a commemoration of women's place in the public sphere during the Second World War, mirroring Wood's own quest for recognition and acceptance.

Notwithstanding Clark's rebuke which cast Wood as naïve, her career and her support of Eric Brown and the National Gallery, and her work for the War Reconstruction Committee are significant events reinforcing the importance of women's

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<sup>77</sup> Hill, *Canadian Painting in the 1930s*.

<sup>78</sup> Pearl McCarthy, "Sculptor Excels at Congress," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 15 October 1960.

<sup>79</sup> Baker, 81.

place in society at a time when women's activities in the public sphere were controversial for a liminal generation. The criticism she faced at the Toronto Central Technical School and during the Winnipeg War Memorial competition underline the intolerance she faced as a woman but also her perseverance. Wood advanced the cause of women's recognition by example.

## Conclusion

The articles by Clark and Underhill challenged the Group of Seven's dominance in the art world and questioned the lack of social commentary and criticism by artists during the Depression. Wood's vehement defence of the separation of art and politics and her support of landscape art is often perceived to be sentimental or naïve, but was a viewpoint that came to the fore after the Second World War. Despite the apparent opposition between Clark and Wood, each woman's writing can be seen a part of a search for a more public presence in society.

Despite their great differences, Clark and Wood's careers share common features. Both of the same generation, each woman tried to establish a professional career, strongly defended her values and views on art, and advocated for several arts causes, serving many community organizations. Among other subjects, both artists represented strong resilient women, helping to create a body of visual culture that challenged traditional norms of femininity and promoted greater acceptance for the variety of women's choices in society. Clark and Wood were not idle bystanders in the broad movements that benefited women artists in the first half of the twentieth century.

Previously, the scholarship on Paraskeva Clark and Elizabeth Wyn Wood has often tended not to address their lives in the context of larger issues of women in twentieth-century society. While writers were aware of Clark's complaints that her domestic responsibilities kept her away from painting, no one had considered the lives of these two women as potentially exemplifying the general trends for woman artists in the 1930s, as woman began to gain acceptance and prominence in artists' societies and gallery exhibitions. More specifically, earlier literature has not addressed the lives of Clark and Wood as part of a liminal generation, who

mediated private concerns with the public realm, and in the case of these two artists, presented and validated women who worked in the public sphere.

This thesis has begun to unravel the cultural process of twentieth century feminism in Canada. While neither Clark nor Wood declared herself a feminist, their actions underline their belief in women's abilities to contribute equally in society. They were part of a cultural shift that changed perceptions and in time permitted more women to choose their own destiny.

This analysis has identified differences in the personal lives of Clark and Wood, specifically how they managed their households and how this affected their professional careers. Their dissimilar perspectives and their quite different management of their households seems to suggest a difference of class. While both were roughly middle class, Wood relied upon her hired domestic help, which allowed her the free time to work as a professional. On the other hand, Clark's commitment to maintain the household duties herself perhaps indicates a desire to maintain solidarity with the working class, or what Clark must have considered the proletariat. Clark's apparent desire to keep this status may be reflected in her daily walks to the grocery store, even though she could have driven a vehicle and saved a considerable amount of time. This desire to remain among the working classes trumped her desire for painting, as the Clark household could have likely hired domestic help which would have granted Clark more independent time.

More scholarship is needed to understand the larger social picture that facilitated women's movement toward greater freedom and prominence in society. In particular, Harry McCurry's advanced perspective of women's work requires more attention to identify why such a politically conservative figure advocated both for women and socially liberal individuals such as Clark and other women artists like Pegi Nicol MacLeod and Molly Lamb Bobak. In the

broader context, additional scholarship is also needed to reveal how other women artists participated in these trends and how women began to seek a more public role. The cultural foundations of feminism that changed the way society thinks and acts towards women can be mapped through further analysis of this transitional period.

**Illustrations**

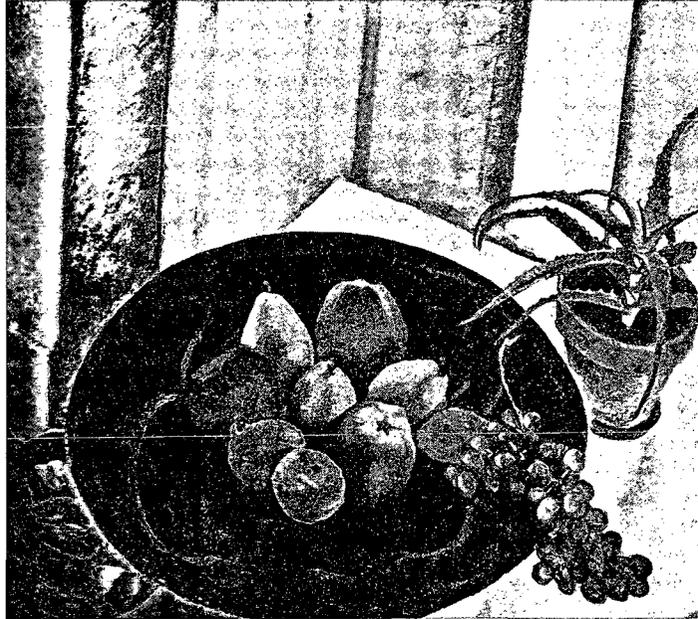


Fig. 1.1 Paraskeva Clark, *Still Life* (c. 1936), oil on canvas, unknown dimensions. Reproduced in Bertram Brooker *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1936), plate 61.



Fig. 1.2 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *Woman Holding Skein* (1934-35), painted plaster, 78 x 28.5 x 44.4 cm. Estate of Elizabeth Wyn Wood and Emanuel Hahn. Reproduced in Victoria Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood: Tradition and Innovation in Canadian Sculpture* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1998), 127.

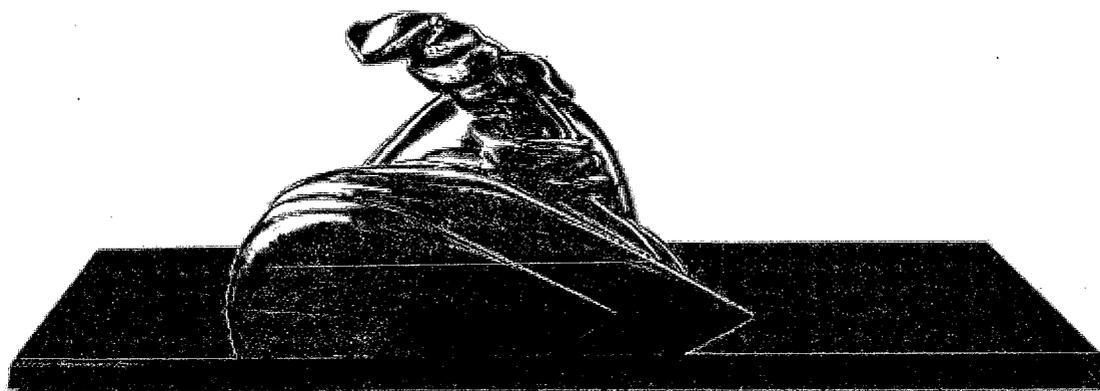


Fig. 1.3 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *Northern Island* (1927), cast tin on black glass base, 22.5 x 37.7 x 20.8 cm, bequest of Mrs. J.P. Barwick, from the Douglas M. Duncan Collection, National Gallery of Canada, no. 28991.

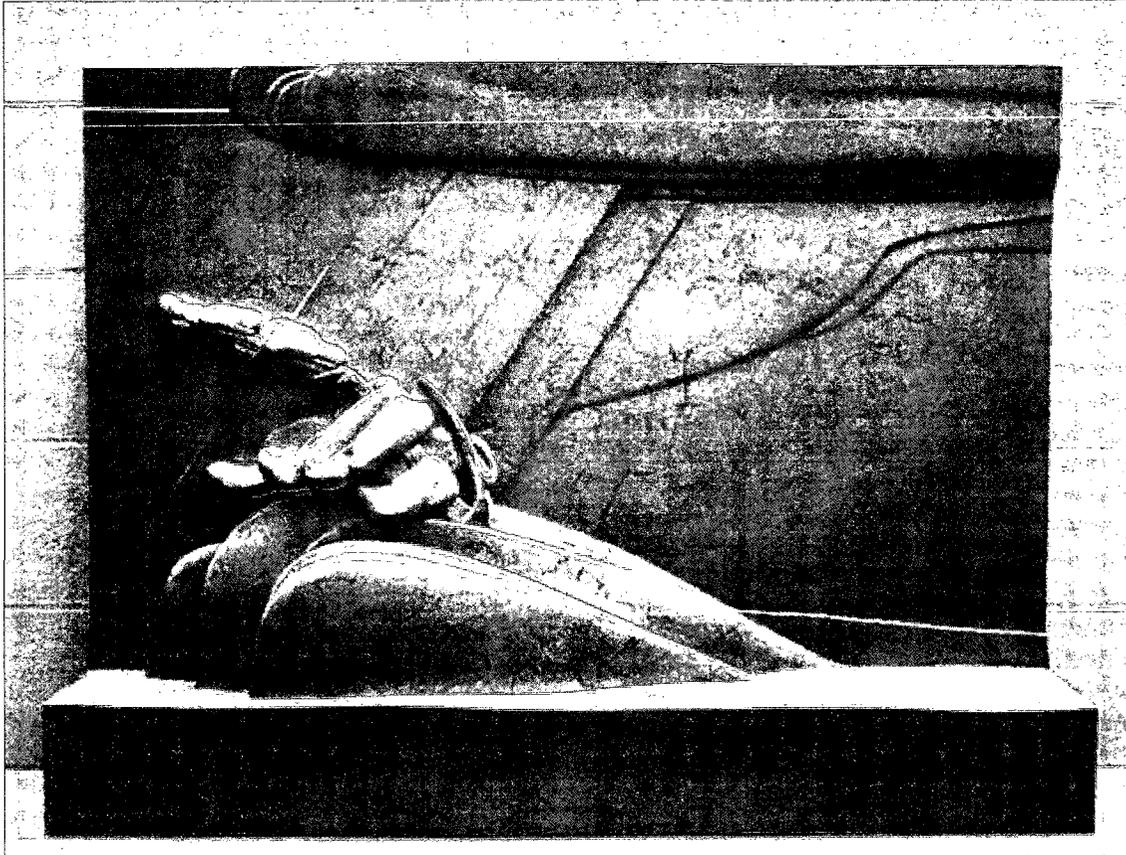


Fig. 1.4 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *Passing Rain* (1928), marble, 81.3 x 107.3 x 20.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, no. 3715.



Fig. 1.5

Paraskeva Clark, *Petroushka* (1937), oil on canvas, 122.4 x 81.9 cm, National Gallery of Canada, no. 18624.



Fig. 2.1 Molly Lamb Bobak, *Meat Parade, Hamilton Trades School*, oil on canvas mounted on plywood, 45.9 x 55.8 cm, collection of the artist. Reproduced in Cindy Richmond, ed. *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* (Regina, MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993), 97.



Fig. 2.2 Paraskeva Clark, *Self Portrait with Concert Program* (1942), oil with paper (concert program) on canvas, 76.6 x 69.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, no. 4592.

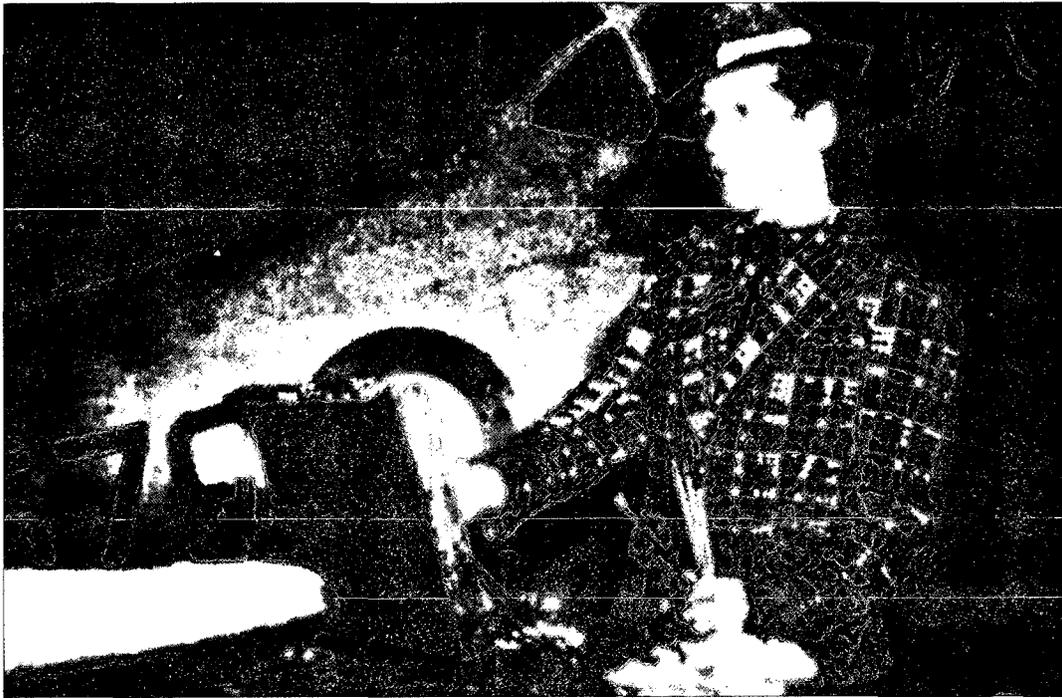


Fig. 2.3 Anonymous, *Untitled*, black and white photograph, (1945) unknown dimensions. Caption states “Depicting on canvas the lives of women of the Royal Canadian Air Force takes Mrs. P. Clarke [*sic*] of the National Gallery of Canada into almost every section of the Stations she visits.” Reproduced in J.W. Sargent, ed. “People, Places, Planes,” *Contact* (February and March 1945): 9.

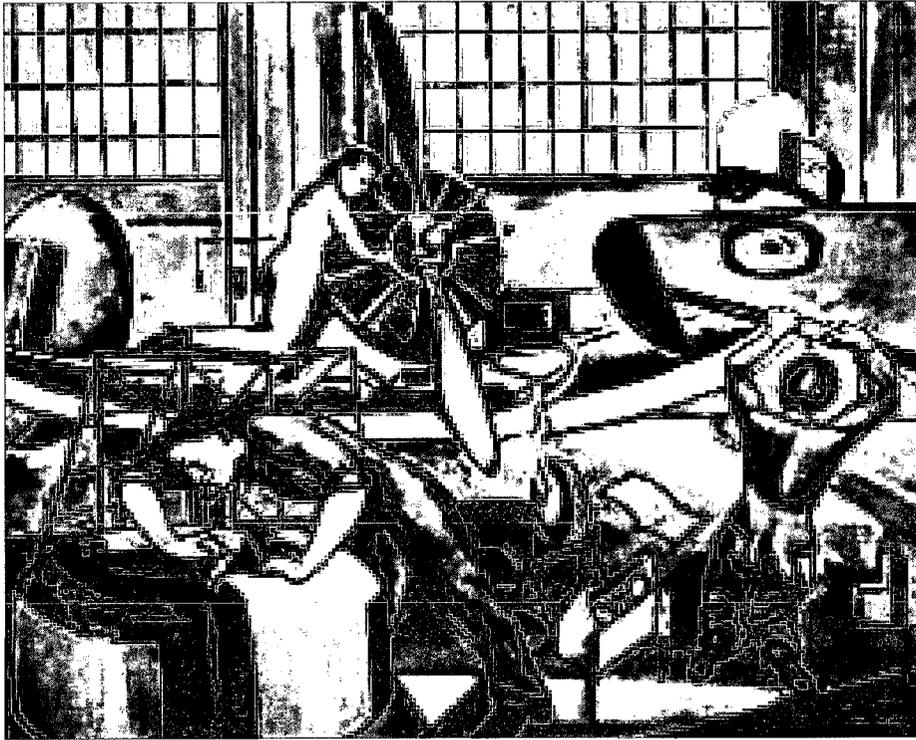


Fig. 2.4 Paraskeva Clark, *Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar # 6, Trenton RCAF, Station* (1945), oil on canvas, 101.9 x 81.5 cm, Canadian War Museum, Beaverbrook Collection of Art, no. AN19710261-5678.



Fig. 2.5 Frances Loring, *Girls with a Rail* (1919), bronze, 71 cm height, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, no. 8503.



Fig. 2.6 Molly Lamb Bobak, *Canadian Women's Army Corps Officer Cadets and N.C.O.'s Waiting for the Montreal Train* (1945), oil on hardboard, 60.6 x 76.1 cm, Canadian War Museum, no. 12035.



Fig. 2.7 Paraskeva Clark, *Portrait of Mao* (1938), watercolour, unknown dimensions. Reproduced in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), 29.



Fig. 2.8 Paraskeva Clark, *Parachute Riggers* (1946-47), oil on canvas, 101.7 x 81.4 cm, Canadian War Museum, no. 14086.

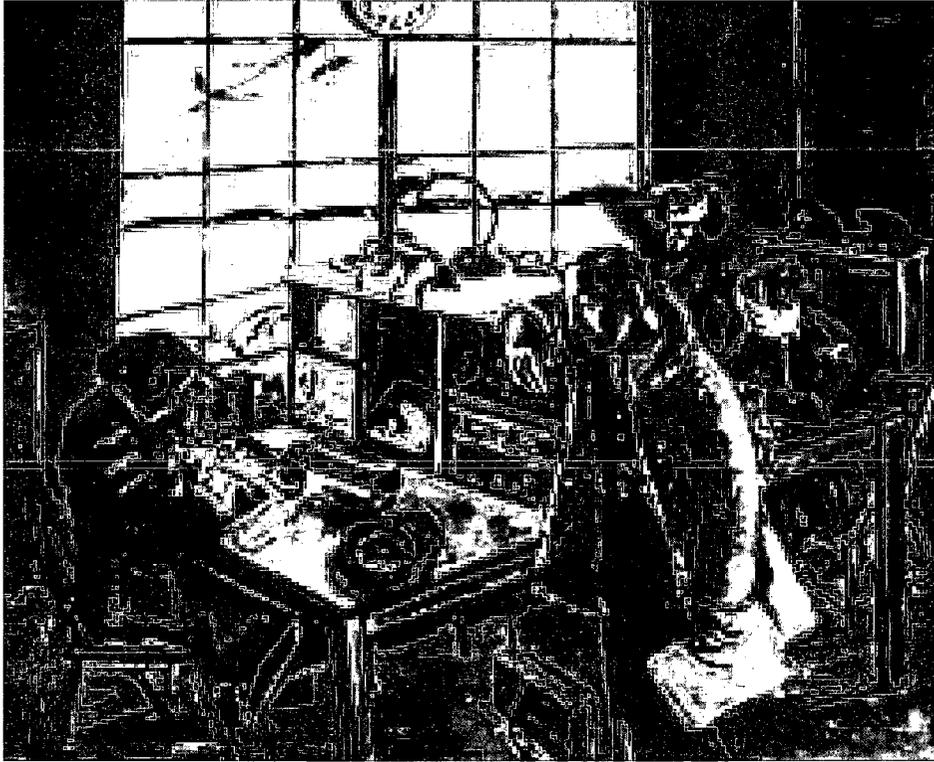


Fig. 2.9 Paraskeva Clark, *Quaicker Girls [sic]* (1946), oil on canvas, 73.8 x 89 cm, Canadian War Museum, no. 14087.



Fig. 2.10 Paraskeva Clark, *Public Bath—Leningrad* (1944), watercolour with pastel, 49 x 59 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), 64.



Fig. 2.11 Paraskeva Clark, *Russian Baths* (1936), watercolour, 35.3 x 35.3 cm, private collection. Reproduced in Mary E. MacLachlan, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1982), 56.

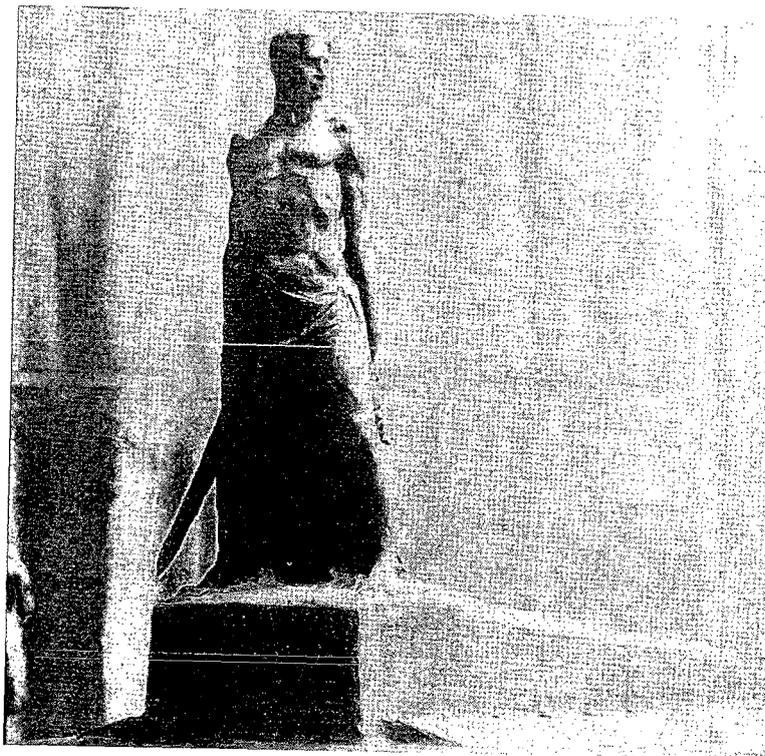


Fig. 3.1 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Model for Winnipeg War Memorial, plaster, unknown dimensions. Reproduced in Victoria Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood*, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1997), 52.



Fig. 3.2 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *Linda* (1930), plaster, 202 x 68.5 x 57 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery, no. G-57-126.



Fig. 3.3

Prudence Heward, *Rollande* (1929), oil on canvas, 139.9 x 101.7 cm, National Gallery of Canada, no. 3709.

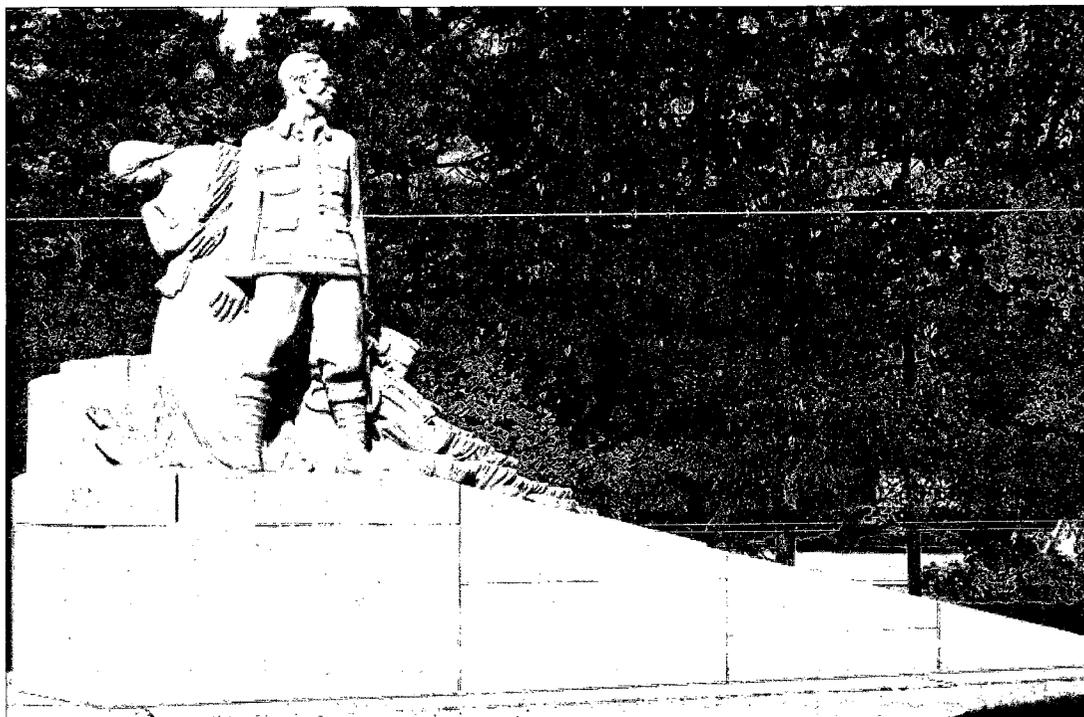


Fig. 3.4 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Welland-Crowland War Memorial (1934), granite, unknown dimensions, Chippewa Park, Welland, Ontario. Reproduced in Victoria Baker, *Emanuel Hahn and Elizabeth Wyn Wood: Innovation and Tradition in Canadian Sculpture* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1997), plate 5.



Fig. 3.5 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *The Recruit* (1937), plaster, 106 x 100.5 x 67.5 cm, Canadian War Museum, with photograph of Norman Bethune (c. 1936), printed in Roderick Stewart, *The Mind of Norman Bethune* (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977), 40.



Fig. 3.6 Elizabeth Wyn Wood, *Munitions Worker* (1944), painted plaster, 84.4 x 55.5 x 40 cm, National Gallery of Canada, no. 35872.



Fig. 3.7 National Film Board, *Untitled* (1941), black and white photograph, unknown dimensions. Caption states: Mrs. Jack Wright boards a bus on her way to work at a munitions factory,” Library and Archives Canada, e000761761.



Fig. 3.8 National Film Board, *Untitled* (1941), black and white photograph, unknown dimensions. Caption states: "Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as "The Bren Gun Girl", jitterbugging with plant foreman Bill Ward during a party at the Glen Eagle Country Club," Library and Archives Canada, e000760450.



Fig. 3.9 National Film Board, *Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl* (1941), black and white photograph, unknown dimensions. Caption states: "Veronica Foster, an employee of the John Inglis Co. Ltd. Bren gun plant, known as "The Bren Gun Girl" poses with a finished Bren gun at the John Inglis Co. plant," Library and Archives Canada, e000760403.

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