

**Reframing Montreal Modernisms:**  
**A Biographical Study of Betty Sutherland and her Work with**  
***First Statement*, First Statement Press, *Contact*, Contact Press, and *CIV/n***

by

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## Abstract

This study investigates the role of Betty Sutherland in the making of the modernist little magazines and small press publications of Montreal during the middle part of the twentieth century. Essentially a biography of Sutherland's life in Montreal, this paper draws from archival research and personal interviews with Betty Sutherland's colleagues and family members, to reveal the many artistic and editorial contributions that she made to the print culture of Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s. The first chapter explores Betty Sutherland's editorial contributions to *First Statement* magazine, and her work designing book covers for First Statement Press throughout the 1940s. The second and third chapters discuss the 1950s, and examine Sutherland's role in the creation of *Contact* magazine, her book designs for Contact Press, and her contributions to *CIV/n* magazine as artistic director and artist. An annotated bibliography of Sutherland's cover designs for First Statement Press and Contact Press is featured in the appendix.

## Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to Aviva Layton, who has offered her support on this project. Aviva Layton has been a tremendous help in debunking some of the myths that have circulated

about Irving Layton and Betty Sutherland's relationship. Her kindness in sharing some of her memories about Betty Sutherland, and her own time spent in Montreal during the 1950s, is greatly appreciated.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ii
<b>Introduction</b>	
“Where is Betty”: Betty Sutherland’s Exclusion from the History of Montreal’s Modernist Little Magazines and Little Presses	1
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
A Little Understated: Betty Sutherland’s Role with Montreal’s <i>First Statement</i> Magazine and Press	24
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
Designing Woman: Betty Sutherland’s Contributions to <i>Contact</i> Magazine and Contact Press during the 1950s	50
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
“Not a one man job”: Betty Sutherland’s Involvement with the <i>CIV/n</i> Group and the End of the 1950s	68
<b>Conclusion</b>	
Writing Back: Betty Sutherland after Modernism(s)	89
<b>Appendix</b>	
An Annotated Bibliography of Betty Sutherland’s Book Designs For First Statement Press and Contact Press	101
<b>Works Cited</b>	113

## Introduction

### **“Where is Betty”: Betty Sutherland’s Exclusion from the History of Montreal’s Modernist Little Magazines and Little Presses**

“Where is Sylvia?”

Sticking your head  
in the oven  
you thought you were terribly clever –  
guest editor for *Mademoiselle*  
brilliant author of first novel  
up to your neck in poems

In my dream you rolled  
all over the bed with me.  
Put one long dark  
cloth red leg over mine.  
We flashed together  
under yellow silk  
of sari, red  
dotted

If you didn’t make it  
how can I?  
You outwrote me  
ten times over  
before thirty

In the long evening  
I piece together  
a novel  
like crocheting  
or knitting twenty rows  
before bed-time.

- Boschka Layton [Betty Sutherland],  
*The Prodigal Sun*

Many years after the modernist period in Canadian literature, Betty Sutherland wrote in her poem “Is There Hope For The Future Cry The Loud Bells Of Palsy,” “If I don’t survive the next San Francisco earthquake / don’t live to see the second coming of

Christ in two thousand and twenty / I may be remembered for a line in Layton's poem to his third wife" (*Prodigal* 21). There is some truth to Betty Sutherland's verse: twenty-four years after the publication of her debut collection of poems, stories, and drawings, *The Prodigal Sun*, and twenty-two years after her death, Betty Sutherland is only occasionally mentioned in histories of modernism in Canada and usually as Irving Layton's second wife and the mother of his two children. Like Sylvia Plath who struggled to gain recognition as an important poet in the shadow of her more successful poet-husband, Ted Hughes, Betty Sutherland's artistic accomplishments, both as a graphic artist and poet, have gone relatively unnoticed by critics and literary historians, her life fading into a backdrop contextualizing one of Canada's most notorious poets, Irving Layton.

Despite the common impression offered by history books and critical studies of modernism in Canada that Betty Sutherland was merely Layton's muse throughout the 1940s and 1950s, her role in Montreal's social realist poetry movement deserves closer attention.<sup>1</sup> Although she never published poetry during Canada's modernist period, her work creating the little magazines and designing covers for the small presses that published social realist poetry was at least one factor in both their relatively popular and

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<sup>1</sup> John Sutherland was the first to use the term "social realism" to describe the young generation of poets in Montreal during the 1940s. He writes in his introduction to *Other Canadians* that these poets are "not middle class but proletarian in origin," and that "In their work one finds a more Canadian point of view, a greater interest in themes and problems of a Canadian kind, and a social realism which distinguishes it from the political make-believe of other poets" (60). Sutherland classifies Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster in this "category" of poets (60). Ken Norris has subsequently used the term social realism in *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-1980* to refer to the modernist poetry movement started by the little magazines of the 1940s and 1950s in Canada.

critical successes. Her contributions to these projects are an element of Canada's print culture that has yet to be explored.

The little magazine, according to Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, is "a magazine designed to print artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or presses" (2). The small or little press is often an extension of a little magazine, since it tends to grow out of, or coexist with, one (Tracey 14); it works to solidify the aims of the little magazine by offering an alternative to those books produced by commercial presses. Primarily concerned with the literary arts, little presses and little magazines can also be as concerned with the visual arts. Little magazines will frequently print drawings, paintings, and reviews of visual artists in their pages. Sometimes, the visual arts figure as prominently as the writing in the little magazine, such as Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* (1914), whose second issue actually "makes up for its lack of striking textual material with numerous woodcuts and other illustrations that embody vorticist ideals" (Orchard 20). The little presses frequently employ the artists featured in their partner magazine to design or illustrate their books.

Despite the significance of the visual arts to the little magazines and publications of little presses, these artistic elements are habitually glossed over by Canadian critics. Likewise, the editorial, administrative, and creative activities involved in making small press publications and little magazines are rarely considered important to their function. Nevertheless, as Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich affirm, the little magazine is "not more nor less than the persons who produced it," and this includes everyone from poets and editors, to artists and collators (230).

Betty Sutherland, as she will be called in this essay so as to avoid confusion with those who shared her surname, was an artist associated with *First Statement* (1942-1945), *Contact* (1952-1954), and *CIV/n* (1953-1955) magazines and their adjunct little presses. She not only contributed artistically to these projects, but also assisted in the editorial and administrative activities. As a member of *First Statement* magazine's original group of producers, she worked on the little magazine throughout its earliest issues. In 1944, when John Sutherland, Betty Sutherland's brother, started First Statement Press, she designed the books it published.<sup>2</sup> When *Contact* magazine formed in the early 1950s, Betty Sutherland designed the magazine's cover as of the third issue, and she later created many of Contact Press's cover designs, including those of the earliest books by Irving Layton and Louis Dudek. While working with Contact Press, Betty Sutherland assisted the new little magazine *CIV/n* by reading through submissions and editing those works selected for upcoming issues. She also worked as the art director for *CIV/n* 3, and her own sketches were featured frequently in *CIV/n*'s pages.

Yes, Betty Sutherland was the modernist muse to Layton and to a number of other Montreal poets. She was, however, also the artist who was inspired by the poetry and personas of so many of modernism's famous poets, from Canada and abroad. In this way, the artistic relationship she had with the Montreal modernists was reciprocal; to characterize it otherwise is to deny Betty Sutherland her role in the development of the little magazines, little presses, and modernism in Montreal.

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<sup>2</sup> In *First Statement* 2.10, John Sutherland announced *First Statement*'s intention to publish poetry in book form (1). The first book to appear was Layton's *Here and Now*, published sometime between December 1944 and February 1945 (Tracey 101). The release of this book represents the beginning of First Statement Press.

Betty Sutherland was born Elizabeth Sutherland on May 14, 1920 in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, which is approximately 1390 kilometres from where she would spend her young adult life: Montreal. Her early childhood in Liverpool, where she lived with her brother, John Sutherland, was a difficult time; the family's matriarch, Lois Sutherland (née Parker) fell ill with tuberculosis when the children were young. Lois, whom Elspeth Cameron describes as "artistic, a contralto who loved playing their grand piano, telling stories and drawing" (137), eventually succumbed to the disease in 1926, when Betty Sutherland was just six years old (Tracey 68).

The Sutherland children went to live with their paternal grandparents in Lockeport, Nova Scotia after their mother's death. They remained there until 1930, when Frederick Sutherland, Betty Sutherland's father, moved the family to Saint John, New Brunswick to live with his new wife, Dorothy McNicholl (Whiteman ix). The newly formed family, however, was not a happy one. Betty Sutherland and John Sutherland disliked their new stepmother (Whiteman ix), whom Betty Sutherland believed to be "neurotic, strict and hating children" (qtd. in Cameron 137). After five years of living together, however, the Sutherlands added to their family a new member: Donald McNicholl Sutherland, born July 17, 1935.<sup>3</sup> Two other children were also added to the Sutherland clan, making them a family of seven (Cameron 177). Little is known, however, about these formative years of Betty Sutherland's life, except that she lived in

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Sutherland would grow up to become a famous actor in Hollywood.

Saint John with her siblings, her father, and her new stepmother, and eventually graduated from Saint John High School in 1936 (“Elizabeth”).<sup>4</sup>

Throughout her childhood, Betty Sutherland relied on painting as a form of expression; she began creating art just after the death of her mother (Cameron 137). After high school, she decided to pursue a postsecondary diploma at the Saint John Vocational School, where she studied art with Julia Crawford and Violet Gillet (“Elizabeth”). Said to have been “a phenomenally gifted pupil,” Betty Sutherland was asked to paint the auditorium doors of the school while she studied there (“Elizabeth”).<sup>5</sup> She graduated after four years at the school and went on to teach painting to the children of Black’s Harbour while working at a local department store (“Elizabeth”). It is possible that Saint John during the 1940s provided little opportunity for a budding artist to grow, and by 1942 she migrated to North America’s art mecca: New York City.

Many years later, in 1976, Betty Sutherland wrote in her journal about her move to New York City and her father’s reaction to her decision to leave New Brunswick:

I was determined to study art in New York at the Art Students’ League. I had my teacher Violet Gillett on my side and my father finally gave in, in fear and trembling. He embraced me on the train platform. He said with a trembling voice, ‘Promise me you won’t drink or smoke, and that you won’t ever forget your mother.’ He didn’t dare mention sex, speaking of

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<sup>4</sup> The source of this information has no identified author, and therefore the title of the work “Elizabeth Sutherland: Paintings and Drawings,” will be referred to in this and subsequent citations.

<sup>5</sup> In “Elizabeth Sutherland Paintings and Drawings,” it does not explicitly state that Betty Sutherland painted the auditorium doors of the Vocational School, only that “The auditorium doors in the Vocational School dated from this period,” when she attended the institution. Max Layton, however, explains that a few years ago he “got a call from someone – either from the school itself or from the National Archives – who told me that Betty Sutherland had painted some hallway doors at the school and that their purchase by the Archives was being arranged” (“Re: Research Essay”).

it was as bad as doing it. I did not go home again. (qtd. in M. Layton

“Re: Research Essay”)<sup>6</sup>

Although reluctant to let his daughter leave, Frederick Sutherland eventually allowed Betty Sutherland to move to New York City, and her dream of attending classes at the Art Students League came to fruition.

At the Art Students League, Betty Sutherland studied under the tutelage of Harry Sternberg, a social realist printmaker. Born in New York City in 1904, Sternberg was a founding member of the American Artists’ Congress, an organization that aimed to “achieve unity of action among artists of recognized standing in their profession on all issues which concern their economic and cultural security and freedom, and to fight War, Fascism and Reaction, destroyers of art and culture” (Davis 54). Sternberg wrote on the political importance of the graphic arts in a paper presented at the Congress in 1936, arguing that the “cult of rare prints” offers nothing to the serious artist (137). Progressive artists, according to Sternberg, should turn to the graphic arts because they are skills capable of producing prints “rapidly and inexpensively in large quantities, and can be widely distributed at low cost,” and therefore it is a medium capable of “reaching people” (137). Sternberg’s philosophy is not unlike the motivation of Canada’s social realist poets, who developed new ways of publishing their work and making it available to the masses. Betty Sutherland’s instruction by Sternberg prepared her to work in the graphic arts, designing book covers for the social realist little magazines and little presses in Montreal.

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<sup>6</sup> Max Layton graciously provided excerpts from Betty Sutherland’s journal, dated from 1976, in an e-mail sent to the author. Betty Sutherland’s journals are not yet available for public consultation.

Although she only spent a few months studying there, her time at the Art Students League is said to have been one of “intensive hard work during which she spent hours everyday in the museums and libraries of New York” (“Elizabeth”). Later that year, in 1942, Betty Sutherland suddenly gave up her dream of studying there and returned to Canada, to live in Montreal. She described her motivation to move to Montreal in an interview with Elspeth Cameron in 1982: “I was ripe for the picking. I had come to Montreal instead of going home because I was twenty-two and it was about time to begin to live. I had had a few escapades – most recently, a boyfriend who had told me that he was separated and living with his mother. I had just realized he was married and not separated” (qtd. in Cameron 138).<sup>7</sup> More than just the exhausting hours at the Art Students League, then, she chose to leave New York City because her personal life was unsettled. Montreal presented an alternative environment to New York’s art scene, and her brother, John Sutherland, was already settled there.

John Sutherland had moved to Montreal in 1941, despite the fact that “his t.b. was still positive,” to continue his studies at McGill University (qtd. in M. Layton “Re: Research Essay”). It is possible that Betty Sutherland moved closer to her brother to fulfill his need for a caretaker. Sutherland had been battling tuberculosis of the kidney since 1937, and he moved to Montreal only after a brief physical recovery from the disease. He spent just four months at McGill University before his health problems returned, and he had to leave. Max Layton, Betty Sutherland’s son, believes that his uncle left McGill University to immerse himself in writing and editing because he knew

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<sup>7</sup> A recording of the interview with Betty Layton (Sutherland) was not available for consultation in the Elspeth Cameron collection at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book library in Toronto. Notes from the interview were available; however, they were unclear. Therefore, comments made by Betty Sutherland during the interview that are quoted in Cameron’s biography of Irving Layton will be reproduced in this paper.

that he would not have a “normal lifespan” (“Re: Research Essay”). Betty Sutherland’s move to Montreal coincides with her brother’s relapse, suggesting some concern for her sibling’s health as motivation behind her decision to relocate.

Whatever the actual reason for her move to Montreal, the decision would place Betty Sutherland among the group of modernist poets who changed the way poetry was being written in Canada. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, she worked with this group of young men and women to publish their poetry and print their artwork in little magazines, namely *First Statement*, *Contact*, and *CIV/n*. Later, they would begin to publish their own books, available to the general public for a modest price (enough to cover the cost of production), the way that they wanted them to appear, in a symbolic rebellion against the big publishing houses that had monopolized poetry in Canada for decades. These accomplishments were achieved not by the individual, but by the group; it was a collective effort between editors, artists, poets, and friends that created these little magazines and kept the small presses running. Betty Sutherland was a member of these groups, and her role in the movement and contributions to its success are gradually being revealed.

Why is it that so little is known about Betty Sutherland and her work with *First Statement*, First Statement Press, *Contact*, Contact Press, and *CIV/n*? Recent studies about Canadian modernism suggest that her gender may account for her work having been overlooked by critics. Such studies propose that women’s contributions to modernism have been eclipsed by those made by men. Carole Gerson argued in her 1991 essay “The Canon between the Wars: Field-notes of a Feminist Literary Archaeologist” that

In addition to the still prevalent modernist critical embargo on ‘feminine’ concerns and the subsequent demotion of social and domestic issues as ‘sentimental’ (and not explicitly ‘Canadian’), historical and biographical factors conspire against the reputations of Canadian women writers. . . . women writers of the past, who were barred from the academic and editorial institutions that shape the canon, have been vulnerable both to lionization and quick devalorization on grounds that are implicitly or explicitly gender-related. (47)

Gerson notes that canon-forming institutions were run by men, and these men “disregarded women writers because they were attempting to define a Canadian literature characterized by ‘virile’ attributes (48). For them, women wrote “Romantic/sentimental/domestic” verse, and so they were easily dismissed by canon-makers, and “those who engaged with modernist methods were seldom taken as seriously as their male counterparts and have been consistently under-represented in the canon” (55).<sup>8</sup>

Gerson’s study is concerned only with women writers who have been neglected by those who created the canon; her analysis, however, is shared by other critics who

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that Gerson’s modernist canon-makers are “represented by” E.J. Pratt in her study (48). Gerson does not mention in her article, however, the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, which was published under the auspices of the Canadian Author’s Association (CAA); nor does she indicate that E.J. Pratt, who was the chairman of the CAA in 1936 (an organization whose members, Gerson notes, were mainly women (54)), edited the first issue of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*. The inaugural issue featured a total of forty-three poets: of those forty-three poets, twenty-nine are women. It is also worth mentioning that, although Gerson (barely) acknowledges A.J.M. Smith’s *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (1943) (48), she does not remark that Smith included eight women poets in the “Modern Poetry” section of his anthology. The section consisted of a total of thirty-one poets: therefore, a quarter of them are women. Smith also included Dorothy Livesay among the modernists, whose omission from *New Provinces* (1936) lead Gerson to conclude that “the decades between the wars were not propitious for the reputations of women authors in Canada” (54).

study a variety of women's literary activities. In a 1990 article concerning modernist little magazines in Canada, Pauline Butling notes that the standard definition of the little magazine is "(masculist)," because it is characterized "by Louis Dudek and others, as an aggressive, assertive, fighting, militant instrument of the avant-garde" (62).<sup>9</sup> Butling does not offer an alternative to this definition, but she does criticize its exclusivity and inaccuracy, since it tends to ignore publications run by women. She concludes that "although women have done much to establish their presence as writers, editors, and publishers, the erasure of women's achievements from the historical record continues" (70).

Dean Irvine agrees with Butling's assessment of literary criticism's "masculinist" inclination, writing in his 2001 PhD dissertation that "women magazine editors and poets who were members of little magazine groups between 1926 and 1956 have continued to be minor figures in the historical record" (2). He goes on to note that it has become a "literary-historical myth" that Canadian modernism and its magazine culture are a "masculinist phenomenon" (2). According to both Irvine and Butling, Betty Sutherland's work with the little magazines in Montreal has gone unnoticed because the literary institution has not served its women writers, editors, and makers of Canadian little magazines well.

It is possible that so many literary critics of Montreal's little magazines and small presses have neglected to include Betty Sutherland in their histories because she is a woman. It may also be true that, as Gerson, Butling, and Irvine explain, women like

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<sup>9</sup> "masculist," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a variation of the adjective "masculinist," meaning "expressing, representing, or promoting opinions, values, etc., regarded as typical of men" ("Masculinist").

Betty Sutherland continue to be excluded from studies of the period because criticism has been “masculinist” in its project of creating a historical record that “neglects to consider alternative histories of women’s involvement with the Montreal little magazines” and little presses (Irvine “Two Giovannis” 26). Women have occupied, historically, a subordinate place in academic and literary institutions until the latter half of the twentieth century, and many would argue that they still do today. The possibility that Betty Sutherland was not immune to this kind of injustice is undeniable.

To place all of the blame, however, on literary criticism’s erasure of women’s contributions to modernism in Canada is also inaccurate; it ignores the fact that some women did receive critical attention for their work with the little magazines and little press publications. P.K. Page, for example, received critical attention as early as the 1940s, from *First Statement*’s editor, John Sutherland, in his article “P.K. Page and *Preview*,” and later in “The Poetry of P.K. Page,” which appeared in *Northern Review* in 1947. By the 1970s, now over thirty years ago, Page criticism was gaining momentum, with articles by A.J.M. Smith, Michael Preston, and Constance Rook appearing in *Canadian Literature* and *The Malahat Review*. In 1959, Ian Sowton’s “The Lyric Craft of Miriam Waddington” appeared in *The Dalhousie Review*. Phyllis Webb criticism originates in the early 1960s, with articles by Helen Sonthoff, and later, by John Hulcoop. Each of these women writers had been widely anthologized by the 1980s, and critical studies of their lives and works only increased in numbers after the 1970s. These three women, at least, received some credit for their contributions to modernism around the same time as their male colleagues.

It is also inaccurate to suggest that women do not figure prominently in histories of little magazines because they were excluded from literary activities that were “reserved” for men, as Butling does when she writes that “Not until the seventies, when the feminist movement as a whole began to challenge the male monopoly of power and public space, do women begin to move into the traditionally male-dominated position of editors” (63). Butling’s comment generalizes the literary atmosphere in Canada, and it dismisses the many women editors that did work in this country before the 1970s. Emily Murphy, for example, was the literary editor of *The National Monthly of Canada* as early as 1902, and the literary editor of the *Winnipeg Telegram* from 1904-1912 (Mander 57, 82). Doris Anderson became the editor of *Chatelaine* magazine in 1957 (Anderson 129). Women also edited little magazines before the 1970s, like Catherine Harmon who edited *Here and Now* (1947-1949), Phyllis Aikman, the editor of *Elan* (1946) in Montreal and Audrey Aikman of *First Statement*’s sister, and Aileen Collins of *CIV/n* (1953-1955).

In addition to the women little magazine editors listed above, using Dean Irvine’s redefinition of the little magazine that includes “non-commercial, literary, arts, and cultural-interest magazines whose editors facilitate and participate in the construction of a magazine culture for their contributors and readers – but not, primarily, for profit” (“Little Histories”<sup>10</sup>), we can also include Florence Custance who edited *The Women Worker* in Toronto as early as 1920, Myra Lazeckko-Haas who edited *Impression* in Winnipeg between 1950 and 1952, and Yvonne Agazarian, editor of the Vancouver little magazine *pm* (1951-1952) – this last little mag circulating primarily in British Columbia. Irvine has demonstrated that all of the abovementioned women made significant contributions “to the making of modern literary culture in Canada” (“Little Histories”

242). Women, then, were not necessarily excluded from specific literary activities, and, occasionally, they held the position of editors of little magazines.

While it is possible that Betty Sutherland has received less critical attention than her male colleagues because of her gender, there are other explanations for her absence from the histories of modernism in Canada that do not necessarily have anything to do with the fact that she was a woman. If we consider the type of contributions that Betty Sutherland made to the little magazines and small presses in Montreal, we can begin to comprehend why her involvement with these literary ventures continues to be overlooked. Betty Sutherland was not the editor of a little magazine, nor did she contribute her poetry to the pages of one; nevertheless, she did work on the editorial board of more than one little magazine, contribute her artwork to their pages, help create and fund some of these publications, and design book covers for their offspring presses. These contributions, however, are not what typically interests literary critics of the Canadian little magazines and little presses.

Recently, there has been acknowledgement of a biased approach to the study of little magazines that favours authorial activities over those of production. Dean Irvine notes that “Though crucial to the little magazine’s non-commercial economy, these menial jobs have regularly been deemed inferior to editorial work and summarily disregarded by little-magazine historians” (“Little Histories” 11). He suggests that “The predominantly clerical labour involved in little-magazine production is, in this historical context, gendered female,” adding that this “demonstrates that literary history has so far not only marginalized women editors and members of magazine groups but also their feminized forms of labour” (11). Irvine’s last point aligns him with Butling’s comments

about gendered literary activities; however, men were also involved in the physical and clerical labour of little magazine production, as Irvine hesitantly concedes (11), and many of these men also continue to be absent from the literary historical record. It is more the type of work than the gender of the workers that has led literary historians to discount this area of little magazine and little press history in Canada.

The material production and distribution of the little magazine, many would agree, is less glamorous and less inspiring than the poetry or the editorship of the little magazine, particularly as the topic of a literary historical account. Critical emphasis has been on the content of the little magazines because it is what concerns literary historians. Furthermore, the graphic and artistic elements of the little magazine and small press are frequently absent from these histories because they fall outside of the realm of the literary. It is not surprising, then, that little has been written about Betty Sutherland, since her own contributions to *First Statement*, *Contact*, and *CIV/n* fall outside the traditional activities that constitute the subject of the literary historical record.

Just as literary historians are inclined to focus on the poetry and editorship of little magazines and little presses in Canada, their interests have centered on the individual writer or editor, and less on the extensive, collaborative workings of the literary group. Collett Tracey notes that “Poets who are recognized tend to be more prominent individuals who by force of personality or by chance are highlighted while others, whose contributions are often equally important, are left in the shadow” (i). She adds that “In addition to the significance of the individuals themselves, what is also forgotten is the various interactions between these individuals and others who surround them, that make up the atmosphere and environment out of which poetry is born” (ii). Criticism has been

resolute in its aim of examining the poet, often neglecting the poetry and the elements that influence its creation.

The attention given to the individual is something that Carole Gerson discusses in her article “The Canon between the Wars: Field-notes of a Feminist Literary Archaeologist,” where she quotes Terry Lovell, who writes in *Consuming Fiction* that “it is authors rather than books that survive, with a few notable exceptions” (132). Lovell argues the existence of a trend in literary criticism to canonize authors as opposed to their works, creating the “*auteur*” that becomes the focus of popular and critical attention (132). Gerson demonstrates in her essay that this trend exists in Canadian literary criticism, and has been strategically used by “those in power” to bolster their own “current agendas and the particular configuration of national, aesthetic, and sexual politics that best serves their interests” (46). This critical trend of canonizing the author in Canadian literature rather than the text also fosters the writing of the individual success narrative: the story of a national literary hero.

The literary myth-making phenomenon seems particularly true of Canadian modernism, a field where many of our nation’s poets have become icons of a counter culture of poetry and leftist politics. Consider, for example, Leonard Cohen, whom most Canadians know of as musician, and yet, it is arguable that few Canadians are able to name a collection of his poems; or Frank Scott, “the brilliant McGill law professor who was also a leading poet,” who fought Maurice Duplessis’ Padlock Law in Quebec, and won (Weintraub 284). The Padlock Law gave police the right to lock up any house if it was considered to be a “source of communist propaganda,” and Scott had it removed from the statute books (Weintraub 284). Scott also helped found the Canadian

Commonwealth Federation, which later became the New Democratic Party of Canada, a leftist political party that, with its more social policies, offers an alternative to the dominant Liberal and Conservative parties. These examples are not meant to suggest that Leonard Cohen and Frank Scott do not deserve the literary critical attention they have received. They only serve to illustrate that their extra-literary successes have more than likely contributed in some way to the abundance of literary critical attention given them.

It is the individual success story that has been the focal point of most of the histories of the little magazines and little presses in Canada. Studies of *First Statement* magazine have centered on its editor, John Sutherland, the individual who created, against all odds, a reputable magazine and “the first significant little press” in Canada (Francis “Little Presses” 56). According to little magazine lore, Sutherland was “prompted to start *First Statement* when some of his own poems were rejected by *Preview*” (Norris 33). The determined young man never abandoned his love of poetry, and, despite health problems, and his continual battle with tuberculosis, he successfully started a little magazine that, after acquiring a printing press, ended up absorbing its rival magazine, *Preview*. The new, joint publication became *Northern Review*, which ran from 1945 until Sutherland’s untimely death in 1956, becoming a “small magazine” of considerable significance in Canada (Francis “Literary Underground” 68). Wynne Francis described Sutherland as the “central figure, if not the leader, of the “First Statement Group” (“Montreal Poets of the Forties” 21), and Neil Fisher called him “the catalyst that triggered such literary activity” in his 1974 study of *First Statement* (4). Sutherland’s story, evidently, provides an appealing narrative for those who were looking to write an inspiring national literary history.

It is true that Sutherland was the editor of *First Statement*, and the leader of the little magazine and press, but this type of critical attention, although in many ways accurate, can be misleading: it creates the impression that the little magazine and little press were a one-man-show, and establishes a hierarchy that belies the collaborative spirit of these projects. Some studies of *First Statement*, like Norris's, discuss the little magazine's members of the editorial board, but their attention rarely meanders further than a discussion of Dudek and Layton's involvement with the periodical, and these are grounded in the polemical articles and poetry each man wrote for the little magazine; yet again, attention is given to two successful individuals, who both became major Canadian poets.<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to *Contact* magazine, the correspondence between Dudek and Raymond Souster has been the main area of interest. On rare occasions, and usually with reference to the Dudek-Souster correspondence, there is mention of Layton and his dissatisfaction with Souster's refusal to publish some of his poems (Tracey 183-184; Campbell 120). In the case of *Contact*, it may be more accurate to represent the little magazine as a one-man-show, for it was run mainly by Souster from Toronto, with the assistance of Dudek who was in Montreal. Furthermore, Michael Gnarowski has demonstrated that Souster was reluctant to relinquish any kind of creative control over

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<sup>10</sup> Although Layton considered himself to be a "major poet" and Dudek "only a minor one" (Cameron 203), I would argue that the terms "minor" and "major" are highly subjective and unstable, and that Layton's assessment of Dudek is as personal as it is critical. In his *From There to Here: A Guide to English Canadian Literature Since 1960*, Frank Davey states that Dudek has had "the most influence on subsequent generations of Canadian poetry of any poet in Canadian history" (95), suggesting that Dudek should not be underestimated as an influential poet in Canada. If we consider the number of books published by Dudek, and the abundance of critical studies on his poetry, published collections of his correspondences, and a biography about the author, it would be appropriate to consider him a poet of considerable importance. Dudek's increasing inclusion in a number of poetry anthologies, such as *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1982), edited by Margaret Atwood, is a testament to his status as a "major" Canadian poet.

the magazine's publication (*Contact* 11-13). Literary critics have, however, found an interest in the few other successful individuals involved with the little magazine, such as Robert Creeley and Charles Olson of Black Mountain fame, and Cid Corman, the editor of the American little magazine *Origin*, who contributed poetry, articles, and reviews to *Contact* (Gnarowski *Contact*; Whiteman "Souster's Letters"; Reed).

Only in Robert Campbell's Master's thesis, however, do we hear about some of the other members of *Contact* who helped create the publication. Campbell is one of the few critics, along with Collett Tracey, who mentions that Betty Sutherland designed *Contact's* cover. He also mentions Jack Hersh, who helped select and edit the contents of *Contact's* earliest issues, and was listed as "Editor" with Souster in *Contact* 5. Similarly, George Nasir appears in Campbell's study, a poet only rarely mentioned in histories of the little magazine, even though he was listed as an "Associate Editor" in *Contact* 5. As Campbell notes, these men did not contribute nearly as much to the little magazine as Souster, but they were involved in producing the magazine to some degree. Campbell does not, regrettably, go into any extensive discussion of what these men did for *Contact*.

Perhaps it is because neither Nasir nor Hersh enjoyed successful careers following their work with *Contact* that criticism has made them peripheral, if not negligible to *Contact's* history. In fact, George Nasir's own story is tragic: he suffered a mental breakdown in the 1950s, and underwent a lobotomy shortly thereafter, never able to write poetry the same way again (Campbell 128). Souster's poetic success sparkles and shines in the eyes of those looking to write a narrative history of the little magazine. Of course, more than the earlier little magazine *First Statement*, and its "partnered" little magazine, *CIV/n*, *Contact* was Souster's magazine, a near solo project, which is why literary critics

have not wanted to look beyond him to write its history. Still, people like Hersh, Nasir, and Betty Sutherland contributed in their own ways to *Contact*'s creation and appearance, and if no one questions the role each of them played in making the little magazine, then it may never be known to what degree their involvement shaped its format and content.

Literary criticism about *CIV/n* resembles the studies of both *First Statement* and *Contact* in its inclination to write the history of the individual poets. With *CIV/n*, however, this vein of criticism creates a much less accurate impression of what the magazine was and how it ran. From its inception, *CIV/n* was meant to be a poetry “workshop,” a group effort to “change things” with a little magazine that would “serve as a new force in writing and criticism in Canada” (Collins 7). The little magazine was to be run by four young friends – Aileen Collins, Wanda Staniszevska, Jackie Gallagher, and Buddy Rozynski – with the advice and assistance of Louis Dudek and Irving Layton (Collins 7). Despite the fact that neither Dudek nor Layton’s names appear on the masthead of any of *CIV/n*’s seven issues, criticism has been centrifugal in its project of separating and forming a dense centre of Layton and Dudek from the seemingly extraneous editors of the magazine.

Wynne Francis supports her decision to look specifically at Dudek and Layton’s involvement with *CIV/n* in her review of Collins’ book *CIV/n: A literary Magazine of the 50’s* by quoting Dudek, who once wrote in *The Golden Dog* that “when we study these group magazines we always find that the group is made up of antithetical individuals, and the interaction of the individuals is the real dramatic story of the magazine, not the unity of the magazine or group as such” (2). Francis concludes that the truly “antithetical” individuals of *CIV/n* were Dudek and Layton and that “the ‘real dramatic story’ of this

magazine derives from the tensions between them” (90). In so doing, Francis disregards the possibility of other antithetical relationships between individuals who worked on the little magazine, especially the possibility that the “real dramatic story” of *CIV/n* might involve the antithetical relationship between its editor, Aileen Collins, and Irving Layton.<sup>11</sup>

Francis’s discussion of *CIV/n* targets the individual poets’ roles with the little magazine, and she concludes that “Neither *Contact* nor *CIV/n* would have much historical importance had not Souster, Dudek, and Layton later developed into three important, and very different poets” (92). She conveniently forgets that *CIV/n* published the earliest works of Canada’s most famous poets, such as Leonard Cohen and Phyllis Webb, that it included works by many American authors like Creeley, Corman, and Olsen, or that it managed to find its way into print, something that *Contact* was never able to accomplish; for Francis, the only reason *CIV/n* is worth looking at is because some of the individuals who contributed to its production became famous. Francis, however, is not alone in this sentiment, as Aileen Collins notes that, for the critics, “*CIV/n* became a star thing,” and she insists that these critics got it wrong: “In any sense,” says Collins, “it was really a cooperative,” where many people contributed to the

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<sup>11</sup> Layton’s personality clashed with Collins’s when he tried to take over *CIV/n* at one point during the little magazine’s run. Collins wrote to Dudek explaining,

Layton is an overpowering son of a, and is also crazy now for names and a policy to cater to said names. Maybe I’m being too ‘childish’ about it – but I feel strongly – why does he want to be publicly ass/d with the editorial staff now? – it is quite obvious and if he wants it that way, I am not staying as editor to do the typing and send out the mail.

The proverbial butting of heads between Layton and Collins almost led to Collins’s resignation, which could have meant the end of the little magazine, since Collins and her editorial staff, Buddy Rozynski and Wanda Staniszevska – not Layton – typically put together each issue of *CIV/n*. Nevertheless, critics like Francis have ignored this relationship and focused, instead, on the better known feud between Dudek and Layton, and their dissatisfaction with Souster’s control over *Contact*, as the backdrop for a history of *CIV/n*.

little magazine through informal and inclusive editing sessions held at Betty and Irving Layton's home (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). She also notes that, although extremely helpful, Dudek and Layton were not the nucleus of the group, and that the younger group of editors – Collins, Rozynski, and Staniszewska – always “had the last say” ( Personal interview. 14 October 2004).

The critical disposition to write about the successful individual in studies of Canada's little magazines and little presses, particularly those concerning *First Statement*, *Contact*, and *CIV/n*, explains Betty Sutherland's absence from previous literary historical analyses about these projects. With only one book of poems and short stories written many years after the modernist period, receiving scant critical attention, combined with her status as a “minor” Canadian artist, and her immigration to the United States in the 1960s, Betty Sutherland's career does not meet the requirements of the Canadian literary success story. Furthermore, her contributions to each little magazine and the little presses as a volunteer and artist simply do not impress upon those critics concerned with the literary content of little magazines.

Nevertheless, Betty Sutherland's involvement with each little magazine and little press is important to the history of these endeavours. In her article “Literary Underground,” in which Wynne Francis defines the little magazine in Canada, she writes that the production of a little magazine is “a labour of love on the part of the editor and the volunteers he is able to gather around him” (65). Ignoring the fact that, in keeping with the grammatical conventions of her day, Francis's editor is gendered male, her assessment of the role of the editor and the volunteers (plural) in little magazine production is both accurate and important. The little magazine is not a book, it is not

simply a collection of poems, and it is not just a work of literature or creative writing: it is important that critics do not essentialize it as such. The little magazine is important to our literary culture, yes; but it is also an important element of our country's print culture, combining various elements from multiple authors, artists, and volunteers, which makes it an extremely interdisciplinary project.

Similarly, the work of our little presses is "only partially literary," as Francis notes that "With them we enter a McLuhanish universe which exploits several media simultaneously and engages the audience in a kinetic communion" ("Little Presses" 60). Although Francis refers here to the avant-garde little presses that emerged in the sixties, *First Statement* and *Contact Press* planted the seeds for this kind of innovation in print. If these qualities of the little magazine and small press are kept in mind, then Betty Sutherland's role in the production of the little magazines and the workings of the small presses in Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s acquires an unprecedented value.

This paper will reexamine the histories of *First Statement* magazine and *First Statement Press*, *Contact* magazine and *Contact Press*, and *CIV/n* magazine, focusing on the role that Betty Sutherland played with each group. Both a critical intervention and biographical study, this paper aspires to work not as a counter-narrative, but as an addendum; as previously noted, many studies of the little magazines and little presses of Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s are not necessarily incorrect, and I do not wish to negate any of the valuable research that some earlier critics have provided. Further probing into the workings of these periodicals and presses, however, will help recover their histories which are, at present, incomplete.

## Chapter 1

### A Little Understated: Betty Sutherland's Role with Montreal's *First Statement* Magazine and Press

The literary scene in Montreal during the 1940s may be described as a cynosure for literary historians of Canadian poetry. The energy and passion that are the oil in this era's engine have thrust it forward as, quite possibly, Canada's pinnacle of modernism. A look at our literary criticism reveals a penchant for the poetry of this time and place: in Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski's *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* Dudek suggested that "it is with the period after 1940 that the kind of literary activity and movement-poetry that had arisen in England just before World War I and in America during the 1920s began to flourish in Canada" (205); Wynne Francis' article "Montreal Poets of the Forties" described the 1940s as "Canada's most exciting literary decade" (23), and highlighted the rivalry between two little magazines *First Statement* and *Preview* as the decade's main event; Brian Trehearne writes in *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition* (1999) that the decade formed the backdrop for Canadian Poetry's "great modern transition" (3), and he argues that the "'forties" begin in 1942 with the little magazines *Preview and First Statement*, and end roughly around 1954 (39).

Both Trehearne and Francis, although different in their approaches to 1940s poetry, focus on the importance of the little magazines *Preview* and *First Statement* as definitive literary events of that decade. The legendary rivalry between *Preview* and *First Statement* has emerged as the decade's allegory for modernism: a tight cast of characters who embody the conflict between the old and the new, the cosmopolitan and the native, and the feminine and the masculine. Trehearne explains, however, in his

1997 article “Critical Episodes in Montreal Poetry of the 1940s,” that the critical over-enthusiasm behind the telling of this tale may have led to its chimerical status. Miriam Waddington, a member of the First Statement group, agrees with this assessment, suggesting that “Much has been written about that period, and by now the years between 1940 and 1950 have acquired a specious glamour and a false romantic patina through the writings of critics and commentators, most of whom were too young to have been there” (“Apartment Seven” 17). Trehearne is consistently censorious of the critical romanticism that has led to a “still-powerful tendency to make antitheses out of persons, and thus out of the little magazines with which they were involved” (*Montreal* 14). He asserts that this “misguided critical tradition” began with Wynne Francis’s “Montreal Poets of the Forties,” though he is careful to avoid placing all the blame on Francis since “the faults of her piece are largely those of enthusiasm: caricature, exaggeration of conflict” (“Critical” 21).

While Trehearne calls for a movement away from “scene” and towards poetry, this essay will not be the answer to his call (4). It will, however, avoid discussing the legendary feud that has led to critical binarism, and instead challenge the integrity of another prevalent narrative: the story about the First Statement group and their editor. For, in the myth-making process, certain characters, mainly the editor and the poets, have materialized as the heroes of the little mag and press while others have faded into literary obscurity. Although Trehearne asserts that there has been too much focus on the “scene” in studies of the Montreal poetry of the 1940s, beginning with a “biographical critical mood” (“Critical” 2), and that “It is the poetry that matters, obviously, not the colourful

personalities” (*Montreal* 3), I would argue that both the poetry and the personalities have their place in literary criticism, as earlier critics have shown.

It may be that “critical citation of poems in the ’forties is breathtakingly rare” (Trehearne “Critical” 22), and that is lamentable; however, a focus on not only the poets, but also the writerly activities of *Montreal*’s little magazines has relegated all other activities to marginal status, which is equally unfortunate. With *First Statement* and *Preview*, the critical focus has been on the editors and the poets they published, resulting in a hierarchy of contributors that misrepresents the history of these periodicals (Martin; Leahy; Edwards; Precosky; Fisher; Norris). Betty Sutherland is one among the many members of these groups who has been all but written out of the historical record, and this is mainly because her contributions to *First Statement* magazine and First Statement Press were neither in poetry or prose.

Betty Sutherland was an original member of the group that made *First Statement*, and she designed many of First Statement Press’s book covers throughout the 1940s. If we approach *First Statement* magazine and First Statement Press as multifaceted projects – that is, not simply exercises in poetry and prose, but also editing, printing, art, etc. – Betty Sutherland and other marginalized figures emerge as important members of the First Statement group. This section will explore Betty Sutherland’s involvement with that group, studying her role through a personal, as well as professional lens. To avoid reinforcing the prevailing metanarrative of *First Statement*’s poets and editor, this chapter will assume a discursive approach to the historicity of the little magazine and press, focusing on Betty Sutherland’s role with the group and her early life in Montreal.

Once she had arrived in the city, it did not take long for Betty Sutherland to settle into her new home, and she found employment sometime between the summer and fall of 1942. Her place of employment at this time is said to be where she first met Irving Layton (Cameron 136).<sup>12</sup> Exactly where she worked and what she did, however, are some of the many permutations in the 1940s narrative. Elspeth Cameron's 1985 biography of Irving Layton placed Betty Sutherland as a cashier at the Venus restaurant on St. Catherine Street (136). In his book *God's Recording Angel*, 1995, Francis Mansbridge states that Betty Sutherland was a "hat-check girl" (also the title of Cameron's chapter) at the Venus Restaurant, not a cashier (46). Irving Layton writes that Betty was working at the Diana Grill, not the Venus Restaurant, in his 1985 autobiography *Waiting for the Messiah* (215); he maintains the story that she was a "hat-check girl." In her own journal, however, Betty Sutherland's story diverges from the others:

After New York, John and I took rooms together in Montreal and set seriously to work at our separate careers. He had left McGill, had a job at the New Carlton Hotel as a night clerk, and wrote during the day. I got a job as a cashier at Gallagher's Grill, and painted in my hours off. (qtd. in M. Layton "Re: Research Essay")

As her memory serves her, Betty Sutherland recalls working at Gallagher's Grill as a cashier; this rendition of the circumstances under which Betty Sutherland and Layton met is corroborated by Max Layton, who suggests that "the names *Venus* and/or *Diana* are

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<sup>12</sup> Layton places the meeting in early March [1942] (*Waiting* 214). This date, however, seems unlikely since Cameron notes that Betty Sutherland arrived in Montreal in July of 1942 (138). By November of 1942, Betty Sutherland and Layton had met, so she probably began working at the restaurant between July and November of 1942.

suspiciously poetic (although there was a Diana Restaurant on St. Catherine)” (M. Layton “Re: Research Essay”).

Poetic elements are frequently embedded in Layton’s life story, a phenomenon that is explained by Elspeth Cameron in the preface to her biography of the author. Cameron writes that “coming from a peasant background of limited education, unaccustomed to keeping written records, and much given to story and song,” Layton and his family found greater significance in “the moral point of anecdote” than literal accuracy (n. pag.). Cameron also notes that Layton hated “being pinned down,” and that this hatred “of being made to be one defineable [sic] entity, frequently led Layton to alter or invent facts” (n. pag.). Layton’s tendency to “make the world up as he goes along” may account for some of the historical inaccuracies found in his autobiography, *Waiting for the Messiah* (1985), and Cameron’s biography about him, *Irving Layton: A Portrait* (1985). Therefore, as Max suggests, the Diana Grill and the Venus Restaurant are potentially more symbolic than factual names, and Gallagher’s Grill was likely the name of the restaurant where Betty Sutherland worked.

While her time was occupied working as a cashier and painting, Betty Sutherland’s brother John was busy devising a plan to start a new literary magazine (Whiteman xvi). Shortly thereafter, *First Statement* was born. Not unlike the confusion surrounding Betty Sutherland’s place of employment, the original makers of the publication are a point of debate. Dean Irvine explains in his PhD dissertation that “Most magazines routinely employed women (and, less frequently, men) in clerical roles, sometimes acknowledged on the masthead, often not” (11). Irvine notes that the result of this inconsistent practice is that these menial jobs, such as mimeographing, collating,

stapling, and typing, “have regularly been deemed inferior to editorial work and summarily disregarded by little-magazine historians” (11-12). A glance at *First Statement*’s first volume reveals a random format for acknowledging contributors, editors, and assistance.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, ambiguities and discrepancies concerning who was involved in what aspect of *First Statement* magazine have inundated literary histories. Betty Sutherland’s involvement with *First Statement*, in particular, has become an addled tale of marginalization.

Although Betty Sutherland’s work with *First Statement* magazine is rarely explored and often confounded by critics, she has not been completely left out of the record as a participant in its creation. A number of critics have at least mentioned her as an original member of the magazine’s editorial board. Miriam Waddington stated in her 1972 introduction to John Sutherland’s *Essays, Controversies, and Poems*, that Betty Sutherland was an original member of the First Statement group, and that she had a role in the creation of the magazine (2). Neil Fisher supports this claim when he writes that *First Statement* “was initially produced by John Sutherland, his sister Betty, and McGill students Robert Simpson, Keith MacLennan, and Audrey Aikman” (1). Similarly, Hilda Vanneste lists Betty Sutherland as an initial member of *First Statement* in her book *Northern Review: 1945-1956* (63). Irving Layton actually names Betty Sutherland as one of the editors of the little magazine in *Waiting for the Messiah* (221). Despite the numerous sources that attest to her inclusion as a member of *First Statement*, Betty

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<sup>13</sup> *First Statement* 1.1 lists all members of the little magazine on page eight. *First Statement* 1.2, however, only mentions the editor, John Sutherland, on page nine. This format continues until issues thirteen and fourteen, where the format reverts to mentioning the *First Statement* “group,” named on page ten. *First Statement* 1.15, however, returns to the format of only mentioning the editor, this time on page ten. The editor/production group information is always listed at the end of the issue for the first volume, except for issue twenty, where it is printed on the cover.

Sutherland's role with the periodical remains unclear. There is little available information concerning the extent of her involvement, the duties she performed, and the influence she had on the independent publication.

The real confusion about Betty Sutherland's work with the little magazine seems to originate with Wynne Francis's 1962 article "Montreal Poets of the Forties." In her study, Francis wrote that a group of friends, including R.G. Simpson, Mary Margaret Miller, Audrey Aikman, and, the "central figure, if not the leader," John Sutherland, "turned out the first six or seven issues of an eight-paged mimeographed sheet which they named *First Statement*" (21-22). Although she credited her with introducing Irving Layton to the First Statement group, Francis neglected to mention any direct involvement Betty Sutherland had with the periodical.

Years later, in 1984, Ken Norris wrote about *First Statement* in *The Little Magazine in Canada: 1925-1980*; because Norris quoted Francis's list of the founding members of the periodical, he promulgated Betty Sutherland's exclusion from the history of the little magazine's beginning. Norris later confused Betty Sutherland's role with *First Statement* when commenting that issue thirteen "boasts a new staff: John Sutherland, Betty Sutherland, Irving Layton, Glyn Owen, Audrey Aikman, and Louis Dudek" (36). Since there is no mention of Betty Sutherland earlier in his book, Norris's list suggests that she is among the new staff members. In fact, Betty Sutherland was an original, founding member of *First Statement* magazine.

One has only to look at *First Statement*'s first issue to see it clearly written that Betty Sutherland was a member of the magazine's inaugural editorial board; on the last page the editors write, "This magazine has been produced by five people: John

Sutherland, Betty Sutherland, Robert Simpson, Keith Maclellan, and Audrey Aikman” (8). It is possible that critics, such as Francis and Norris, have neglected to include Betty Sutherland (as well as Keith Maclellan) in this original group because prior to issue number eighteen of the first volume there are no names printed on the cover of *First Statement*. Nevertheless, the editors are listed at the end of the first issue, and Betty Sutherland’s involvement with the periodical is further credited in *First Statement* 1.13, and *First Statement* 1.14. Her name is finally omitted from the list of members in number fifteen of the same volume. It is important to note that, although her name is absent in the fifteenth issue, this does not mean that Betty Sutherland’s involvement with *First Statement* ended with the preceding issue. The little magazine did not include a list of members in every subsequent issue, nor did it publish their names on a proper masthead. It is impossible to say, only by looking at *First Statement*, where Betty Sutherland’s involvement ended, and the extent to which she participated, because of the magazine’s inconsistent and vague policy regarding the documentation of its members.

Despite such impediments to discovering the workings of *First Statement*’s editorial activities, it is possible to explore and examine the evidence that suggests Betty Sutherland played a significant role as a member of the group that made *First Statement*. Returning to the story of when Betty Sutherland met Irving Layton, we can perceive at least a minor involvement on her behalf with the periodical. In November of 1942, Irving Layton’s sister-in-law, Eckie, was working at the same restaurant as Betty Sutherland (Layton *Waiting* 215). It was Eckie who came to Layton and informed him of the strange young woman she was working with: “there’s somebody who works at the Diana as a hat-check girl who’s just as kooky as you are. Crazy as a loon” (qtd. in

Layton *Waiting* 215).<sup>14</sup> Eckie, of course, was speaking of Betty Sutherland, exclaiming, “she thinks she’s an artist. She’s forever drawing and doodling and making sketches and talking wildly. And she has a brother, John, who thinks he’s a poet. . . . She looks very much like Ingrid Bergman, really a cross between Ingrid Bergman and Greer Garson” (qtd. in Layton *Waiting* 215). It was Eckie who encouraged Layton to call Betty Sutherland and arrange a meeting with her while he was in Montreal, on leave from Camp Petawawa. Layton did not hesitate, and phoned her that day.

Their first rendezvous took place at a coffee shop, and the discussion concerned poetics; Betty Sutherland characterized the meeting almost as a casual interview:

The poetry he read that first day was awful. It absolutely stank. It was too conscious of politics. It had terrible rhymes. There was no heart to it. I had read Louis Dudek’s stuff by then and loved it. When I told Irving what I thought, he was taken aback. He saw I was going to be a hard nut to crack. . . . Although I thought his poetry was shit, I believed I could help him improve it. I was drawn to him because he was fascinating. He has a fascinating face to draw. (qtd. in Cameron 137-138)

Betty Sutherland’s memory of her first meeting with Layton concerns his poetic ability. At the very least, her comment suggests that she worked as an intercessor between Irving Layton and John Sutherland, merely handing the poems of the writer to the editor of *First Statement*. Her intense interest in Layton’s poems, however, combined with her ability to judge the quality of the work, implies that she was more directly involved with the editorial activities of the magazine. She explains she was familiar with Dudek’s work,

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<sup>14</sup> Betty Sutherland and Eckie probably worked at “Gallagher’s Grill,” not the “Diana.”

and was convinced that she could help Layton “improve” his writing, comments that point to a more refined knowledge of poetry and the editorial process.

In addition to Betty Sutherland’s own comments about editing poetry, Irving Layton has provided a testimony of her work with *First Statement*. In his autobiography, he explains Betty Sutherland’s efforts in making the hard copy of the little magazine:

Betty helped out whenever she could. The three of them (Betty Sutherland, John Sutherland, and Audrey Aikman) toiled heroically at mimeographing and stapling the sheets and then sending out copies. There were few subscribers, less than seventy-five, I’d say. John held down some menial job to pay for the whole thing and even Betty contributed something from her meager earnings as a hat-check girl to help keep the magazine afloat. (*Waiting* 219)

Along with Sutherland and Aikman, Betty Sutherland formatted and distributed the early copies of *First Statement*. She also helped finance the project while she was working at Gallagher’s Grill. Aileen Collins, the editor of *CIV/n*, said of little magazines in an interview that “if you’re paying for it and you’re doing the work, it’s yours” (Personal interview. 14 October 2004); if this concept is accepted, then Layton’s comment reveals that *First Statement* is as much Betty Sutherland’s project as anyone else’s.

Even before he joined Betty Sutherland as a member of the First Statement group, Layton was enthralled by the young woman. In *Waiting for the Messiah*, he writes about his instantaneous passion for Betty Sutherland:

I was attracted to Betty, but not only physically. There was something about her personality that I knew with certainty fated me to know her

beyond this brief moment. She was wearing a raccoon coat, the kind students used to wear at football games. Undoubtedly she had picked it up at a second-hand store, probably the Salvation Army. (I later learned that most of her skirts and velveteen jackets came from the Sally Ann.) Anyway, there she was, engulfed in an oversized raccoon coat, her face suspended above the fur, her light brown hair blown wildly in all directions. Now a strange thing impelled me. I stepped over to her and took her in my arms as if we were going to start to dance. We did in fact do a few steps, then I embraced her more closely. “Betty”, I said softly, “you and I are going to have beautiful children.” (216)

Layton’s prophecy would prove, in a few years, to be fulfilled, but many unforeseen events would precede its realization. First, Betty Sutherland would have to introduce her new beau to her family, starting with her brother.

Louis Dudek explains that he and Layton met John Sutherland around December, “or perhaps in late November, 1942,” a few weeks before *First Statement’s* ninth issue was released (“Letter” 2).<sup>15</sup> Layton recalls that when he returned to Montreal he went to Stanley Street to call on Betty, who took him to meet John, “also living on Stanley Street only a few houses north, just below Sherbrooke” (*Waiting* 220). The meeting was a success. The passion for poetry held by these two gentlemen was mutual and, according

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<sup>15</sup> Layton believes that he met John Sutherland when he returned to Montreal “in late 1943” (219). This date is incorrect: *First Statement’s* thirteenth issue is the first to list Layton as a member of the First Statement group, and it was released in February of 1943 (Dudek “Letter” 1). Therefore, the meeting between Sutherland and Layton probably occurred before February 1943, around November or December 1942, as Dudek suggests (“Letter” 2).

to Layton, John Sutherland immediately asked him “to become one of *First Statement’s* editors” (*Waiting* 220). Sutherland later extended the invitation to Dudek.

Once Dudek joined the First Statement group, Layton notes that “*First Statement* had five editors: John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, myself, Audrey Aikman, and Betty” (Layton *Waiting* 221). Layton considers Betty Sutherland to have been an “editor” of *First Statement*, and one equally responsible for the making of the little magazine. As an editor, she probably read through submissions, selected particular poems for publication, and proof read or edited the final product, in addition to helping mimeograph, collate, staple, and distribute *First Statement*. Such duties are far more active than any previously attributed to Betty Sutherland in histories of the little magazine. According to Layton, then, Betty Sutherland contributed much more to *First Statement’s* longevity and success than simply introducing him to John Sutherland.

It is true that Betty Sutherland’s talent was more artistic than literary during the 1940s, unlike most of *First Statement’s* members; however, this does not mean that she was incapable of judging and improving the quality of poetry submissions to the little mag. In addition to her strong bond with John Sutherland, an avid reader, prolific writer, and editor, Betty Sutherland worked part-time as a proofreader for the local newspaper, *The Montreal Star*. According to Layton, Betty Sutherland was employed at the *Star* along with himself, John Sutherland, and Audrey Aikman, Sutherland’s fiancée at the time (*Waiting* 233). In a letter she sent to Layton many years after their escapades in Montreal, Betty Sutherland fondly reminisced about her time working with him at *The Montreal Star*: “Do you remember how we used to sing, on the way to our proof-reading jobs at the *Star*, going down Beaver Hall Hill – It’s snowing, it’s snowing, the little man

is growing !? In the days when guilt was young. Dear Irving, I wish we had never grown up” (Letter to Irving Layton. 19 December 1982). Although she says little about the job itself, proofreading for a newspaper would probably have honed her grammatical skills, as well as bolster her appreciation for poetic writing.

Layton’s comment that Betty Sutherland was an active, authentic “editor” of *First Statement* is one of the few explicit declarations of her role with the little magazine.

There does exist, however, other evidence that implies Betty Sutherland was a member of the editorial board. In a letter from Louis Dudek to Irving Layton, Dudek writes about a discussion the First Statement group, including Betty Sutherland, had about one of his poems:

I send you the last version of my poem of the rose tree. I showed both versions to the First Statement people, and asked them to guess which was which. Audrey Aikman guessed wrong... Alas. Betty, too, thought that the first was better. But John did know, and gave the reason for my changes correctly. Of course, I do not doubt myself that the changes improve the poem. Don't you agree? (5 January [1943])<sup>16</sup>

From the above passage, it is evident that Betty Sutherland, along with members of the First Statement group, was consulted about the two versions of the poem. Her opinion seems to weigh heavily on Dudek; despite insisting his confidence in the changes to the

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<sup>16</sup> The letter was originally dated as 5 January 1942; however, someone has penciled in “43” where the year is written on the letter. It is more than likely that 1943 is the year that the letter was sent, since *First Statement* did not exist in January, 1942 – it began around July or August of 1942 (Dudek “A Letter” 1). The confused date appears to be authorial, especially considering that it was written during the first few days of a new year.

poem, Dudek's tone feels apprehensive when he questions whether or not Layton agrees with him.

Although Dudek does not agree with Aikman and Betty Sutherland's assessment of "The Rose Tree," his comment gives us a closer look at the editorial style and process of *First Statement*: poems seem to have been passed around the group, read in drafts or successions, and then each editor provided his or her opinion of the piece. Whether or not this approach was consistently used is uncertain. Among the editorial members, there appears to have been a division between male and female reader response; this gender division resurfaces in another letter from Dudek to Layton one week later: "The girls at these meetings added sauce to the feast, but/and agreed with the men for the most part. What reservations they had in their female secret councils is not known" (14 January [1943]).<sup>17</sup> "The girls" Dudek most likely refers to are Audrey Aikman, Betty Sutherland, and (possibly) Maxine Bigg, the "Business Manager" acknowledged in issue nine (8).<sup>18</sup> While these women generally agreed with the other editors, Dudek's comment suggests that he was not convinced their opinions during the meeting were wholly honest. One has to question if there were "female secret councils" among the women of *First Statement*, and if different opinions were expressed there concerning the poetry submissions. All that can be surmised from Dudek's comment is that the female members may have held a subordinate position (perhaps self-imposed) during the

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<sup>17</sup> As with the previous letter from Louis Dudek to Irving Layton, someone has penciled "43" over the original date of 1942.

<sup>18</sup> Issues ten, eleven, and twelve, which appeared between January and February of 1943, do not acknowledge members of the group. The only Montreal women acknowledged as members in *First Statement* by this time are Audrey Aikman, Betty Sutherland, and Maxine Bigg. Helen Cumming is added to this list by issue fourteen, which was released in March of 1943 (Dudek "Letter" 1).

meetings, that their voices could have been suppressed, which might account for some of the critical ignorance of their involvement in the editorial process.

While busy working on *First Statement* magazine, Betty Sutherland decided at some point in 1943 to move into a little apartment above the Junior League of Montreal Superfluity Shop on University Street (Cameron 29). Layton describes the abode as “the top floor of what was really a factory building. The bottom floor was rented to somebody who manufactured cardboard cartons” (*Waiting* 228). In her short story, “Love in the Attic,” based on her time living there, Betty Sutherland (then known as Boschka Layton) wrote that “The top floor, the third, was much as it must have been in the days of its youth: four good-sized rooms, one in each corner of the building; a smallish hall and stairwell, a small bathroom, the toilet had a pull chain to flush it, a small porcelain sink, with big, knobby taps that leaked a little” (53). Of her main character, she writes, “She was a painter, and lived in her studio; cooked on a hot plate; had to buy almost everything she needed one day at a time, there was no refrigerator. Painted in the daytime, and worked as a cashier in a huge empty restaurant from four till midnight. . . . Her lover had moved into the room across the hall” (53).

Irving Layton moved into the building with Betty Sutherland, and, like the lover in Betty Sutherland’s story, stayed in a room across the hall from her. The life they lived together was bohemian and artistic. While she found employment as a cashier and a waitress, Betty Sutherland’s career was as an artist. Likewise, Layton was putting all of his energy into his poetry. Sometimes, as Betty Sutherland explained in an interview with Elspeth Cameron, the new living arrangement was a distraction from these pursuits:

I had liked the idea of a lover who would disappear from time to time. He had an oppressive ego and it had always been a relief when he left. Whenever he wrote a poem, he had to read it out loud to me at once. Having him around every day was much too much. I was pretty independent and wanted to be left alone most of the time to paint. (qtd. in Cameron 142-143)

Despite Betty Sutherland and Layton's different approaches to the creative process, their time living together proved to be creatively fruitful: Layton was writing many poems for publication in *First Statement*, leading to his first published book *Here and Now* (1945); Betty Sutherland was creating book covers for small publications, drawings, and paintings, including her only work on display at the National Gallery of Canada, *Front Door* (1946).

Although Betty Sutherland and Layton were adjusting well to their new lifestyle, Betty Sutherland's father was less than enthusiastic about the couple's living arrangement. Elspeth Cameron describes him as being irate upon discovering his daughter had "taken up with a Jew" (143). Part of Betty Sutherland's attraction to Layton, however, was his "Jewishness" (143). Betty Sutherland insisted that one of the reasons she was attracted to him was historically significant: "Because of Hitler and the war generally, I had strong feelings about the Jews. I wanted to show that I was not prejudiced. Loving Irving, I felt as if I were making up for the awful things that had happened. I still feel constant to their race" (qtd. in Cameron 143). Moving in with Layton was important to Betty Sutherland because it was, in a way, an expression of her

liberalism and her un-prejudiced perspective. Despite her father's initial disapproval, she continued to live with Layton for approximately fifteen years.

There was comfort in the fact that at least one of her family members accepted her relationship with Layton: her brother, John Sutherland. While living with Betty Sutherland on University Street, Cameron notes that "Layton's closest associates were Louis Dudek and John Sutherland, who continued to publish his poems and stories in *First Statement*, convinced that Layton had the makings of a great literary figure" (147). With the help of Dudek, Layton, and Betty Sutherland, John Sutherland was able to expand his literary operation by purchasing a printing press early in the spring of 1943. Bruce Whiteman explains that the acquisition of the press was important because it "permitted the expansion of Sutherland's activities to include the publication of books" (xvi-xvii). So impressed was Sutherland with Layton's writing that the first book to be published by First Statement Press was Layton's *Here and Now* (1945), which preceded works by Patrick Anderson, Miriam Waddington, and Raymond Souster (Francis "Little" 56).

The success of First Statement's "New Writers Series," the name given to *First Statement* books, was not only due to the high quality of the writing it published, but also to the excellent physical appearance of the books it printed (Tracey 101). Wynne Francis remarks that "Designed and illustrated by artist Betty Sutherland, First Statement books were more attractive than the occasional chapbooks put out by commercial publishers and more professional in appearance than the publications of many more recent little presses" ("Montreal" 57). Betty Sutherland's contributions as a cover designer and artist of First Statement chapbooks were integral to the philosophy behind the publications. John

Sutherland wrote in his “Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences,” that the “chapbooks have been designed in an attractive format in the belief that the importance of type and design demanded greater acknowledgement from the book publisher in Canada” (74). In keeping with First Statement’s modernist aesthetic, the chapbooks challenged both the writing that came before it and the artistic presentation of those written works.

Always the visionary, Sutherland’s demand for a more profound consideration of book design in Canada was one of the first of its kind, and a topic that would continue to be critically discussed in the years to come. Almost fifteen years after Sutherland’s “Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Science,” William Toye wrote an article for *Canadian Literature*, entitled, “Book Design in Canada.” In this article, Toye discusses the relationship of the book designer to literature:

The designer is in a position to serve the written word profoundly; first of all by making it legible, giving it the proper type face, length of line, leading, and margins, and handling the type meticulously. By using imagination, taste, and craftsmanship, he can also put every aspect of the physical book in perfect accord with the work itself, and even heighten its meaning. Whether this is done or not done, whether it is done well or badly, is surely of some importance. (53)

Considering Betty’s work designing books did not end with First Statement Press (she designed book covers for Contact Press in the 1950s), and the high demand for her talent by her colleagues, a topic discussed in the next chapter, Betty Sutherland’s work must

have been “done well,” as Toye would say. Her success can be judged by looking at her book designs, which arguably capture the vibrancy and creativity of the written works inside them.<sup>19</sup>

As the First Statement group became busy in 1945 publishing books like Layton’s *Here and Now*, Patrick Anderson’s *A Tent for April*, Miriam Waddington’s *Green World*, and Souster’s *When We Are Young*, in addition to printing its second and third volume of *First Statement* magazine, Layton and Betty Sutherland’s relationship was intensifying. In July of 1945, she became pregnant with their first child – out of wedlock.

Complicating matters was the fact that Layton was still married to his first wife, Faye Lynch, who refused to grant him a divorce. According to Elspeth Cameron, Faye was determined to be with Layton and “in desperation, sent off a letter to Betty’s father, Fred Sutherland, accusing Betty of enticement and pregnancy” (168). Betty Sutherland’s father was alarmed; however, as vice-president and general manager of the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission, he could not take leave from work to visit the couple in Montreal (Cameron 168). Louise Scott, Betty Sutherland’s cousin, explains that alternate arrangements were made by the family to investigate the situation:

The first ambassador from the Sutherland family was my mother. She was sent to Montreal to report on the exotic creature, Irving Layton. Although I was only six when this happened, I know there was a great commotion in the family about whether he was Jewish or Communist or both. My mother was quite charmed by him and came back to say that she saw

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<sup>19</sup> See the appendix for an annotated bibliography including pictures of Betty Sutherland’s book cover designs.

nothing wrong. It was all a great disappointment to Uncle Fred, who was an irascible individual anyway. (qtd. in Cameron 168-169)

After this slight approval from the Sutherland family, Layton and Betty Sutherland were prepared to start their family.

The Layton family's initial reaction to the news of the pregnancy, however, was equally apprehensive. Keine Lazarovitch, Layton's mother, was furious that Layton was having a child with a Gentile, and she insisted that Betty Sutherland convert to Judaism (Cameron 169). Betty Sutherland agreed to convert, taking the Russian-Jewish version of her real name: Baschka.<sup>20</sup> Despite this spiritual step, Betty Sutherland claimed that Layton's mother was never fond of her; Lazarovitch was critical of Betty Sutherland's lackadaisical attitude towards domestic responsibilities and religious rituals. As Betty Sutherland remembers, "'Bubba,' as we called her, would get after me: 'That's the wrong fork! You forgot the prayers! Where are there candles?' It was no picnic. When she got mad at me Irving would just laugh. He never defended me" (qtd. in Cameron 169). Through all their arguing, however, Betty Sutherland liked Keine and did many drawings of her. Betty Sutherland was eventually accepted as a member of the Layton family.

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<sup>20</sup> Cameron writes that Betty Sutherland changed her name in the 1940s to "Boschka" (169). Aileen Collins disagrees with Cameron, however, because she believes that Betty Sutherland did not become "Boschka" until many years later: "She and her daughter went to India on this huge, huge trip. And when she came back, she was 'Boschka,' so I don't think it has anything to do with Layton" (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). Although Cameron remarks that Betty Sutherland "formally legalized her Jewish name in the early 1970s, and began using it then" (169), Aviva Layton also disagrees with Cameron's explanation of the name change. She says that Betty Sutherland took the Russian-Jewish version of her name when she converted to Judaism, but that this name was "Bashka," not "Boschka" (Telephone interview). According to Aviva Layton, Betty Sutherland changed her name in the 1970s, as Collins suggests, to "Boschka" as a tribute to one of her favourite painters, Hieronymous Bosch (Telephone interview).

Betty Sutherland's acceptance by Layton's family was accelerated on the evening of April 7, 1946, when, while dining at John Sutherland and Audrey Aikman's place, she was rushed to the hospital. That night, Max Layton was born (M. Layton "Re: Research Essay").<sup>21</sup> The baby's arrival, however, necessitated a few changes in the couple's lifestyle; they needed to abandon their blissfully bohemian abode on University Street for a rental shack in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. Their small city dwelling was inadequate for a family, and the new, rural home was a pleasant escape for Betty Sutherland from the bustle of city life. It also offered the couple time to decide where to relocate permanently. Betty Sutherland spent the summer there with her newborn son and Layton's nephew, Bill Goldberg (Cameron 170). Layton remained in the city, working at the Ross Tutorial School as the new history and poetry teacher, but visited the Eastern Townships on the weekends (Layton *Waiting* 253). His absence during the week provided her with valuable time to concentrate on her artwork.

Meanwhile, back in the city, John Sutherland was busy running the result of a merger between *First Statement* and *Preview*: the little magazine *Northern Review*. The first issue of this periodical appeared in January of 1946, and continued to run for ten years, until 1956. By that time, the magazine was exclusively edited and made by Sutherland himself. This was not the initial plan. *Northern Review*'s original editorial board is said to have been carefully chosen "to give equal representation to the same old constituencies of *First Statement* and *Preview*" (Francis "Montreal Poets" 31). There is

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<sup>21</sup> Elspeth Cameron indicates that Betty Sutherland and Layton's son's name is "Maxwell Rubin Layton" (169); however, Max Layton writes, "The name on my birth certificate is Max, not Maxwell and no one has ever called me Maxwell. Also, the date of my birth is definitely, April 7, 1946" (Re: Research Essay).

no evidence, however, to suggest that Betty Sutherland was a member of *Northern Review's* editorial board, although she was a member of the First Statement's.

The reason that Betty Sutherland abstained from working on *Northern Review* remains unclear. Her pregnancy, the birth of her child, and the family's move to a suburban district are all possible reasons. She is, however, present in *Northern Review's* second volume as the subject of an article written by Louis Muhlstock. The appearance of this article suggests that Betty Sutherland's painting career was beginning to take precedence over other ventures, such as the work she had done with *First Statement*. Nevertheless, her artwork was similar in content and philosophy to the writing found in the little magazines. Muhlstock explains that her work represents a movement away from what was being painted in Canada since "She is amongst the few painters who are concerned with people and not with the Canadian landscape" (15); this kind of shift in content is a fundamental quality of modernist little magazines, which are "alert to the need for new values and the search for fresh modes" (Francis "Literary Underground" 67).

Furthermore, Muhlstock writes of the "underground" quality of Betty Sutherland's art, stating that "Her paintings are full of inner meaning and quiet human dignity and therefore not too popular, because they disturb... By popular too I mean not easily accepted by the masses who look either for skill and technique and the generally pretty in painting or the unusual which they really do not ever understand" (16). The subversive and novel qualities of Betty Sutherland's artwork align its vision with the modernist little magazines in Montreal, making it ideal for collaboration. Perhaps this is

why she was asked to design the covers of books by Irving Layton, and, later, Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, among others.

As her artistic career was burgeoning, so was Betty Sutherland's family life. Max's birth finally convinced Layton's first wife, Faye Lynch, to grant him a divorce (Cameron 170). Betty Sutherland and Layton could finally marry, which they did. The date of the ceremony, however, has become a point of debate. Cameron places the wedding in "February 1948" (170); this date seems unlikely since, in a letter from Layton to Robert Creeley, Layton writes "Yesterday was our wedding anniversary, officially our eighth" ([September 1954], 131). The letter implies that the wedding was held in September, but suggests the year was 1946 (eight years before 1954). Irving Layton provides his version of the event in *Waiting for the Messiah*: "I married Betty one week after the divorce came through; and, as though to outrage the gods, or to defy them, the wedding took place on September 13, the same day of the month I'd married Faye, seven years earlier. Our son Max would be born the following spring" (231). According to Layton's story, the wedding would have occurred in 1945, since Max Layton was born in the spring of 1946. Max Layton, however, disagrees with this version of Layton's story, explaining, "I've always been told that I was born before my parents got married" ("Re: Research Essay"). He adds that Betty Sutherland's 1976 journal "puts the wedding date at eighteen months after I was born – so September 1947 seems most likely" ("Re: Research Essay").

Whatever the actual date of the ceremony, the wedding was an important step towards the acceptance of the couple by their respective families. Frederick Sutherland, Betty Sutherland's father, was finally satisfied with a proper marriage. He generously

provided the Laytons with enough money for a down-payment on a “charming little house in Côte St. Luc, set among farm lands in the rural north-west outskirts of Montreal” (Cameron 170); with their new home on 8035 Kildare Ave, Layton and Betty Sutherland finally had an ideal place to raise a family.

The couple’s family life in Côte St. Luc was blissfully peaceful; however, Layton’s relationships with his friends and colleagues became increasingly unstable by the end of the 1940s. One crushing conflict arose between brothers-in-law, Irving Layton and John Sutherland, in 1948 over a review of Layton’s second book of poetry, *Now is the Place*. In *Northern Review*, Sutherland’s comments about Layton’s newest book are, for the most part, “commending” the collection of poems; however, Sutherland also states that “Mr. Layton’s talents lie in fiction rather than poetry. While about three-quarters of the poems are of small value as restoratives from our puritanical drought, about four of them probably indicate that Mr. Layton is a poet of some sort” (34). Layton was offended by these comments, and his relationship with Sutherland, consequently, became abrasive. Collett Tracey notes that “correspondence also suggests that relations between Layton and Sutherland were becoming increasingly impatient, even hostile. These issues appear to have culminated in an argument between the two editors,” resulting in Layton’s resignation from *Northern Review*’s editorial board (120).

Betty Sutherland was placed precariously between brother and husband throughout the feud. Furthermore, Layton was rather insensitive towards his wife and her position concerning the conflict. He attempted to divide brother and sister on numerous occasions. Betty Sutherland describes one instance where Layton used his poetic ability to cleave apart Betty Sutherland and John Sutherland:

He said such awful things about my brother. I remember going to Frank Scott's one quiet Sunday evening when everyone had books or new poems to read from. Irving had brought a poem he'd just written, "When it Came to Santayana's Turn." He asked me to read it out loud for him. When I realized that it was an awful attack on John, whom I loved and who was very sick, it was too late for apologies. (qtd. in Cameron 225)<sup>22</sup>

Furious at Layton's attempt to implicate her in his attack, Betty Sutherland still managed to remain neutral in the battle, choosing neither brother nor husband's side.

At the same time, a rift between Layton and Dudek that had started a year earlier, in 1947, was intensifying. While Dudek was studying at Columbia University, Layton "had become increasingly convinced that, isolated from the Montreal poetry scene in New York City, Dudek's political beliefs were changing, and that he was in the process of selling out on socialism in general, and Layton in particular" (Tracey 121). After numerous hostile letters between them, Dudek and Layton ceased correspondence in 1947.

Many critics have noted that Layton and Dudek were the closest of friends before their dispute in the late 1940s; few have mentioned, however, that Betty Sutherland and Dudek were also close friends before, during, and after this argument. They had worked together on *First Statement*, and she initially admired Dudek's poetic ability above Layton's (Cameron 137-138). Luckily, Dudek was not in Canada at the time of the dispute, making his and Layton's a solely epistolary conflict; consequently, Betty Sutherland was able to maintain her friendship with Dudek and his wife at the time,

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Stephanie (née Zuperko). The amicable nature of Dudek and Betty Sutherland's relationship would become instrumental in Dudek and Layton's reunion for the creation of Contact Press.

Tumultuous friendships aside, the end of the 1940s was an exciting time for the Laytons, especially when the couple conceived their second child. Naomi Parker Layton was born on June 1, 1950.<sup>23</sup> The couple was thrilled with their new arrival, but one misfortune resulted: the birth had put stress on Betty Sutherland's weak heart. She had suffered from rheumatic fever as a child and, as Cameron explains, "had been advised, after Max was born, that she should not have any more children" (189). The pressure put on her heart during Naomi's birth would lead to devastating health problems in the 1950s. For the time being, however, Betty Sutherland was ecstatic about her new arrival. She was ready to move into the 1950s with all the promise that a new family and stable home could provide

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<sup>23</sup> Elspeth Cameron provides May 1, 1950 as Naomi Parker Layton's date of birth (189). Max Layton, however, corrects the date, stating that "Naomi was born on June 1, 1950, not May" ("Re: Research Paper").

## Chapter 2

### Designing Woman: Betty Sutherland's Contributions to *Contact Magazine* and Contact Press during the 1950s

The early 1950s have often been characterized as a more or less stagnant period for poetic activity in Canada. Remembering the vibrancy and collectivity that marked the poetry of the early 1940s, it seems like the new decade began with a whimper instead of a bang. As Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski directed us in *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* (1967), “we must recall that the Montreal group had dispersed in 1944 (an actual agreement of dissolution of the partnership of Layton, Dudek, and Sutherland in *First Statement* was signed on September first, 1944) and that late in 1947 a gradual weakening of Sutherland’s sense of modernism had created a lull in the literary scene” (141).

The literary “lull,” however, has been misinterpreted to mean that the cusp between the 1940s and 1950s was an apathetic, unproductive period for Montreal poets. In a 1963 feature article of *The Canadian Author and Bookman*, for example, we are told that in 1951 “poetry was in the doldrums” and that “Little poetry was being written, and that little had scant hope of publication in book form” (“Poets” 2). These statements imply that the relative success of *Contact* magazine and Contact Press is largely due to a lack of competition.

In *Contact Press 1952-1967* (1966), Gnarowski responded to the comments made in the *Canadian Author and Bookman*, clarifying that

A cursory survey of the years 1951 and 1952 – years when Contact Press was planned and established – reveals that at least three major books of

poetry were published in each one of those years. Publishers' lists for those years are of average length, indicating as well that there had not been a noticeable decline in the activity of commercial publishers. (3)

Gnarowski insisted the perception that poetry was not being published, or even that it was not being written at the beginning of the 1950s, is inaccurate. Raymond Souster affirmed in "Some Afterthoughts on *Contact Magazine*, printed in Gnarowski's book, that the early 1950s were a particularly fecund period of writing for the future members of *Contact*: "Irving Layton, Louis Dudek and myself had moved into the Fifties writing more strongly, and certainly more productively than ever. But not only were the regular book publishers indifferent to our work, but the one or two little magazines still functioning, foremost of which was John Sutherland's *Northern Review*, were now closed to us" (1).

It was not because poetry was "in the doldrums," then, that *Contact* magazine and Contact Press were created ("Poets" 2); it was, rather, a genuine displacement in the direction of poetic creation, a permutation from the wartime-fed poetry of the 1940s that instigated the need for a new vehicle like *Contact*. "Social Realism's Second Phase," as Ken Norris called it, was well underway (56). It was lacking, however, an outlet for its writers. Gnarowski expanded on this theory, citing "Restlessness and dissatisfaction with the way in which their own careers were developing; disenchantment with the ideas of literary contemporaries, and a certain annoyance with the policies of commercial publishers" as precursors to the collaboration of Souster, Dudek, and Layton and the creation of *Contact* magazine and Contact Press in the 1950s (*Contact Press* 10).

Discussions about *Contact* magazine and Contact Press's beginnings have dominated criticism of the little magazine and little press; however, only a few critics – like Frank Davey in *Louis Dudek & Raymond Souster*, Tracey, and Campbell – note that the collaboration between Souster, Layton, and Dudek, *Contact* magazine, and even Contact Press, would never have transpired were it not for Betty Sutherland. It was a monumental intervention on her behalf that reunited the three young poets, leading to Souster's conclusion that "There must be some other publication, even if it's only a token gesture" (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 4). Once the magazine had been established, Betty Sutherland designed the cover of the publication, beginning with the third issue. Her talent to create attractive and original cover designs encouraged Contact Press to continue to use her artwork for their publications throughout the 1950s. Despite these major contributions to the little magazine and little press, however, Betty Sutherland has remained a mere footnote in *Contact*'s history. It is time to reconsider her role in the making of *Contact* magazine and the running of Contact Press throughout the 1950s.

It was late summer in 1951 when Dudek returned to Montreal from New York City (Tracey 155).<sup>24</sup> He had been hired by Dr. Harold Files, Acting Chairman of McGill University's English department, to teach "composition and modern poetry" (Tracey 156). Betty Sutherland learned quickly of Dudek's return to the city, and she did not hesitate to contact him. Tracey explains that

As soon as she heard of Dudek's arrival in Montreal, Betty Sutherland

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<sup>24</sup> Ken Norris writes that Dudek "planned to return to Montreal in September" of 1951, a date that corresponds with Dudek's letter to Souster on July 17, 1951, where he writes that he will "be in Canada after September" (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact Magazine* 3). That he arrived in August, as Tracey suggests, is a possibility.

(John Sutherland's sister and Layton's wife) phoned Dudek to urge him to reconcile with Layton. The two poets made temporary peace with each other and arranged to meet the following weekend. Coincidentally, Souster and his wife were in Montreal at the same time and were invited along. And so, in late August, 1951, Dudek, Sutherland and Souster gathered at Dudek's grandmother's farm, near Charlemagne, Quebec, on the Little Jesus River. (156-157)<sup>25</sup>

As previously noted, Layton and Dudek had ceased correspondence in 1947. Betty Sutherland's phone call initiated the first meeting between the two poets in four years. Aileen Collins, editor of *CIV/n* and second wife of Louis Dudek, calls Betty Sutherland "the catalyst that brought Louis and Irving back together again" (Personal interview. 15 October 2004). The meeting would mark the introduction of Souster to Cid Corman's *Origin*, a small American publication that would have a huge impact on *Contact's* content and, later, Souster's own poetry (Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 1).

Shortly after this meeting, on October 6, 1951, Souster definitively announced to Dudek *Contact's* impending release in February of the following year (Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 4).<sup>26</sup> Although *Contact* was really Souster's publication, Dudek and

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<sup>25</sup> There is some confusion as to who was present at the meeting. Collett Tracey explains that "according to Souster, Layton did not appear while John Sutherland did. Dudek's account of the time suggests that Layton was actually there and Sutherland wasn't. A photo taken at the farm does not show Layton, but it is possible that he was the one who actually took the photograph" (156). It seems unlikely that John Sutherland was present, since Tracey writes that it was at this gathering that "Souster again raised the idea of a new magazine with Dudek" (157). The reason Souster wanted to start a new little magazine was because he was "fed up" with Sutherland's *Northern Review* (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 3); it would seem awkward for him to mention starting a new publication in Sutherland's presence.

<sup>26</sup> Souster initially wrote to Dudek and informed him of his plans "to bring out the first issue of a mimeographed magazine of verse to be called *Contact* in February" of 1952 (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact*

Layton were both published in its pages and supportive of the project. Gnarowski even describes Dudek as the “*eminence grise* behind the magazine,” a term that is fitting if one considers that Dudek wrote some of the little magazine’s most memorable editorials and provided Souster with the names and addresses of many of its American contributors (*Contact 1952-1954* 5).

*Contact*’s introduction to the literary underground was successful in its aim to be the “outlet for experiment and a franker discussion of poetry” that Souster envisioned in a letter to Louis Dudek on June 23, 1951 (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 3). Cid Corman wrote Souster on January 23, 1952, just after *Contact*’s release, to praise not the quality of the poetry in the little magazine, but “the impetus behind it, the effort that it suggests, that it wants to make, an essential effort... for Canada” (qtd. in Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 7). Something, however, was missing from the publication, preventing it from having the full impact that Dudek and Souster anticipated.

It seems that Corman’s tepid reaction, among others, may have had a role in changing the presentation of *Contact*; after his letter, Dudek and Souster proceeded to find ways to improve the publication, both inside and out. Dudek wrote to Souster on January 26, 1952, just after Souster had received Corman’s letter, about the importance of a printed cover for the next issue, suggesting they use Betty Sutherland as their designer:

Do let’s get a printed cover for No. 2. I.e. just one coloured plate (y’can get it printed – in different colours, one for each issue, enough for about five issues at once, even more) with the word CONTACT slapped across it. I can get Betty Layton to cut this, and John’s printer to do it. . . . Also,

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*1952-1954* 4). The first issue of *Contact*, however, was actually released in January, 1952 (Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 5).

y' should reduce the size of it to letter head size. The big sheet is awkward, not like a mag. (qtd. in Campbell 102)

Dudek was ready to progress with the little magazine, but Souster had some reservations, mainly the cost of printing. It would take some coaxing on Dudek's behalf to convince Souster to print an expensive cover for a mimeographed little magazine.

Dudek was persistent with his belief that a printed cover would improve *Contact's* reception. He was not ready to give up the battle. Dudek sent a letter to Souster only a couple of weeks later, in which he wrote,

About the cover, I am adamant, we want to make the mag look as good as possible, it gets the stuff more careful reading (the writing is ragged and bold enough as it is...) so what the hell let's make it. I'll send you \$15 for the job; Betty is sending a linocut with the word CONTACT, which you must take to a printer who will mount it on wood, and print off on paper of your choice. (9 February 1952)

In an attempt to make *Contact* appear more serious, Dudek chose Betty Sutherland to create a cover. Despite his initial concern about the cost of printing, Souster eventually agreed to Dudek's plans, and Betty Sutherland's cover appeared on the third issue of *Contact*, in May of 1952.

Dudek's choice of Betty Sutherland as cover designer was natural. She had designed books for First Statement Press in the late 1940s, and she was Layton's wife. She was also developing a reputation as a serious artist in the city. In 1950, she was invited to be part of a four-man show at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal ("Elizabeth"). During this period of her life, Betty Sutherland was busy teaching art

classes at the city's Y.M.H.A. (Young Men's Hebrew Association), and she was even commissioned to construct a caribou diorama for the Redpath Museum at McGill University ("Elizabeth"). The many hours she had spent painting in the Eastern Townships of Quebec during the summer of 1946 were finally starting to amount to something.

Despite such promising opportunities, Betty Sutherland confronted some bitter difficulties at the beginning of the new decade. In 1951, she was struck with endocarditis, which is an infection of the heart's inner lining or the heart valves. Layton explains in a letter to Robert Creeley that Betty Sutherland "came down with it, just after giving birth to [their] little daughter" (8 July 1953, 23-24). Her doctors had been correct in their early assessment of her health: Betty Sutherland's heart was too weak for the stress that the birth of another child would cause. It appears that a surgical procedure was required, and that her recovery was rather prolonged. Layton wrote Creeley in 1954, just after Creeley's own wife was recovering from an operation, stating "Yes, it takes some time before the bad effects of an operation leave and the good ones make themselves felt. Bet's got a bit of migraine but the doctor thinks pills and glasses will help" (9 October 1953, 54).

Once she had made an adequate recovery from the operation, Betty Sutherland returned to her artwork. Layton was supportive of her talent. Louise Scott, Betty Sutherland's cousin who lived with the Laytons briefly in the 1950s, recalls that she "was lazy and he pushed her. She never applied herself fully to her drawings, though there was no question of her talent" (qtd. in Cameron 226). Aileen Collins also comments that Betty Sutherland was "very careless about her work. I suppose she felt she could always

do more” (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). Max Layton, however, disagrees with both Scott and Collins, suggesting that his mother’s “bacterial endocarditis enlarged and weakened her heart and she never fully recovered” (“Re: Research Essay”). It was her poor health, draining her of energy, which kept her from realizing her full artistic potential.

Nevertheless, Betty Sutherland continued to paint “practically everybody that went through her house that she found interesting” (Collins. Personal interview. 14 October 2004). She soon became persistent about her need for studio space. In the early 1950s, Layton wrote Robert Creeley about how he spent approximately \$2500 to build an extension on their house (which was really a cottage). The renovation was supposed to provide Max with a bedroom, and his wife with a small studio (27 September 1954, 148-149). Aileen Collins recalls the couple’s improvements to their home in Côte St. Luc, remarking, “they had a big lot behind the house... They built kind of an extension on the back. But it wasn’t elaborate and it certainly wouldn’t qualify to be called a studio. When I knew her, I’m not sure if it was her studio, but she worked in a studio downtown with a group” (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). In Collins’s opinion, Layton’s addition to the home was not an adequate space for Betty Sutherland to work in; she remembers her often working outside of the home.

If she did rent studio space in the city, this would have been a weighty expense for the young family. The visual arts can be a costly venture, and the financing of Betty Sutherland’s work became the subject of complaint for Layton when he wrote Creeley in 1953:

I think my last letter to you – the one you apparently didn't get – I told you something about my wife's painting exhibitions, one of which is scheduled for November and one the month following. It's the first time she's had a one-man show. This summer, like myself, Bet put in a couple of months of good, hard work and she's got several canvases to prove it. Of course, at the moment we're wondering where we're going to get the money to pay for all the framing and the costs of transportation. (23 September 1953, 44)

Framing and the cost of transportation are just some of the expenses the serious artist must incur; canvas, paint, and brushes are other costly supplies. Perhaps to reduce their spending, some of Betty Sutherland's paintings were done on hardboard instead of canvas.

The one-man show Betty Sutherland eventually presented was in Saint John, New Brunswick: her hometown. Layton was hopeful that she would sell many paintings, writing in his letter to Creeley that she had "priced them moderately in the reasonable hope that some of her compatriots. . . . will, out of local pride, dig into their pockets and buy some of her pictures" (44). The show was a success. Shortly afterwards, Layton sent a letter to Creeley to share the news of Betty Sutherland's accomplishment: "Since somebody who reviewed her exhibition at St. John's said that she was securely among the masters and hailed her as an authentic genius it has become exceedingly difficult to argue with her about anything. Just kidding, of course. I know no one sweeter and more modest" (5 December 1953, 69). Great reviews, like the one Layton mentions, were only part of Betty Sutherland's achievement; during her first two shows, she had also earned

“a hundred dollars from sales,” a substantial amount in the 1950s, and she was beginning to make a name for herself in the Canadian art world (Cameron 220).

While Betty Sutherland’s artistic career was blossoming, *Contact* magazine continued to publish the poetry of Layton and Dudek, as well as writing from international contributors. The release of the little magazine in early 1952, however, did not quell the sense of growing dissatisfaction in its editor, Souster, and his associates, Dudek and Layton, with the publishing industry in Canada. Tracey explains that, in February of 1952, Dudek sent a letter to Souster that “suggested that, together with Layton, they select approximately seventy-five poems to publish in book form” (163). A month later, in March, Souster agreed to the plan, and by the end of the month the three poets had decided that their first publication would be titled *Cerberus*, and that their new press would bear the name “Contact Press” (Tracey 164-165).

Betty Sutherland was, naturally, asked to create the cover for *Cerberus*. Almost a year after its release, a short review of *Cerberus* appeared in *CIV/n 2*, a new literary magazine in Montreal. The review, by Neil Compton, praised *Cerberus* as an “attractively produced volume” (59). An advertisement on the following page of *CIV/n 2* for Contact Press boasts “Cover Designs by Betty Sutherland” for not only *Cerberus*, but also Irving Layton’s *The Black Huntsmen*, and Louis Dudek’s *Twenty-Four Poems* (60). Betty would continue to design covers with Contact Press for these three poets, and others, throughout the 1950s.

The arrival of *CIV/n* in 1953 meant that Dudek and Layton were occupied with a new little magazine as advisors, all but ceasing their involvement with *Contact*. Gnarowski explains that, by this time, “The liaison with Souster was now dependent on

the concerns of Contact Press, and the letters which the two men [Souster and Dudek] exchanged dealt more and more with plans for publishing and distributing Contact Press books; to a significantly smaller extent with current material for *Contact*, and not at all with the future of the magazine” (*Contact 1952-1954* 13). Dudek, furthermore, sailed to Europe in the summer of 1953; the overseas voyage created more of a gulf between Souster and Dudek, especially in regards to *Contact*. Finally, in February of 1954, “Souster wrote Dudek, Corman and Creeley informing them of his decision to cease publication with #10” (Gnarowski *Contact 1952-1954* 14). Souster explained that the magazine had become too demanding of his time and energy, and the last issue of *Contact* was released in March of 1954. Betty Sutherland’s design appeared as the cover of *Contact* until the last issue.

Meanwhile, Contact Press was only growing in the number of its publications and its scope. Gnarowski describes this phenomenon when he writes that “In general, it may be urged that the little press – under certain circumstances – is a logical associate of the little magazine” as *Contact* magazine gave rise to Contact Press; he goes on to explain, however, that “once it has given rise to its associate little press,” the little magazine does not “have to hang about as a necessary and continuing adjunct. Normally, the little press becomes a sturdily independent entity almost at once, and can be expected to outlive the founding little magazine. The best example of this kind of independence, longevity and performance is Contact Press” (*Contact Press* 11-12). After publishing a number of volumes of their own poetry, Dudek, Souster, and Layton were looking to enhance the performance of their press. Tracey writes that “During the latter part of 1955, they began to feel self-conscious about publishing their own work, especially since there were still

too few avenues by which Canadian poets could get published, and so they made a conscious decision to produce work by others” (166).

It may be, in fact, that this desire to publish the work of others, especially from a younger generation, began even earlier, in 1954, their sentiments expressed by the arrival of *Trio*. A collection of poems by Gael Turnbull, Phyllis Webb, and Eli Mandel, *Trio* was announced in an advertisement for Contact Press, which declared, “The first appearance in book form of the work of a new generation – the poetry of the Fifties – is a major event” (163). The three poets were regular contributors to *CIV/n*, and in this way Contact Press served to promote the new little magazine; the relationship was actually reciprocal, since *CIV/n* often advertised Contact Press books. The publication of *Trio* provided a wider selection and a more intimate encounter with the poetry of three specific *CIV/n* poets. Made in the same style as *Cerberus*, Souster explains that it was “a cheap way to introduce three poets,” and the best that Contact Press could do at the time (qtd. in Tracey 169).

Of course, probably for financial reasons, but also because of her former success, the group asked Betty Sutherland to design the book’s cover. When it was complete, *Trio* appeared with four, forceful vertical lines running from right to left in black, yellow, white, and black, respectively. The title, *Trio*, appears at the top of the page in bold, black letters. Each of the authors’ names is appears randomly on the page. It was the first publication of the new generation of Contact’s poets, but it was not to be the last: the press went on to publish books by young authors like Leonard Cohen, Doug Jones, and Margaret Atwood.

Contact Press was successful in achieving its goals to publish good and important poetry that was not getting attention due to what Dudek calls the “commercial corruption of the estab press” (qtd. in Tracey 165); this accomplishment, however, was not without its difficulties. Evidence of tension between Contact’s three founding members is apparent with the creation, in 1954, of the Laocoon imprint. Tracey explains that,

According to Dudek, Laocoon Press was an imprint created by himself and Layton as a symbolic gesture of separateness from Souster and Contact Press. Dudek suggests that by that time they were feeling the need to have a sense of independence from Souster within the press’ structure. The reasons for this remain vague, although they might have been reacting to Souster’s resistance to allow them more input into *Contact* magazine, as well as to his ongoing interactions with Cid Corman and other American poets. (175)

Whatever the exact reasons for using the Laocoon imprint, the issue that instigated its creation soon dissipated. Only two books were ever published under Laocoon: Louis Dudek’s *Europe*, the cover of which was designed by Krystyna Sadowska, and Irving Layton’s *The Long Pea-Shooter*, designed by Betty Sutherland.

Layton and Creeley wrote extensively, back and forth, about the publishing process of *The Long Pea-Shooter*. Interestingly, the two authors frequently emphasize the importance of the design. Layton writes Creeley in 1954, describing the work Betty Sutherland was doing on his book:

My Long Pea-shooter will be out in about three weeks. Bet’s just gone down to the typographers to make the plate for the cover. The book’ll also

have a drawing of my puss by my wife – fancy shmancy like they say.

The thing has fifty poems and my smilometer and guffawometer give me reason to suppose a success for it. My one worry is – will it make a sour grape like you smile. Ha! Ha!. ([October 1954], 160)

Layton's excitement about the forthcoming publication only increased, and he wrote Creeley a few days later, informing him that "The Long Pea-Shooter will be out sometime during next month. It's going to be a nice-looking book" (17 October [1954], 163). *The Long Pea-Shooter* is an attractive book, especially since it features a drawing of Irving Layton by Betty Sutherland; its inclusion led Creeley to comment once he had received his copy, "Like, very much, Bet's drawing of you!" (27 December 1954, 194).

Correspondence between Layton and Creeley reveals that Betty Sutherland was more invested in the *Long Pea-Shooter* project than simply contributing her drawing of Layton and designing the cover. She was also concerned about the design of the book and its layout. Layton wrote Creeley expressing Betty Sutherland's concerns just after *The Long Pea-Shooter* was released, telling him that "Bet wants to know what you thot [sic] of layout of LP-S" (10 January 1955, 198).<sup>27</sup> Always passionate about poetry and publishing, Creeley provided a verbose response in his next letter:

Things so much of a muck at present, let me at least tie into the actual, like they say, – viz , Bet's question re format of THE LONG PEA-SHOOTER. God knows I can't make much sense, at any time, re such things. But let me go at it assend-to, i.e., even like a variant way of how it could have been done.

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<sup>27</sup> "LP-S" or "LPS" refer to *The Long Pea Shooter* (1954).

I think a smaller page, for one thing – figuring most of the poems in the book have ‘narrow’ form. But, more than that, one night we’d cut down a page from IMOMF, for some reason or other, to the dimensions of a GD/s page, just to see what it looked like – and it looked the end, i.e., jumped like crazy. With LPS, in particular, energy, and satiric character, wd have done very damn well in a ‘jammed’ page, i.e., wd have given effect of jumping right off it. As it is, – it’s almost too formal. Does that make any sense? (I’ll enclose page of IMOMF, as noted above, to show you what I mean here.) Anyhow, think something like an out-size pocketbk wd have been it – i.e., a small, tough book, with a real leer to it. Something to throw, in fact – a rock. (Too, I think yr present jacket design wd have been sharper on such a size [*Added in margin:* That green wd be unnecessary.] – it is a little spread here?). (18 January 1955, 200)<sup>28</sup>

Creeley, being extremely experienced in designing books after working with the Divers Press, offers some constructive criticism to Betty Sutherland. He suggests keeping her present jacket design, but using a smaller format.

The commentary about *The Long Pea-Shooter*’s format was one among a couple of discussions that Betty Sutherland and Creeley engaged in (via Layton) about book design. Earlier, in 1953, Irving wrote a letter to Creeley that provided his and Betty Sutherland’s reaction to a book the Divers Press had recently published: “I received the Eigner book during the week. Lovely job, as usual, though my wife thinks the paper too stiff. I try to persuade her that the fewness of the poems made it necessary, but I haven’t

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<sup>28</sup> “IMOMF” is Layton’s *In the Midst of My Fever* (1954), and “GD/s” probably refers to Creeley’s *The Gold Diggers* (1954).

been able to convince her” (5 December 1953, 69). Layton appears to have less of an aptitude towards book design than Betty Sutherland, since Creeley wrote back in agreement with her comments: “Your wife very right on LE/s paper – too damn thick, like leather. O well. Can’t win them all. But at least we know for the next time” (12 December 1953, 71).<sup>29</sup> Creeley’s agreement with Betty Sutherland demonstrates her knowledge of book design.

Layton liked publishing with Creeley’s Divers Press because Creeley always delivered an original and attractive book design at a fair price. There was also the fact that Divers was a bigger name than Contact in the publishing industry, which could only help Layton’s international career. After *The Long Pea-Shooter*, Layton proposed to bring out a new book, *The Cold Green Element*, with Divers Press, under the Laocoon imprint (Letter to Creeley. [13] September 1954, 134). Creeley enthusiastically agreed to print *The Cold Green Element*, but cautioned that shipping the book from Spain would be both costly and time-consuming. Layton decided, instead, to print the book in Montreal, due to financial constraints. He mentioned to Creeley, in a letter sent in February 1955, that he was in the process of arranging a deal with a “chap” to finance the publication of his book (211). Layton’s one condition, it seems, was that Betty Sutherland remain involved in its publication, as he writes that he will “insist Bet designs the book” ([February 1955] 211). When the book finally appeared in 1955, published explicitly by Contact Press and ditching the Laocoon imprint, the cover was Betty Sutherland’s design, and the collection of poems featured two of her artistic compositions.

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<sup>29</sup> “Eigner” and “LE/s” refer to the American poet Larry Eigner. Creeley and Layton discuss Eigner’s book of poems, *From the Sustaining of Air* (1953).

Betty Sutherland's work designing book covers for Contact Press in the middle of the 1950s became frequent; around half of the press's publications in this decade were done by her. The designs she created were considered to be second to none by Contact Press's owners. Souster wrote to Dudek on this topic in the late summer of 1955, when the question of who would design his forthcoming publication, *The Selected Poems*, was raised in a letter: "About Betty doing the cover – who else would anyone want to do it? Great" (27 August 1955). There was no hesitation on Souster's part to have his work presented in Betty Sutherland's signature style. It was beneficial to the press to use her designs since those books with covers created by Betty Sutherland sold well. In fact, Souster's *The Selected Poems*, which was eventually designed by her, became one of the press's most sought-after publications. In 1960, Dudek wrote to the Department of National Revenue confirming that Contact was a non-profit organization and mentioning that the press's "most successful book is The Selected Poems of Raymond Souster. This book is now sold out. The record of accounts shows production costs amounted to \$467.89. Total receipts from sales \$331.32." Of course, Souster's poetic ability was the main draw to his *The Selected Poems*. Betty Sutherland's design, however, would have only helped to catapult the book's popularity.

Betty Sutherland's work with Contact Press began to wane once Layton started to publish his books with other presses; this may be because Layton's move created conflict within the press itself. Dudek explained in a letter to Peter Miller that "The break with Layton is best covered by the fact that he took his poetry out of Contact Press to Jonathan Williams (for a collected poetry) and then to McClelland & Stewart Ltd." Layton's move also meant the end of Betty Sutherland designing the covers of his own books, since

Jonathan Williams had them professionally done. This does not mean that Layton disliked her designs or that it was his choice to stop using them; little is known about what prompted these decisions regarding printing and design. In *The Improved Binoculars*, Layton's first book done by Jonathan Williams and featuring an introduction by William Carlos Williams, Layton writes on the last page, "My wife, the painter Betty Sutherland, has designed all the books I've brought out privately," ensuring that she receive proper credit for her efforts in launching his career. As a point of interest, *The Improved Binoculars* was also dedicated to Betty Sutherland.

After Layton published *The Improved Binoculars* elsewhere, it is important to note that Betty Sutherland did not cease designing book covers for Contact Press. Once she and Layton separated, she remained friends with Dudek and Souster, helping them with their publications the best way she knew how: artistically. She even designed the cover of Dudek's *The Transparent Sea* and *Laughing Stalks*, as late as 1958. Betty Sutherland continued to design books for Contact Press until she left for San Francisco in the 1960s. Contact Press published new and important books of poetry by Canadians until 1967

### Chapter 3

#### **“Not a one man job”: Betty Sutherland’s Involvement with the *CIV/n* Group and the End of the 1950s**

The 1950s in Montreal began with only one little magazine to showcase its modernist poets: *Contact* magazine. The paucity of literary outlets for Montreal poets was compounded by the fact that *Contact*, one of the only available mediums for the city’s poets, was not made in Montreal; it was put together by Raymond Souster who was now, west of where the action was, mimeographing the magazine in Toronto. Montreal’s modernists were exporting their verse to Toronto just so they could see their work appear in a little magazine. Moreover, “Souster maintained tight control over *Contact*, despite numerous appeals by Dudek to loosen the reins and allow him and Layton more say in the little magazine’s content” (Tracey 178). It was time for a new little magazine to emerge, and one that was made in Montreal by its resident poets. A new vehicle was needed to represent the kind of poetry that was emerging from a younger generation: that vehicle was *CIV/n*.

The *CIV/n* poetry movement began in 1952, when four young Montrealers were “seized by a desire to change things” (Collins “Introduction” 7). Aileen Collins, Stanley “Buddy” Rozynski, Wanda Staniszevska, and Jackie Gallagher had just completed university and were eager to have their voices heard. The group decided that a little magazine was the perfect way for them to “jolt Canadians from their lethargy and narrow-mindedness” (Collins “Introduction” 7). The only problem was that none of them knew exactly where to begin. It was for this reason that they sought the help and advice of Rozynski’s cousin, Louis Dudek, who later engaged the assistance of Irving Layton.

Most critical studies of *CIV/n* have, until recently, concentrated on Dudek and Layton's involvement with the periodical, often casting them in the role of bona fide editors. Ken Norris, for example, disregarded the role of Collins, Rozynski, Staniszewska, and Gallgher with *CIV/n* when he wrote in 1984 that they were merely responsible for handling "the production work and distribution" of the little magazine (64). He added that "much of the energy expressed in the magazine stems from Layton and Dudek, and particularly from Dudek" (64). Norris's study of *CIV/n* creates the impression that the little magazine was really Dudek's project.

Wynne Francis continued the discussion of *CIV/n* in her 1984 review of Aileen Collins's *CIV/n: A Literary Magazine of the 50's*, where she criticized Norris's focus on Dudek's work editing the little magazine. Francis believed that *CIV/n* was the work of both Dudek and Layton, and that the little magazine's content was determined by the "antithetical" relationship between the two men. She wrote that "The 'significance' of *CIV/n*" lies "in the fact that it marked a decisive (and divisive) point in the careers of Dudek and Layton—a fact that (for those who are not wearing a patch over one eye) has had truly remarkable consequences for contemporary Canadian poetry" (92). Like Norris, however, Francis also disregarded the role of Aileen Collins as editor of *CIV/n*, and she even joked that Dudek was perhaps "out of town" when Collins decided to include Creeley's "A Note on Poetry" in *CIV/n* 5 (89).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Francis emphasizes Gnarowski's documentation of "the fact that Dudek deplored Souster's policy of internationalism" and that he "welcomed the founding of *CIV/n* as a 'local' workshop magazine with a definitely Canadian orientation" (89). She, therefore, questions why so many Americans are present in the last few issues of the little magazine, later suggesting that their appearance was Layton's doing. *CIV/n*'s editor, Aileen Collins, however, insists that "the program wasn't Canadian literature," when they started

Only recently have critics decided that Collins's work with *CIV/n* deserves consideration. Dean Irvine offers a brief, ten-page summary of Collins's role with the little magazine in his PhD dissertation. He works to characterize Collins's literary relationship with Ezra Pound, from whom the title *CIV/n* was borrowed. Irvine insists that "Pound's question, 'who is the *CIV/n* female?' is one too rarely considered by literary historians" (306), and he attempts to offer a satisfactory answer through his analysis of the little magazine's antipathy to government grants and subsidies. His sketch, although in many ways pithy, falls short of a profound analysis of the "*CIV/n* female," Aileen Collins, and a true understanding of the workings of the little magazine.

Critical emphasis on locating the editor of *CIV/n*, as so many studies of the little magazine have done, is not without its consequences; mainly, studying *CIV/n* through this critical lens tends to overlook, although it may be briefly mentioned, the concept of *CIV/n* as a poetry "workshop." As Gnarowski explained in 1966 study of *Contact* magazine, *CIV/n* differed from *Contact* in that it was meant to reflect Dudek's concept of a "workshop" for poets, not open to the public (*Contact 1952-1954* 13). If we view *CIV/n* as a poetry movement or workshop, instead of as a publication under the direction of one or two main editors, the traditionally peripheral characters – like Rozynski, Staniszewska, Bob Currie, and even Betty Sutherland – come into focus.

It must first be acknowledged that *CIV/n* did have an "editorial board," as evidenced on the magazine's masthead. The members of this board varied throughout *CIV/n*'s run, but a few members in particular are consistently listed: Aileen Collins,

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*CIV/n*, but that the main goal was "more to destroy what was out there than create something" (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). This program is clearly stated in *CIV/n* 5 by Collins, who wrote in an editorial letter called "Canadian Culture" that "Nothing will be done until we start concentrating on producing *poetry* without qualifications as to nation" (129).

Wanda Staniszevska, and, with the exception of issues three and six, Rozynski. From studying the masthead, *CIV/n* appears to follow the tradition of *First Statement*, *Preview*, and *Contact* by locating a specific individual responsible for editing the little magazine; unlike these other little magazines, *CIV/n* establishes a hierarchy of members from the “Editor,” Collins, to “Associate Editor,” Staniszevska, and “Art Director,” Rozynski. These labels, however, are somewhat misleading. Collins explains in an interview that the composition of the editorial board was much more flexible than the masthead suggests: “We had just agreed on how we were going to do it. I think probably... I can’t remember now. But I imagine it was because I said, ‘okay, I’m going to be editor,’ and Wanda said ‘I’ll be associate editor,’ and Buddy said ‘Okay, I’m now known as Rozynski.’ Sandbox stuff, you know. ‘I’m president,’ you know” (Personal interview. 15 October 2004).

The hierarchy of *CIV/n*’s editorial board was inconsequential; nevertheless, these three members, Collins, Staniszevska, and Rozynski, formed the backbone of *CIV/n*. Allegations that Dudek and Layton were the editors, or the energetic, driving force behind the little magazine, are mistaken. Collins explains that both Dudek and Layton were involved in the editorial process, but that the energy behind *CIV/n* and the final decisions came from the editorial board:

We had these sessions, usually at Irving’s house, where we sat on the floor and dirty chairs, and manuscripts were passed around. I have a few examples where we had initialed them, and put a check whether you liked it or not. But then we had the last – the editorial, Buddy, Wanda and I – had the last say on that. And mainly it was “do we have enough paper for

25 pages”. It was practical as well as everything else. And if Irving and Louis were the masterminds behind this, they should have thrown in a little money to help finance it. My philosophy is, if you’re paying for it and you’re doing the work, it’s yours. We paid for it and did the work.

The dirty work. (Personal interview. 14 October 2004)

It was Collins, Staniszevska, and Rozynski, then, that funded *CIV/n* and decided what went into its pages and what was left out. Dudek and Layton did, however, assist the group by reading submissions, editing contributions, and offering their advice.

If credit is given to Layton and Dudek for their involvement with *CIV/n*, which it is, then their colleagues who helped edit and equally contributed to the creation of the little magazine should also be acknowledged. Among this group of collaborators was Betty Sutherland, who became involved with *CIV/n* through Layton. Although Betty Sutherland’s name is never mentioned in critical studies of *CIV/n*, she was the acting art director for its third issue and contributed her own artwork to the periodical throughout its run. Furthermore, she was a member of the group who read and edited the many submissions to the periodical, an activity most often held at her and Irving Layton’s home.

Consider, for a moment, this concept of the poetry “workshop,” for this is where Betty Sutherland’s work with *CIV/n* comes to the fore. As previously mentioned, *CIV/n* did have a main group of editors responsible for the final decisions regarding the periodical; however, the magazine was much more collaborative and flexible than any of its predecessors. Collins explains in an interview *CIV/n*’s open editorial policy and Betty Sutherland’s involvement with the group of editors:

We didn't see ourselves as a kind of editorial board, that we were running the show. We were much, much more cooperative, and flexible -- if somebody couldn't do something, somebody else did it. And I think Betty came in because she was doing some of the other drawings, with Buddy, even when he was working on the illustrations, she was too. She was involved, from the beginning. (Personal interview. 15 October 2004)

Collins notes that there were other people involved with *CIV/n*'s creation, not just the editorial board, Dudek, and Layton. The format of a "workshop" meant that anyone and everyone had the opportunity to be involved in the making of the little magazine. Betty Sutherland was involved from the start, mainly working with Rozynski on the artistic elements of the publication.

Although the artwork in *CIV/n* was her main concern, Betty Sutherland was also a member of the group that read through the submissions and edited each issue. In fact, Collins acknowledges that "A lot of the activity in terms of the editorial meetings and everything took place at Irving's -- Betty and Irving's. So Betty was involved from the very beginning. She was part of the group that decided, and read stuff. She was a good reader" (Personal interview. 15 October 2004). Respected among her colleagues for her ability to critique, proofread, and edit the poetry submitted to *CIV/n*, Betty Sutherland's work with the group helped determine the quality and content of the little magazine.

In addition to working on the content of *CIV/n*, Betty Sutherland also helped design its appearance. In 1954, Robert Creeley offered to print *CIV/n* on his press in Spain and improve the quality of the little magazine, which was being mimeographed at the time. Layton responded to his offer enthusiastically:

We are all very excited to hear that you are willing to do *Civ/n* for us: it's a great break. I didn't want to ask you because I thought you had enough on your hands without my adding that to your already heavy burdens. But if you offer, we accept. My wife and gang will confer on the kind of format – offhand GD strikes them as unsuitable, but BMR – that's a beaut, no kidding. ([September 1954], 129)<sup>31</sup>

Creeley never printed the following issue of *CIV/n*, since he could not obtain “shipping permits for stuff going directly to Canada” from Spain, and shipping via the United States would have meant “extra shipping costs” and “double duties” (Creeley, 24 September 1954, 147). What is interesting about Layton's response to Creeley, however, is that he includes Betty Sutherland among the group that decided on the format of the little magazine before it was printed; this means that Betty Sutherland was making decisions normally reserved for an editor or editorial board. Since Layton's letter was most likely sent in September of 1954, around when *CIV/n* 6 was released, his comment also demonstrates that Betty was working on the little magazine as late as the last couple of issues.

Before the final issues of *CIV/n* were released, however, Betty Sutherland made artistic contributions to the little magazine, both as art director and artist. The appearance of *CIV/n* marks an evolution in the role of art and design in the Montreal little magazine, and Betty Sutherland had a hand in this progression. *CIV/n*'s predecessors, such as *First Statement*, *Preview*, *Contact*, and *Northern Review*, included artistic submissions and reviews in their pages; however, none of these little magazines had a designated artistic

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<sup>31</sup> “BMR” refers to the *Black Mountain Review* (1954-1957).

director, nor did they integrate art with the poetic content – what Louis Dudek calls “ornament” for poems (“Wood Carvings by Rozynski” 83). *CIV/n* was the first modernist little magazine in Montreal to unite both poetry and art using a mimeograph machine.

Nowhere is the critical attention to the visual arts more prominent than in *CIV/n* 3, the issue for which Betty Sutherland served as art director. Within its pages, the third issue of *CIV/n* offers two drawings done by Betty Sutherland, as well as photographs of three wood carvings done by Rozynski. Preceding Rozynski’s work is an introduction, written by “L.D.” – presumably Louis Dudek; this homage to Rozynski establishes the significance of artistic work in the little magazine and the importance of designers like him:

The poet will at once admit, with perfect frankness, and without masochism, that these pieces of wood show more care and labour in execution than the work of most poets in *CIV/n*, *CONTACT*, *NORTHERN REVIEW*, or *FIDDLEHEAD*, the present list of Canadia [sic] literary saloons. . . .

*CIV/n* is grateful to this young painter and sculptor for his help in the illustration and design of the magazine. The present number, illustrated by Betty Sutherland, proves that he has broken fertile ground for others also in this form. (“Wood Carvings by Rozynski” 83)

Dudek’s article indicates the importance of the artistic director and the prominence that art was beginning to acquire in the little magazines of Montreal. The work of Rozynski and Betty Sutherland initiated a tradition of artistic relevance in the little magazines that

was carried on to the next generation of Montreal little mags, such as *Delta* (1957-1966) and *Yes* (1956-1970).

Although supportive of her artistic endeavours, it seems that Layton may not have fully respected Betty Sutherland's artistic gift, and that he "sometimes saw Betty's talent as an extension of his own and her work as taking second-place to his" (Cameron 226). Occasionally, this lack of acknowledgement was a source of tension for the couple. Betty Sutherland remembered one particular incident at a *CIV/n* party in 1953, a showcase of Rozynski's art for the second issue, when an argument about art was really a pretext for underlying problems: "Irving went into a big spiel that Buddy should make duplicates of his sculptures and sell them for \$2.95. I knew some technical things about sculpture and I told him he was stupid to say such a thing about a work of art. In a way, I did it just to see how it would sound" (Cameron 227). Layton refused to concede to Betty Sutherland's knowledge of art: in many ways, the argument was basically symptomatic of a power struggle that plagued their relationship. It was this particular argument, however, that really changed the temperament and texture of the couple's marriage. Betty Sutherland recalled that "Things became very stormy" after this night, and Cameron suggested that the argument eventually led to marital infidelity (Cameron 227).<sup>32</sup>

Despite the tumultuous state of Layton and Betty's relationship, Betty's work with *CIV/n* was a huge success. The feedback on issue 4 was in favour of it being one of

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<sup>32</sup> Cameron wrote that Betty Layton (Sutherland) said during her interview, "There was a discussion we had up on the mountain one day about this . . . . It was a calm discussion in which we both admitted that we needed the outlet of affairs" (qtd. in Cameron 227). Aviva Layton, who became close friends with both Betty Sutherland and Irving Layton over the years, however, insists that Betty Sutherland and Layton never actually agreed to an open marriage. She explains that both Betty Sutherland and Irving were hurt by each other's infidelity, and this contributed to their eventual separation.

the best issues ever created. Ray Souster wrote about this particular number, “what a fine issue *CIV/n* 4 is. It has a fire and a sparkle” (qtd. in Collins “Introduction” 9); Layton wrote to Creeley, “Did you get *Civ/n* 4? By far the best issue to date, I think” (5 December 1953, 68). *CIV/n* 4 features two illustrations by Betty Sutherland: a sketch of a corpulent Dylan Thomas casually puffing a cigarette, and another drawing of a man-turtle and a man-fish entitled, *The Cachelot Sighted by The Flaming Terrapin*, which Wynne Francis explained is “a spoof of her brother’s interest in E.J. Pratt and Roy Campbell” (“Dramatic” 92).<sup>33</sup> Collins notes that the drawing of Dylan Thomas was “done from life at the home of Betty and Irving Layton, when Dylan Thomas visited Montreal” (“Introduction” 10). According to Elspeth Cameron, Thomas made this visit during the fall of 1952, stopping to speak at McGill University (205). The British poet seems to have made quite an impression on the young *CIV/n* group, and Betty Sutherland’s portrait captures his intensity. Her drawing is preceded by Phyllis Webb’s “Elegy on the Death of Dylan Thomas,” presenting the issue as a sort of dedication to Thomas’s life and poetic achievement.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Fig. 1. and Fig. 2. in the appendix.

<sup>34</sup> According to Collins’s *CIV/n: A literary Magazine of the 50’s*, issue four was completed in October, 1953: this would mean that it preceded Thomas’ death in November of 1953. The dates provided by Collins, however, do not indicate whether they were the date of release or the date that the issue was scheduled for release. Furthermore, Collins has indicated that it was difficult to identify the precise dates of each issue when writing her book: “Nothing was dated. I knew when it had originally started, and I knew when it ended. And then I had enough from letters and things that I could place it at least around when they came out. So I reconstructed it that way” (Personal interview, 10 February 2005). Therefore, it is possible that the final copy of *CIV/n* 4 was not released until after Dylan Thomas’s death. To clarify, Dylan Thomas never “drank himself to death” in 1954, as Elspeth Cameron suggests (239). According to George Tremlett (a Thomas biographer), Dylan Thomas died on November 9, 1953 (177). The cause of death was pneumonia, with “pressure on the brain the immediate cause. Within his body were found all the usual fatty tissue side effects of heavy drinking, but no evidence of cirrhosis of the liver” (177).

In addition to Dylan Thomas, many writers and editors stayed at the Layton home when visiting Montreal. In June of 1953, it was *Origin* editor Cid Corman who spent time on Kildare Avenue in Côte St. Luc. Corman “hitch-hiked first from Dorchester, Massachusetts to Toronto, where he stayed with Souster for a week, then to Montreal, where he visited the Laytons” (Cameron 215). Not much is known about Betty Sutherland’s reaction to this visit, or her impressions of the many artists who stayed in her home; however, her hospitality was widely respected among the literary community. Collins recalls that Betty Sutherland “was very easy-going. Company didn’t bother her. You slept on the floor. It wasn’t formal at all. If you were invited to a party there, you could bring six friends” (Personal interview. 14 October 2004).

If one were to stay at the Layton household during the 1950s, it was more than likely that, before leaving, your portrait would have been painted. Collins remarks that, at the time, Betty “painted portraits of practically everybody that went through her house that she found interesting... She did several nudes of Irving. And she painted kids a lot too” (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). A short biography on Betty Sutherland, produced by the New Brunswick Museum Art Department, indicates she made an estimated twenty oil paintings, three gouaches paintings, and twenty-two drawings of Montreal dwellers by 1953 (“Elizabeth”). Among the list are portraits of her children, Max and Naomi, Irving Layton, Aileen Collins, Louis Dudek, and Layton’s sister-in-law, Eckie – to name only a few. In fact, Layton wrote to Creeley in 1953 describing Betty Sutherland’s passion for portraiture. He tells Creeley, “Ever since my wife saw that fine sensitive face of yours, she’s been dying to do a portrait of you: so for her sake if not for mine I trust you will make it your business to visit us as soon as you humanly can”

(December 1953, 72). Whether or not Betty Sutherland ever met Creeley and painted his portrait is unknown, but Layton's comment suggests that he would have been a prime subject for her canvas.

Betty Sutherland's many drawings and book designs were major contributions to the modernist publications during the 1950s; it was her portraits, however, that had the most impact on what was being written throughout the decade. Most of her subjects were poets, and she would often find one specific poet who inspired her to do a series of portraits. One example is William Robert Fournier (Bill Fournier), who contributed a number of poems to *CIV/n*. Collins recalls that he served as Betty Sutherland's muse for a while:

He was one of Betty Sutherland's favourite subjects. She painted him. She had about nine nude paintings of this guy. He was the funniest guy, honestly, who lived in this tiny little cubby hole on Union Avenue downtown. . . . But he was very, very thin and extremely pale, white, white, white, and he had kind of reddish hair. Well, Betty thought this was just great. Very white, a white figure, elongated. (Personal interview, 10 February 2005)

Poets, like Fournier (who was really more of a thespian than a poet) often inspired Betty Sutherland artistically, and the more eccentric the better.

Similarly, Betty Sutherland's artwork became the inspiration for many poets, especially for her husband, Irving Layton. Layton's poem "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C.," which can be found in his Governor General's Award-winning *A Red Carpet for*

*the Sun*, was inspired by Betty Sutherland's own paintbrush. Layton wrote about how this poem evolved in a letter to Louis Dudek:

Perhaps I shd say a few words about SUTHERLAND: portrait of A.C. you know, of course, the portrait that Betty did of Aileen; it's that which started me on the poem. I see Aileen as someone who has abandoned the Catholic faith in her adolescence, but who has not been able to replace it by anything else. Hence her rigidity, and the occasional wistfulness which comes into her face like a look of pain. At such times she seems as if she were listening to the turbulent and contradictory voices inside her, or for the single not ('peal' – church peal of bells?) which keeps her sane – the repressed teachings of her early faith. The poem moves me a great deal, and I hope that it will also move you in the same way. When you are here, I'll trot out the picture for you, and I think you will be struck by the poem's fidelity to it. (19 July 1953)

Layton's poem, "Sutherland: Portrait of A.C.," is a direct reaction to Betty Sutherland's painting of Aileen Collins. The merit of the poem, at least as Layton describes it in his letter to Dudek, is found in its "fidelity" to Betty Sutherland's work, which is meant to capture the inner turmoil of Aileen Collins.

The Laytons were experiencing their own turmoil at the time, as they were beginning to find married life a hindrance to their creativity. One particular event, chronicled in Cameron's biography of Layton, significantly altered the couple's relationship: the Keewaydin poetry weekend. In the first week of July, 1954, Doug Jones invited poets from all over Canada, including many who contributed to *CIV/n*, to

spend a weekend on his island just off the banks of Kingston, Ontario. It was here that Betty Sutherland had her first “love affair,” as she referred to the incident in an interview with Cameron:

The last evening we were sitting around the living room. I sat on Frank Scott’s knees facing him. A young poet called John Paul Harvey was sitting on the floor beside Frank’s chair. He took my hand. Irving was sitting across the room facing Frank and me. He could see it all. He said, “I think I’ll go to bed. Come on, Bet.” “No,” I said. “I think I’ll stay.” He went off upstairs alone. I got off Frank’s lap and lay down across John’s knees. I wasn’t drunk, I was just having fun. Suddenly, Irving sped down the stairs and gave John a judo chop to the nose. He pulled me upstairs by the arm, threw me into bed and fucked me. I gritted my teeth and bore it. Soon afterwards, I got up and went back downstairs. I tripped over John in the dark and more or less fell onto him. It was the most glorious thing. He made love to me. I went back upstairs afterwards with love bites on my neck. Irving had heard it all. The next morning he and John went for a boat ride and talked things over. They shook hands on the dock and then we went back to Côte St. Luc. (qtd. in Cameron 237)<sup>35</sup>

The Keewaydin incident is retold here for two reasons: first, it demonstrates the personal state of Layton and Betty Sutherland’s relationship at the time, which is important since, as Collins explains, she was involved in “anything that went on with Irving. They were a devoted couple at that time, and they were involved in each other’s artistic lives as well”

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<sup>35</sup> Dudek corrects the name of the poet in a letter to Elspeth Cameron, stating his full name as “John Paul Harney,” not “Harvey” (29 December 1985).

(Personal interview. 15 October 2004); secondly, because there is another version of what happened between the couple at Keewaydin, and one that, for the accuracy of the historical record, deserves consideration. In a letter to Elspeth Cameron, Dudek responds to Cameron's writing of the event, correcting that "It was of course not Harney to whom he [Layton] gave a 'chop on the nose' but Betty herself. There was blood going up the stairs that JP Harney never mounted. Odd twist in her report" (29 December 1985). Aileen Collins concurs with Dudek, stating that she does not "know what happened; whether Irving and Betty met each other coming, or she returned from somewhere, but they had a knock down, dragged out brawl around three o'clock in the morning. But she got beaten up" (Personal interview. 14 October 2004). For whatever reason, perhaps she was trying to protect her children or Layton, more than one witness has stated that Betty Sutherland's version of the event is fictionalized; this new version demonstrates how deeply troubled the Layton marriage was at the time. Although Layton and Betty Sutherland lived together until the end of the 1950s, the weekend at Keewaydin was the beginning of a cycle of infidelities for the couple.

The stress that Betty Sutherland was dealing with in her relationship with Layton was only intensified by the fact that John Sutherland had fallen ill again. By summer's end in 1955, Sutherland was admitted to Weston Sanatorium for treatment of tuberculosis (Whiteman xxxi). Sutherland remained there for a couple of months, until it was discovered that he was not suffering from tuberculosis, but from cancer (Whiteman xxxi). He was then moved to the Toronto General Hospital, where the cancer was removed in December of 1955. Unfortunately, although the initial prognosis was good, Sutherland's

cancer recurred in the spring of 1956 (Tracey 131). John Sutherland eventually passed away on September 1, 1956: he was just thirty-seven years old.

Perhaps some of the personal problems outlined here are partially responsible for the termination of *CIV/n*. By the middle of the 1950s, the passion and excitement of *CIV/n* began to fizzle. Collins remarks that “Bob Currie almost became part of the editorial board for the last two numbers, because everybody else was dropping off. But Bob Currie and I did, actually, the last two numbers of *CIV/n* on our own. That’s when all the problems started, and all the fights were going on” (Personal interview. 10 February 2005). Although the main problem for the little magazine was funding, many personal problems plagued the editorial board and contributors. After an argument among members of *CIV/n*, which was really a failed attempt on Layton’s behalf to seize control of the publication, the group began to divide (Collins. Personal interview. 10 February 2005). Furthermore, Dudek and Layton were at odds once again, because Layton stopped publishing his poetry with Contact Press. It may be that the growing tension between Layton and Dudek caused Betty Sutherland to pull away from the *CIV/n* group. After the fourth issue, it seems that her artistic contributions, at least, ended with the little magazine. *CIV/n*, for a number of reasons, ceased publication with issue number seven in the early winter of 1955.

It is also a possibility that Betty Sutherland’s involvement with *CIV/n* ended abruptly because her artistic career became more and more demanding. Aileen Collins explains that Betty Sutherland was working hard during the middle to late 1950s on her paintings and cover designs: “I know she had a studio downtown somewhere that she was sharing with some other painters. And then you know she was illustrating, and

designing some of the Contact Press books and stuff like that” (Personal interview. 10 February 2005). After spending a couple of summers at Lac Minerve in the Laurentians and putting in time at the studio, Betty Sutherland had a substantial number of paintings to display. Max Layton writes,

I know that, at some point between 1956 and 1958, she had completed a significant body of work – enough to fill The Four Penny Art Gallery (owned by Leonard Cohen and sculptor Morton Rosengarten, among others). I also know that, the night before the exhibition of her work was to open, the gallery burned to the ground and destroyed every painting my mother had created. The paintings were uninsured. (“Re: Research Essay”)

This horrible incident, however, was not insurmountable for Betty Sutherland; she simply started from where she had left off, continuing to paint whatever and whenever she could.

Although her own work had been destroyed, and her relationship with Layton can only be described as fragile at the time, Betty Sutherland remained supportive of her husband’s literary endeavours. As late as 1957, Layton wrote to Desmond Pacey explaining her role in launching his career as an author:

My wife has been everything that a crazy, mixed-up, impulsive, demoniacal poet cd want in a mate. Do you know, she’s actually insisted I shd bring out my books, even when I showed her the mounting pile of bills? McClelland & Stewart wanted to publish *TIBBY* in their Indian File Series! Bet just wouldn’t hear of it; begged me to go ahead with J[onathan] W[illia]ms though it meant sinking over \$600 which not only

we hadn't got but which we couldn't even borrow. Madness! (17 March 1957, 84)<sup>36</sup>

Betty Sutherland was instrumental in helping Layton start his poetic career. She offered to help him with his writing in the 1940s, provided valuable advice and support for his works throughout their marriage, and often designed the covers of his books. Cameron noted in her 1985 study that, after the couple divorced, "Bill Goodwin recalls that Irving felt tremendous guilt about traveling on his first grant without sharing it with her; she had, after all, done several covers for his books, encouraged him as a poet for years and deserved to have a part in the spoils" (286).<sup>37</sup> Betty Sutherland never did get to share in the spoils with Layton, since they separated just after Layton's critical success as a poet.

Things were not conjugally stable between Betty Sutherland and Layton in the latter half of the 1950s. Both were having affairs with other people, and these extramarital escapades were becoming more and more serious. In 1955, Irving Layton met a young Australian, an x-ray technician at the Jewish General Hospital named Aviva Cantor, who had been sent to Layton by Fred Cogswell, of *Fiddlehead* fame, to join the literary group in Montreal (A. Layton). Layton soon fell in love with Aviva, and led a double life with her and his wife.

Meanwhile, Betty Sutherland had her own secret life. She was having an affair with a black construction worker named Basil (Cameron 263). Not long into this relationship, she became pregnant and decided to have an abortion (Cameron 262). Because of her complex medical history, Betty Sutherland needed to have her heart x-

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<sup>36</sup> "TIBBY" refers to Layton's *The Improved Binoculars* (1957).

<sup>37</sup> Bill Goodwin is Irving Layton's nephew and oldest friend. He changed his surname from Goldberg to Goodwin.

rayed before doctors could perform the procedure. Ironically, it was Aviva Cantor who performed the x-ray on Betty Sutherland at the Jewish General Hospital (Cameron 263); although the coincidence seems incredible, Aviva Layton (née Cantor) has confirmed in a telephone interview that she did, in fact, perform the x-ray on Betty Sutherland at the time. Aviva Layton recalls looking at her lover's wife's x-ray and seeing that "her heart was about ten times bigger, it just took over her whole chest" (Telephone interview). The stress of the pregnancy and the surgical procedure exaggerated the endocarditis that Betty Sutherland had contracted after the birth of Naomi. Consequently, Betty Sutherland developed Bell's Palsy, a type of facial paralysis that is caused by the swelling of the nerves due to damage or trauma. Although her face had once been compared to Ingrid Bergman's (Layton "Waiting" 215), by the end of the 1950s it had become twisted and strained, her mouth drooping to one side.

Elsbeth Cameron wrote that friends and family of the Laytons believe that the deterioration of their marriage was caused, in part, by "Betty's physical transformation" (263). Irving Layton, and Max Layton disagree with this suggestion, and Max elaborates, writing, "I don't recall noticing any signs of Bell's Palsy – signs, by the way, which would have been hard to miss since an unblinking left eye was one of them – prior to my going to live with my father when I was 13 in 1959. I do not recall being shocked by her twisted face and drooping mouth until I finally saw my mother again in California when I was 15" ("Re: Master's Thesis," 14 August 2004). Similarly, Aviva Layton says that this physical transformation occurred after Betty Sutherland and Irving had separated, so it was clearly not a factor in breaking up their marriage (Telephone interview).

The Laytons decided in late 1957 that their marriage was not working, and that a separation would be best. Layton wrote his friend, Desmond Pacey, to explain the domestic situation:

Bet and I have worked out something which satisfies both of us. I live elsewhere but see my family three or four times during the week. This sort of arrangement saves wear and tear on our nerves and the children do not suffer because Bet and I have incompatible temperaments. Bet loves me no less than before, nor I her, but the sad inescapable fact is that our blood rhythms are quite different. (2 November 1957, 90)

The living arrangements had altered; however, the passion between Layton and Betty Sutherland had not yet subsided. As Layton had bounced between his first wife Faye Lynch and Betty Sutherland in the 1940s, he was moving between Betty Sutherland and Aviva Cantor in the 1950s (Cameron 280).

It was not easy on Betty Sutherland to have a husband who enjoyed splitting his time between two women. The new “arrangement” was really just a charade that complicated family matters. After a couple of years of both Layton and her playing games of manipulation with the children and each other, Betty Sutherland could tolerate the situation no longer. On the advice of Stephanie Dudek, she decided to move far away from Layton (Cameron 297-298). According to Aileen Collins, Betty Sutherland made the decision to leave Layton in 1958 or 1959. Collins recalls that during a holiday with a few women in Cape Cod in June of 1958, she remembers that Betty “was still with Layton. And that’s when she was having doubts about whether she was going to go back, or just go to New York, or just pack up and leave” (Personal interview. 15 October

2004). Betty finally left Montreal for San Francisco in the summer of 1960 with Avi Boxer, also a Montreal poet, his wife, Valerie, and Naomi Layton. Max Layton stayed in Montreal with his father.

By the end of the 1950s, the “fire and sparkle” had that characterized *CIV/n* and the poetic energy in Montreal simmered down to a smoldering glow (Souster qtd. in Collins “Introduction” 9). Dudek and Souster went on to start their own, individual little magazines, *Delta* (1957-1966) and *Combustion* (1957-1966). Layton had moved on with Aviva Cantor, even staging a counterfeit marriage in 1958 (Betty Sutherland and Layton did not officially divorce until 1978, when he married Harriet Bernstein) (Cameron 276; 433). He spent a good deal of the following decade travelling abroad with Aviva, and writing poetry on the money he received from grants and fellowships.

Although Betty Sutherland was legally still his wife, Layton’s financial support for her and their daughter, Naomi, was irregular and insufficient. Max Layton notes that, as her health gradually deteriorated, “Betty was reduced to surviving on welfare disability cheques” (“Re: Master’s Thesis.” 14 August 2006). Layton seldom visited Naomi and her mother, but he often corresponded and, in the end, the pair was able to become good friends. Under the influence of the 1960s and trips she made to Mexico and India, Betty Sutherland’s painting continued to evolve and, in the 1970s, she also began to write short stories and poems, published under her new name, Boschka Layton. Betty Sutherland never returned to live in Montreal, the city where she worked with the little magazines and little presses throughout her young adult life

## Conclusion

### Writing Back: Betty Sutherland after Modernism(s)

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Betty Sutherland was an extremely prolific visual artist, hard at work on her paintings during the summer months. As for the rest of the year, she found time to paint and draw even as she worked odd jobs as cashier and proofreader to pay the bills. Her emergence as a poet and writer, however, happened only much later in her life, after she had long been separated from Layton and was living with her daughter, Naomi, in California. It is unclear why Betty Sutherland never published any poetry or short stories when she lived in Montreal. It certainly would have been opportune for her to do so while she was surrounded by writers and editors, and helping to create numerous literary publications. Aileen Collins says that she does not “remember her writing poetry at all” until many years after *CIV/n* ended (Personal interview. 15 October 2004). It would be interesting to know whether or not Betty Sutherland ever wrote when she lived in Montreal, and if she had ever, in fact, submitted her writing to one of the little magazines.

By the 1980s, Betty Sutherland (or Boschka Layton, as she was now being called) had established a respectable reputation in California as a writer and an artist. In an article in the local newspaper, the *Sonoma County Stump*, Maureen Hurley reports that Boschka Layton published her writing with “Sonoma Mandala, First Leaves, Tunnel Road, Haight-Ashbury Literary Quarterly and other small presses in California.” Hurley also notes that Boschka Layton, by that point, had art exhibits in Monterey and Sonoma County, and “an art exhibit-poetry reading at SSU for the Public Poetry Center.” The

reading at Sonoma State University occurred on November 18, 1980, and Betty Sutherland was, this time, accompanied by Naomi Layton, who played classical guitar. Her work was well received in California, and in the 1980s she was even awarded the Fred Manelli Award for Creative Writing.

The pinnacle of Betty Sutherland's writing career came in 1982, when, at the age of sixty-two, her book of poems, stories, and drawings, *The Prodigal Sun*, was published by Mosaic Press in Oakville. The collection of Betty Sutherland's work reveals many poems and short stories that are retrospective, and, one might even venture to say, nostalgic of her life in Montreal and her complex relationship with Irving Layton. Her story "Love in the Attic," as previously mentioned, is based on her time living above the Junior League Superfluity Shop in Montreal with Layton. With this kind of hindsight, there is a sadness to her poetry, an overwhelming awareness that time has passed and done its share of damage; yet, there is a comfort in the act of writing that allows the author to make peace with the past and live in the present. It was more than appropriate, then, that both Layton and Betty Sutherland celebrated this peace with a co-reading at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto.

On Tuesday, September 6, 1983, *The Globe and Mail* ran an advertisement for the Harbourfront Reading Series, featuring "Canadian Poet, Irving Layton" and "author, Boschka Layton," to take place at 8:30 p.m. that evening. Elspeth Cameron attended this event, and she shares her experience in her 1985 biography of Irving Layton:

Boschka looks like a benevolent, aging hippie, her twisted face framed with such a luxuriance of grey curls that she somehow resembles a

child dressing up in her mother's over-size cast-offs. Proudly, like a ship in full sail, she walks into the room and casually clambers up on the stage. . . .

Inside, in a room meant for two or three hundred people, the audience is not big, a hundred at the most. But there is Aviva sitting near the front. Leon is not with her. She goes up to the stage to tell Boschka something. Boschka nods and smiles her lop-sided smile. A few groupies are there. Loyal Dorothy Rath sits off by herself to one side, expectantly. Howard Aster, whose Mosaic Press has published Boschka's first book of poems, *A Prodigal Sun*, is beaming in anticipation.

Layton returns and clambers up on the stage. As the two of them take turns reading their poems, their Montreal past is nostalgically recreated. But now Layton's charisma has faded. His exaggerated rhetoric and dramatic gestures do not draw his listeners into a rhapsodic trance. As Boschka reads in her quiet, understated way, there is the sense of a woman who has been silent too long, someone who has taken a lifetime to come to terms with bitterness. (457-458)<sup>38</sup>

In Elspeth Cameron's eyes, the character of Betty Sutherland and Layton's relationship, and their own individual personalities, had transformed since their time spent in Montreal. On the stage of the Harbourfront centre, Cameron perceives Layton to have

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<sup>38</sup> Dorothy Rath was a correspondent of Layton's. Their letters were published (in 1980) as a book, entitled *An Unlikely Affair*, which includes an introduction by Adrienne Clarkson. Leon is Aviva Layton's current husband.

mellowed in his older years, while Betty Sutherland only begins to break away from a “silent” and “bitter” past: it is as if, through her poetry, she finally finds her voice.

Cameron, however, did not know Betty Sutherland when she lived in Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s; her observations are speculative, and they are gleaned from the stories and anecdotes she has heard through hours of interviews with Betty Sutherland, Layton, and their contemporaries, years after the couple’s relationship ended. Often, however, these stories and anecdotes are contradictory, and the interviewees’ perceptions of events or personalities can vary greatly. Marilyn Rose explains in her essay “The Literary Archive and the Telling of Modernist Lives: Retrieving Anne Marriott” that when it comes to writing biography, “scholars can produce only hypothesis, the best that can be conjectured given the knowledge available at the time, some parts of which inevitably will be challenged by new frameworks and new discoveries in the future” (231). So, while Cameron’s impression of a young and “silent” Betty Sutherland is complementary to Layton’s description of her as “introverted and untalkative,” which he wrote in a letter to Desmond Pacey (90), others would disagree with this characterization of the young artist.

When asked if she found Betty Sutherland to be “untalkative,” Collins replied,

Oh, no. She was wonderful. You ask people for the first word they would think of to apply to Betty – she was extremely exuberant! An enormous smile on her face all the time. She had a lot of problems and stuff like that, but I would say the defining characteristic of her was that she had an enormous – it sounds like a cliché – but a desire to live, a real zest. And I think it was because of her young experiences with T.B., both she and her

brother, and the death of her mother – she had a lot of sorrow she was carrying with her into her adult life. But I think it just motivated her to be... I wouldn't say she was happy, but certainly not introverted. I'm sure she had that side to her character, because she was really into thought, and she had a really active imagination, and she was very intelligent.

(Personal interview. 15 October 2004)

As Collins points out, Betty Sutherland was as multidimensional as any person, and, at times, she may have been more contemplative or pensive than extroverted; however, these are not qualities Collins would use to define her. Perhaps Betty Sutherland acted differently around her colleagues than around her husband. Collins's description of the young artist, however, makes her seem more impressionable, strong-willed, and lively than Layton and Cameron suggest. If we consider the context of Layton's comment that Betty Sutherland was "untalkative," a comment made in a letter to Desmond Pacey announcing his recent separation from his wife, it is possible to understand that the state of his marriage at that moment may have influenced his comment about his wife's character.

Whatever the "truth" may be about Betty Sutherland's personality during the years she lived in Montreal, it is undeniable that a number of her poems "write back" to Layton's verse in a cunning and powerful tone. Cameron acknowledged that Betty's unpublished poem "What Circe Said to Ulysses," is a "sardonic reply" to Layton's poem "What Ulysses Said to Circe on the Beach of Aea," which Layton published as early as 1963 (458-459). Her poem "There May Be Flies (for Tanya)," published in *The Prodigal Sun*, incorporates many of the same abject images seen in Layton's poems, primarily,

menstrual defilement, and the repugnancy and loathing of the female genitalia (33).<sup>39</sup> In Betty Sutherland's poem, however, she parodies Layton's imagery in a grotesque style that mocks a culture obsessed with the purity of the female body. Other poems of Betty Sutherland's address Layton directly, like the unpublished "Brief to Irving," where she rebukes Layton for the way he treats his numerous wives (Lewis 142). Whether or not Betty was "silent," "introverted," or "untalkative" when she lived with Irving, worked on the little magazines, and designed book covers for the small presses, she had certainly found a way to be extroverted, powerful, and vocal in her writing.

Sadly, her strong voice would be heard no more: shortly after her book was published, Betty Sutherland was diagnosed with cancer. She underwent an operation to have it removed, but the procedure was unsuccessful. On Monday, February 13, 1984, the weakened walls of her heart finally burst; she went into cardiac arrest and passed away, surrounded by her friends (M. Layton and N. Layton). Her ashes were scattered under an apple tree in Sonoma City, California. Shortly after her passing, Layton took up his pen and wrote an elegy to his former wife. The poem, "Boschka Layton: 1921-1984," describes Betty Sutherland as an inspiration to Layton's verse:

Because each act of creation is a miracle  
 that happens again and again  
 until it becomes familiar as an autumn leaf  
 or a ripening apple tree in full sail

I shall remember you not as charred bone and ash

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<sup>39</sup> Joanne Lewis explains that Layton uses vaginal imagery in his poetry. She writes that Layton depicts the female genitalia as "dirty and repulsive" (144), and often "combines images of sex and death" (146).

to be given to earth's mad alchemy  
 but as the full-bosomed woman whose lips  
 mouthed my awed whisper: "We shall make handsome children"  
 .....  
 Ordinary miracles to pry open the eyes of the blind  
 happen every day. Yet my deep faith holds:  
 sun, wind, rain, and the dark nights will change  
 my Boschka's cinders to deathless apples and poems.<sup>40</sup> (Layton *Wild* 279)

Written only four days after Betty Sutherland's death, Layton's poem insists that she will live on in verse, whether it be in his own poems or in another's.

It is also possible that Layton is referring to Boschka Layton's poetry in his tribute to her. Only a few months later, he praised Boschka Layton's craft in a letter to Elspeth Cameron, comparing the quality of her poems to Leonard Cohen's:

Cohen's work in song and poetry will survive long long after most  
 of my contemporaries and their achievements lie under the volcanic ash  
 that the years and centuries will blow over them.

I am fond enough to think that some of Boschka's poems will also  
 survive time's ravages. What a lucky man I was to have known two such  
 extraordinary persons.

Layton's comments to Cameron may have been influenced by his most recent loss of a former lover and the mother of his children. His belief that Boschka Layton's poetry

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<sup>40</sup> Irving Layton has indicated the wrong year for Boschka Layton's birth date in the title of his poem: Max Layton has confirmed that Betty Sutherland (Boschka Layton) was born on May 14, 1920 ("Re: Master's Thesis," 16 May 2006).

would survive years after it was written is a high expectation for any poet. Still, his words suggest a deep respect for her as an artist, both visual and poetic; they also reveal Boschka Layton/Betty Sutherland as a serious influence on Layton's poetry, whether as his muse or as a poet in her own right.

Although Betty Sutherland left Montreal and Canada at the end of the 1950s, her influence on Canadian poetry continued through the decades. In her collection of poems *The Visitants* (1981), for example, Miriam Waddington includes a poem that was inspired by Betty Sutherland: "Lady in Blue: Homage to Montreal" (56-57). Waddington explains the poem in her essay "Form and Ideology in Poetry," describing the influence that Betty Sutherland had on her as a colleague, a fellow artist, living in Montreal:

Late one February night I was suddenly assailed by a powerful sense of the presence of Betty Sutherland, a Montreal painter. I wrote a poem that turned out to be a homage to Montreal. It was a homage that grew not out of any myth or archetype, but out of the real sense of threat to myself and thousands of other Anglophones. . . . If my poem embodies anything ideological it is only this: just as genuine relationships between people are never begun unilaterally, they can never be ended unilaterally—either by individuals or social groups. (163-164)

The poem is meant to express Waddington's feelings about the changes occurring in the city with the looming threat of Quebec's separation in the 1970s. For Waddington, Betty Sutherland embodies the city that the two lived in together and spent some of their most fruitful years as artists. The relationship between the artists continues, despite the fact that Betty Sutherland has moved to the other side of the continent. For Waddington,

Betty Sutherland will always be an inspiration to her poetry, regardless of the distance put between them. She will, also, always be part of Montreal, and Waddington sees her spirit present in the city no matter where she is physically located.

Betty Sutherland may be part of the city of Montreal, as Waddington's poem suggests; more importantly, however, she is part of the modernist poetry movement that evolved there. Another look at the history of some of Montreal's modernist little magazines and little presses between 1940 and 1950 reveals that Betty Sutherland was an inaugural member of the First Statement group, who helped create the little magazine *First Statement*, working closely with John Sutherland, Audrey Aikman, Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and still many others who remain unknown, or whose involvement remains unwritten. Irving Layton testifies to Betty Sutherland's work with the little magazine, explaining that she helped mimeograph, staple, and distribute *First Statement* to readers. He also states that Betty Sutherland made financial contributions to the publication. Louis Dudek's personal letters to Layton reveal Betty Sutherland's alignment with the female members of the editorial board, and that she was directly involved in discussions concerning *First Statement* poetry. When the First Statement group started a press, Betty Sutherland created, designed, and illustrated their publications, which were said to be "more attractive" than those books put out by many little presses that preceded First Statement Press (Francis "Little" 56).

When Dudek returned to Montreal from New York City in the 1950s, it was Betty Sutherland's phone call to him that reconciled Dudek with Layton; this phone call led to the meeting on Dudek's grandmother's farm in the summer of 1951 with Raymond Souster, where the seeds of *Contact* magazine were planted. The magazine began

printing its first issue in January of 1952: a mimeographed job done on foolscap, approximately ten pages long. After a number of negative reactions to *Contact's* physical appearance, Dudek and Souster decided to reduce the size of the little magazine to letterhead and use a printed cover. Correspondence between Souster and Dudek during *Contact's* earliest issues reveals that Betty Sutherland was engaged to design the cover for the little magazine, despite the expense of fifteen dollars for it to be printed that the editors would have to incur. The new cover, featuring Betty Sutherland's linocut of the magazine's title, appeared as of the third issue and remained the cover throughout *Contact's* run.

Dudek, Souster, and, of course, Layton valued Betty Sutherland's cover designs, and they asked her to design the cover of their collaborative book, *Cerberus*, the first publication of their newly formed Contact Press in 1952. Dudek and Souster's letters throughout the 1950s reveal that she was often their first choice as a cover designer for Contact Press publications. In fact, Contact Press's bestselling book during the 1950s, Raymond Souster's *The Selected Poems*, was one of her original designs. Betty Sutherland also designed most of the books that Layton published independently at the time.

As she toiled at designing covers for Layton's publications, for many of the Contact Press books, and on her own paintings and sketches, Betty Sutherland also contributed her time to the making of *CIV/n* magazine. Aileen Collins explains that Betty Sutherland was a member of the *CIV/n* group from the beginning, and that she joined the meetings where they would read and decide on the submissions to the little magazine. For *CIV/n's* third issue, Betty Sutherland worked as the art director, showcasing some of

her own artwork and featuring the sculptures of Stanley “Buddy” Rozynski. Some of her best sketches appear in *CIV/n* 4, where her skills in portraiture capture both the group’s genuine respect for poetic ability, and their sarcasm and wit. Thanks to Betty Sutherland’s artistic ability, along with Rozynski’s contributions as artist and art director, *CIV/n* pushed the boundaries of the little magazine’s physical appearance, a quality that had played a rather minor role in precedent little magazines of Montreal.

The physical appearance of little magazines and little press books, in general, has been overlooked by literary critics as important elements to their creation and content. Particularly in studies of Canadian modernist works, rarely does one encounter a frank discussion about how those books or little magazines were made, and who designed them. It seems that academics and critics of Canadian modernism have taken the old adage “You can’t judge a book by its cover” much too seriously. This paper has demonstrated, among other things, that one can expect that the cover of a little press book or a little magazine created by our Montreal modernists will reflect, if not the content of the work itself, at least the history and process behind its publication.

Despite the importance of book design to our country’s literary and artistic culture, it was extremely difficult to obtain copies of First Statement Press and Contact Press original book covers for this study; in most cases, public copies of these books had been rebound. Book design and the visual arts should figure more importantly in methods of book preservation. If our universities and national library continue to neglect the original book covers and designs of little press books and magazines, they will be lost forever. Similarly, book cover design and little magazine design should not continue to

be ignored by critics of little magazines and little presses in Canada, since these elements constitute a major part of our country's print culture.

It is, furthermore, important that future studies of Canadian little magazines and little presses attend to the group dynamic of these ventures. It is not enough to write only about the writers and editors of little magazines: the multiplicity of these publications and the collaboration that they involve deserve significant attention. It is only by expanding, not necessarily exploding, the existing critical frameworks that we can begin to reclaim marginalized figures and groups that participated in Canadian modernism, offering a more comprehensive history of this literary genre. Expanding means moving away from the habitual focus on the poet, the successful writer or editor, and the literary, especially when studying little magazines and the history of modernist printing and publishing; it also means moving towards the traditionally peripheral activities of this culture: collating, mimeographing, designing, editing and proofreading. This shifting will recover some fascinating individuals, like Betty Sutherland, whose contributions helped shape the look and character of our modernist literature.

## An Annotated Bibliography of Betty Sutherland's Book Designs

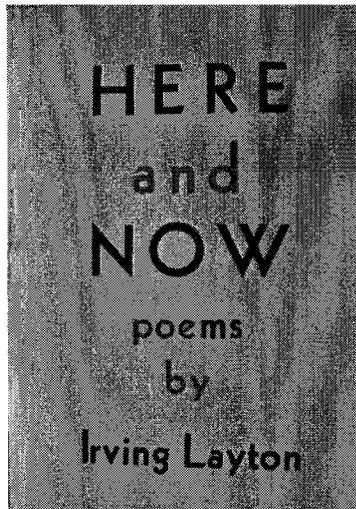
### For First Statement Press and Contact Press

(listed chronologically)

#### First Statement Press

1945

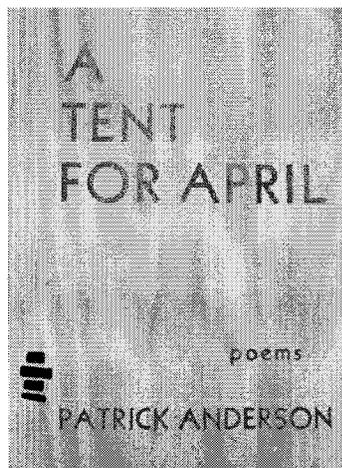
Layton, Irving. *Here and Now*. New Writers' Ser. 1. Montreal: First Statement, 1945.



This was the first book to appear in First Statement Press's "New Writer's Chapbook Series." Collett Tracey notes that it "rolled off the press" between 1944 and February 5, 1945 (101). There is no credit given to the designer inside the pages of this book, nor in any other of First Statement Press's publications. Wynne Francis, however, stated that Betty Sutherland was the designer for First Statement's chapbooks ("Little" 56).

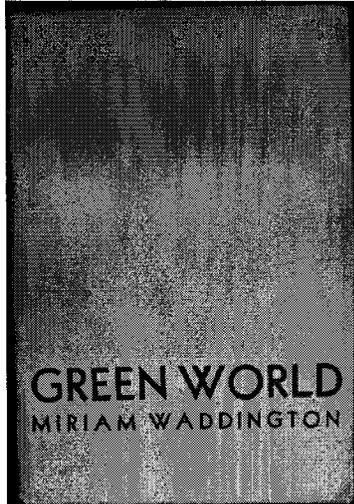
Anderson, Patrick. *A Tent for April: Poems* [by] Patrick Anderson. New Writers' Ser. 2.

Montreal: First Statement, 1945.



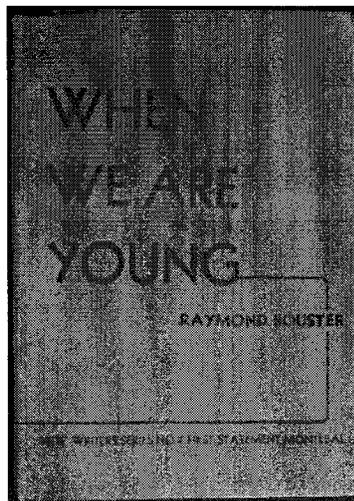
Much has been written about John Sutherland's choice to publish Anderson after the infamous "outing" of Anderson in *First Statement's* pages. Little, however, has been said about the creation of the book itself, and who designed the cover. The design is important as the title appears to form one half of a pitched tent.

Waddington, Miriam. *Green World*. New Writers' Ser. 3. [Montreal: First Statement Press], 1945.



Miriam Waddington's *Green World* is her first book of poems. The design of this book, although simple, is significant; two thirds of the cover is blank space, which draws the eye to the title, as well as the author's name.

Souster, Raymond. *When We Are Young*. New Writers' Ser. 4. Montreal: First Statement, 1945.

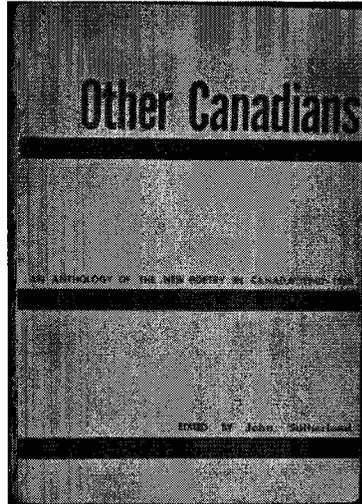


Souster's *When We Are Young* was "the final book to be published by First Statement Press in 1945" (Tracey 106). The cover design is different than the earlier First Statement covers in that it includes the use of line to create movement.

1947

Sutherland, John, ed. *Other Canadians: An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada*

1940-1946. Montreal: First Statement Press, [1947].

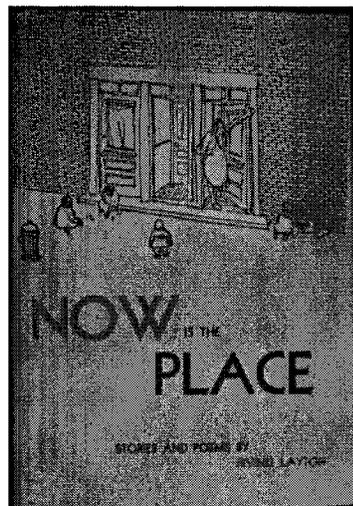


John Sutherland's *Other Canadians* is a reaction to A.J.M Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. Wynne Francis notes that "The poets that Sutherland chose to represent are the younger poets whom Smith overlooked or gave scant notice" ("Montreal" 30). The design is more complex than earlier First Statement books, with three black lines dividing the page and the lettering.

1948

Layton, Irving. *Now is the Place*. New Writers' Ser. 6. Montreal: First Statement Press,

1948.



*Now is the Place* is probably the most elaborate design of First Statement's books. The drawing of the woman at her door who watches young children play is a characteristic theme of Betty Sutherland's artwork (Collins. Personal interview. 14 October 2004). The colour scheme is also similar to Layton's *Here and Now*, which is probably not a coincidence.

1951

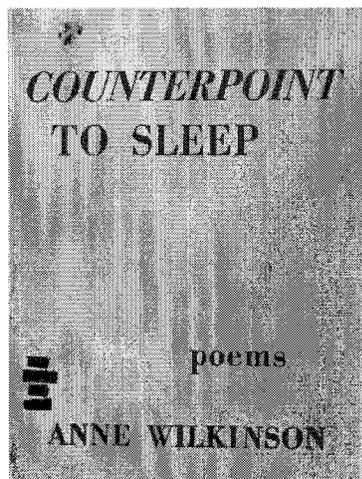
Smith, Kay. *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer, and Other Poems*. New Writers Ser. 7.

[Montreal]: First Statement Press, [1951].



Kay Smith's book of poems is basically a typographical design. It is very plain, and was probably done this way because it is less expensive. It is uncertain what role Betty Sutherland played in the design of this cover.

Wilkinson, Anne. *Counterpoint to Sleep*. New Writers Ser. 8. Montreal: First Statement Press, 1951.

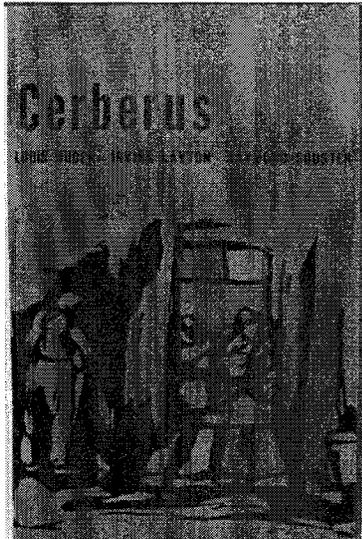


This is the last book published by First Statement Press. Wilkinson's book of poems was released around the same time as Kay Smith's *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer*.

## Contact Press

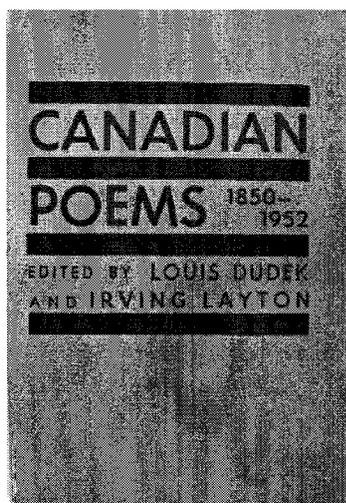
1952

Dudek, Louis, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster. *Cerberus: Poems by Louis Dudek, Irving Layton [and] Raymond Souster*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1952.



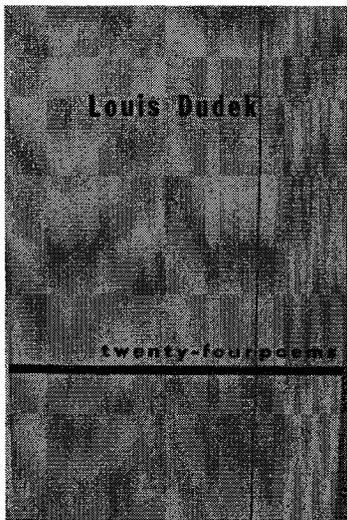
Although there is no credit given to Betty Sutherland within the book itself, an advertisement in *CIV/n 2* for *Cerberus* and other Contact Press books states that the cover designs were done “by Betty Sutherland” (*Contact 60*).

Dudek, Louis, and Irving Layton, eds. *Canadian Poems, 1850-1952*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1952.



Inside the book, on the copyright page, is written “Cover Design by Betty Sutherland.” There were only 500 copies of this first edition made. It was printed by Réal Lucas in Vaudreuil, Quebec.

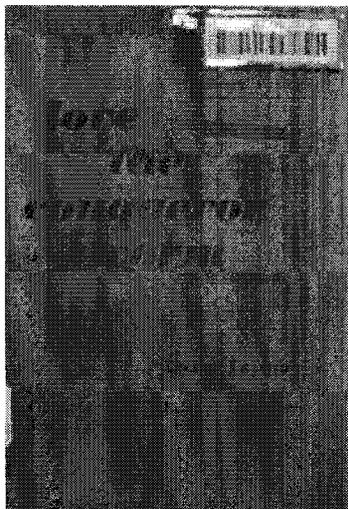
Dudek, Louis. *Twenty-Four Poems*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1952.



Credit is given to Betty Sutherland on the copyright page, where it is written “Cover design by Betty Layton.” The book cover of *Twenty-four Poems* is similar to those done by First Statement Press: black and red lettering on coloured paper. It was printed by R  al Lucas in Vaudreuil Village, Quebec.

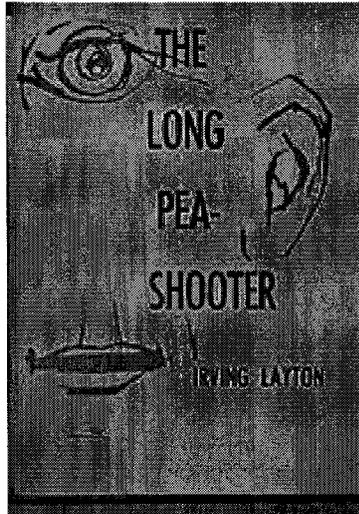
1953

Layton, Irving. *Love the Conqueror Worm*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1953.

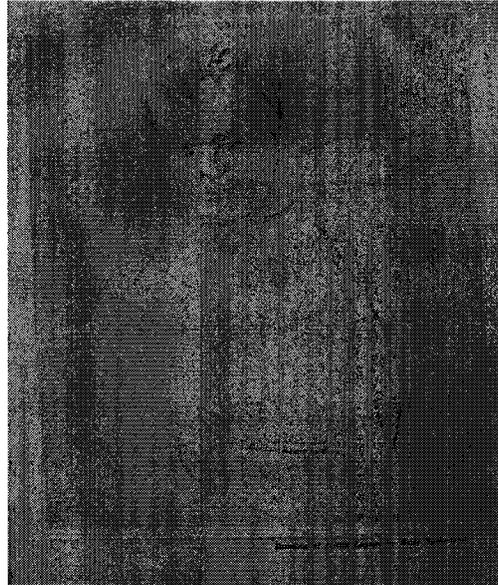


On the copyright page, credit is given as the following: “Cover Design by Betty Layton.” *Love the Conqueror Worm* was printed by R  al Lucas in Vaudreuil Village, Quebec. The condition of the book cover reproduced here demonstrates the need for not only a more adequate method of book preservation, but also consideration of the book’s cover as an important part of the entire work.

Layton, Irving. *The Long Pea-Shooter*. Montreal: Laocoon [Contact] Press, 1954.

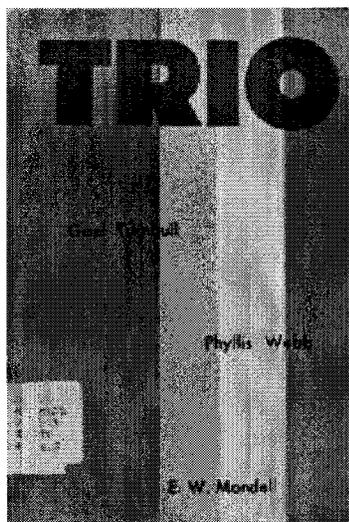


The copyright page credits “Betty Sutherland” as the designer of *The Long Pea-Shooter*. This book also includes a drawing of Irving Layton facing the title page, which was done by Betty Sutherland. It has been reproduced below. It was printed by Réal Lucas, Vaudreuil Village, Quebec.



Mandell [sic], E.W., Gael Turnbull, and Phyllis Webb. *Trio: First Poems by Gael*

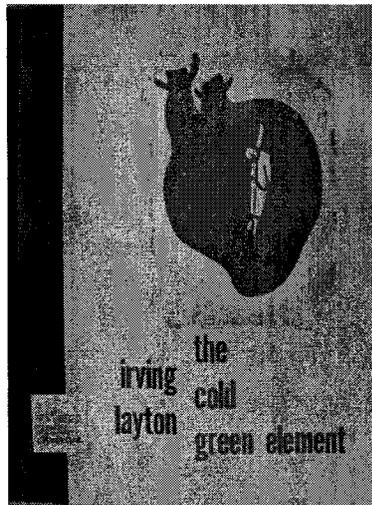
*Turnbull, Phyllis Webb, E.W. Mandell [sic]. [Toronto: Contact Press], 1954*



The copyright page states: “Cover design by Betty Sutherland.” The printing was done by Welmar Press in Montreal.

1955

Layton, Irving. *The Cold Green Element*. [Toronto: Contact Press], 1955. n. pag.



This book includes two prints by Betty Sutherland, reproduced below. The Copyright page credits "Betty Sutherland" as the cover designer.

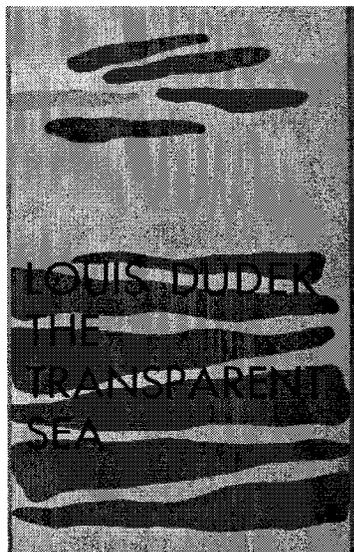


This print is found after the poem "Death of a Construction Worker" in *The Cold Green Element*.

This is the second print done by Betty Sutherland in *The Cold Green Element*. It appears after Layton's poem "Poet and Dancer."

1956

Dudek, Louis. *The Transparent Sea*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956.

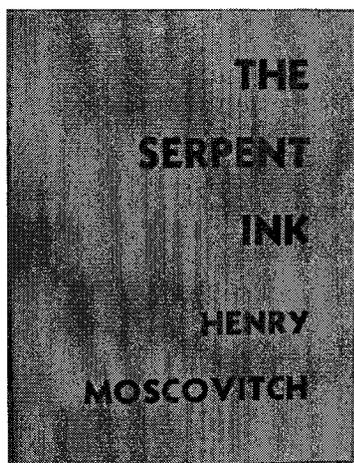


*The Transparent Sea* features a drawing by Michael Lekakis, not by Betty Sutherland. The cover design, however, was done by her, since she is credited on the copyright page.

Layton, Irving. *The Bull Calf and Other Poems*. [Toronto]: Contact Press, 1956.

On the copyright page of *The Bull Calf and Other Poems*, it is written “Cover design by Betty Sutherland.” Unfortunately, there were no original copies of this book available to be photographed.

Moscovitch, Henry. *The Serpent Ink*. [Toronto]: Contact Press, 1956.



In Elspeth Cameron’s biography of Irving Layton, Moscovitch says that “Betty designed the cover” for his *The Serpent Ink* (qtd. in Cameron 341). She is also credited with the design on the copyright page. Once again, this cover resembles Layton’s *Here and Now*, done by First Statement, with its alternating coloured lettering on white paper. Could this similarity be further evidence that Betty Sutherland designed book covers for First Statement Press?

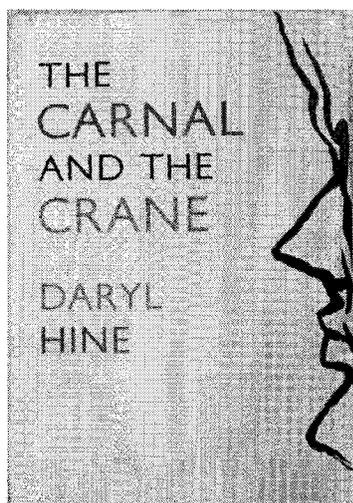
Souster, Raymond. *The Selected Poems*. Chosen by Louis Dudek. Toronto: Contact Press, 1956.



On the copyright page, it is written that “The cover has been designed by Betty Sutherland.” *The Selected Poems* was one of Contact Press’s bestsellers. It was the first printed book, other than *Cerberus*, that Souster published with Contact Press. *The Selected Poems* contains works chosen by Louis Dudek, and it was printed by the Poets’ and Painters’ Press in England.

**1957**

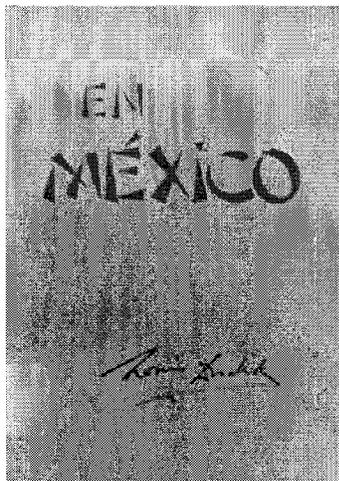
Hine, Daryl. *The Carnal and the Crane*. Ed. Louis Dudek. McGill Poetry Ser. 2. Toronto: Contact Press, 1957.



*The Carnal and the Crane* is the second book in the McGill Poetry Series. Betty Sutherland’s name appears before both the title page and the copyright page. She is acknowledged for having designed the cover. Collett Tracey remarks that Hine’s book is one of the three significant books published in the McGill Poetry Series: the other two books are Leonard Cohen’s *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), and George Ellenbogen’s *Winds of Unreason* (1957) (21). *The Carnal and the Crane* was the only book in the series with a cover designed by Betty Sutherland. It was printed by the Poets’ and Painters’ Press in England.

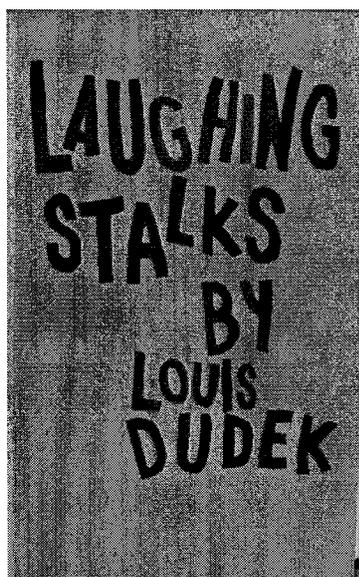
1958

Dudek, Louis. *En México*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1958.



Dudek's *En México* features drawings by Zygmunt Turkiewicz, and it was also printed in England for Contact Press by Poet's and Painters' Press in London. The cover design is credited to "Betty Sutherland."

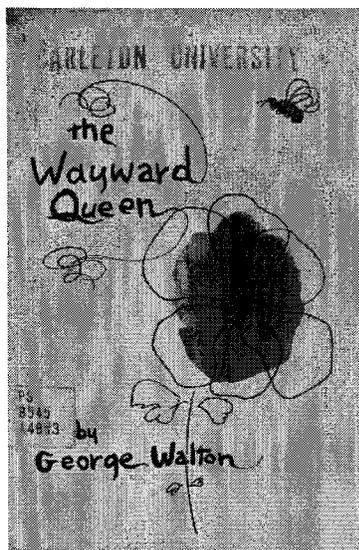
---. *Laughing Stalks*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1958.



*Laughing Stalks* was printed on the Delta Press. Credit is give to Betty Sutherland for the "Cover" on the copyright page. The design of the book, however, is credited to the Delta Press.

1959

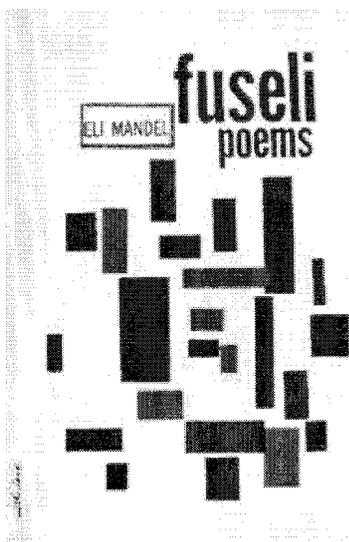
Walton, George. *The Wayward Queen*. Toronto: Contact Press, [1959].



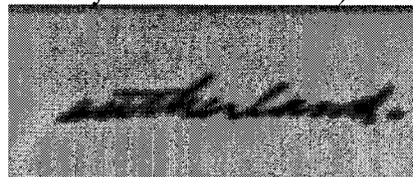
*The Wayward Queen* was printed by Villiers Publications in London, England. Betty Sutherland is acknowledged on the copyright page for having designed the book's cover.

1960

Mandel, Eli. *Fuseli Poems*. Toronto: Contact Press, 1960.



No credit is given to Betty Sutherland, or anyone else, for the design of this cover; however, the cover itself bears the name "Sutherland" in cursive letters on the lower left corner of the page, enlarged below. It is, therefore, very likely that Betty Sutherland also designed this cover. The red box around Mandel's name is a repeated element of her book designs, as seen on the title page of *The Long Pea Shooter* (reinforcing the probability that it is her work).



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