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**MEMORY AND MYTHMAKING:  
THE ROLE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE WORKS OF  
JACK CHAMBERS AND GREG CURNOE**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The 1960s and 1970s saw intense debates about cultural nationalism in Canada as the country sought to define a national identity. At the same time regionalism was posited by many as an alternative way to understand the country. Central in these debates was the role of the artist and the ability of the arts to foster a cohesive sense of identity. This dissertation examines the part that John Richard (Jack) Chambers and Gregory Richard Curnoe, two artists from London, Ontario, played in these debates.

A particularly vibrant arts scene developed in London, Ontario, during the 1960s and 1970s. Chambers and Curnoe were seminal in cementing the city's reputation as one of the most exciting artistic environments in Canada. Through the sustained efforts of the artists, arts critics and reporters, academics, curators, art dealers, patrons and their peers, a particular mythology developed around Chambers and Curnoe. Although they were very different personalities, and their work was stylistically different, they were both believed to possess extraordinary visionary powers. This dissertation traces the historical, social and cultural conditions that allowed this mythology to flourish. It looks at the development of their personae, and explores the reasons why the figure of the artist occupied such a privileged position at a particular time in Canadian history. Using an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, and focusing on the lives and works of the two artists, I examine concepts of nationalism, regionalism, and the role of memory in identity formation. By doing so I demonstrate the complex manner in which the activism and autobiographical artworks of Chambers and Curnoe articulated and metaphorically

reflected the ethos of their community at a particular time and place, and ultimately contributed to Canada's cultural maturation in the late twentieth century.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American Friends of Canada	AFC
Art Gallery of Ontario	AGO
Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects Of Culture in Canada	ADNACC
Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization	CAMDO
Canadian Artists Representation	CAR
Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiennes	CARFAC
Canadian Federation of Artists	CFA
National Archives of Canada	NAC
National Gallery of Canada	NGC
National Museums of Canada	NMC
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design	NSCAD
London Regional Art and Historical Museum	LRAHM
Ontario College of Art	OCA
Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada	PADAC

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*The integrity of separate cultures depends on their having beliefs, myths and rituals which have about them a kind of opacity, resistant to all external analysis.*

—Stephen Spender quoted in Greg Curnoe, “This is a Mixture, Not a Solution.”

During the 1960s the city of London, Ontario, gained a reputation as one of the most exciting centres of contemporary art in Canada. A number of artists from London rose to prominence in the Canadian art world and the city became a focus of the attention of art critics and curators. The factors that accounted for London’s exceptional level of cultural activity were unclear to many: in 1968 the distinguished British critic David Thompson claimed that “for no apparent reason an entirely independent art-scene [had] sprung up in the pleasant and not notably non-conformist, small university town.”<sup>1</sup> Thompson was not alone in his belief that London’s art scene had mysterious origins; indeed, it became a recurring refrain among critics, writers and curators of Canadian art. In his survey text *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, Dennis Reid reiterated this sentiment, claiming that, during the 1960s, the city had “inexplicably spawned a community of uncommon vitality and originality.”<sup>2</sup> Contrary to these opinions, London’s burgeoning cultural scene was the result of a set of carefully orchestrated events and circumstances that revolved around two young artists at a particular time and place.

Central to the cultural activities in London in the 1960s were the contributions of Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe. Both men were born in the 1930s in London and grew up in its conservative environment. In the 1950s they both left the city in search of an art education: Chambers’ search led him to an academic training in Spain, while Curnoe

moved to Toronto to attend the Ontario College of Art. They both returned permanently to London within a year of each other in the early 1960s. Upon their return, the artists met and became friends and began to pursue art as a full-time vocation. They established studios and cultivated connections with other artists, art critics, curators and academics, art dealers and patrons. The creative environment that centred on the two men generated considerable publicity, and contributed to London's reputation as one of the country's most vital art centres. This dissertation examines the role that the two men played in developing and fostering a sense of collective identity among their peers, the mechanisms that enabled them to become central figures in the cultural scene in London, and the larger effect that their cultural group had on promoting a renewed sense of Canadian identity.

The focus of the thesis is cultural nationalism, and the role that the artist plays, or is believed to play, in defining a nation. There are a number of themes that run throughout this dissertation, among them the mythologizing of the figure of the artist, the creation and fostering of collective identity, anti-Americanism in Canada, the distinctive nature of regional cultures, and the importance of memory in identity formation. The dissertation is structured into three main sections, each of which investigates a major theme. The first section examines the myth of the artist. My intention is to uncover why the Canadian art community was interested in developing and supporting distinctive mythologies around Chambers and Curnoe and the processes and players that were involved. Some of the ideological reasons behind the desire to present the two men as individuals with extraordinary visionary powers are also examined.

The second section investigates the formation of group identity among London artists and intellectuals. A number of different institutions, groups, and incidents in the city of London during the relevant period contributed to a strong sense of collective identity. This section examines the interaction of different cultural and political elements, in particular, the history and role of the city's public art gallery, the establishment of artist-run centres and alternative exhibition venues, the growth of art activism and the part that Chambers and Curnoe played in the aforementioned.

Chambers and Curnoe were inspired by their personal experiences and local surroundings, and their strong attachment to place is evident in their artworks. The third section of this dissertation integrates a discussion of regionalism, the promotion of the idea of a regionally distinct culture in London, and the incorporation of regionalism and memory in several pertinent groups of the two men's work.

A substantial body of information is brought together in this dissertation to formulate a comprehensive picture of the two artists, their environment, and their times. Instead of relying on a single theoretical or disciplinary approach, an interdisciplinary theoretical framework is applied. Theoretical arguments from Canadian studies, history, literary studies, philosophy, political science, geography, cultural studies, and art history are used throughout. A discussion of the main theoretical approaches is included in each of the relevant sections.

There is a vast body of literature and audio-visual material on both Chambers and Curnoe that extends from the 1950s until the present. Throughout their lives and after their deaths the two artists were the subject of countless newspaper reviews, articles in scholarly periodicals and popular magazines, exhibition catalogues and gallery press

releases (both for solo exhibitions and group shows), art historical survey texts, monographs, films, and posthumous tributes and symposia. The majority of this material follows a consistent pattern that presents a mythic persona of the artist and a concrete reading of their art (which was often conditioned by the artists' own interpretations of their work). Throughout the literature, certain facts and episodes are singled out for special mention, particularly those that show them as rebellious artists, in possession of special, visionary skills, or as stylistically innovative. The mythic persona of the artist played a very important part in redefining Canadian identity during the 1960s and 1970s, a time of social, political, and historical change in Canada.

As one of the purposes of this dissertation is to deconstruct the myth of the artist, much of the literature and related material on the two men is treated as primary documentation. Newspaper arts critics, curators, intellectuals, and art dealers all had a vested interest in presenting the artists in a particular manner (although there was some variation among their views). How the two artists were presented, by whom, and for what purpose(s) is examined in depth.

A larger body of literature exists on Curnoe, partly because he was more famous (or infamous) during his lifetime, and partly because he lived longer than Chambers. He was also more adept at self-promotion than Chambers was, and often managed to keep his name in the press by provoking controversy. Chambers, on the other hand, was much more reserved and introverted than Curnoe, although when he believed strongly in a cause, would seek a public forum for his views.

The material about and by the two artists can be divided into a number of different categories: primary archival material (including writings by the artists), art

survey texts, monographs and theses, exhibition catalogues (solo and group shows), periodical articles, newspaper articles, exhibition reviews, press releases and promotional material, and assorted material such as film and video footage and symposia. Most of this material is interpretive or descriptive, rather than theoretically analytical (although there has been a shift in the last decade towards a more theoretical reading of their works).<sup>3</sup>

While there have been a number of studies on various aspects of the two artists' lives and works, to date, there has not been a comprehensive study of them in the context of cultural nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps the most enlightening source of material on the two artists is their archives. The main fonds of both Chambers and Curnoe are in the E.P. Taylor Research Library at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto. The AGO has sorted the material, and created finding aids. Chambers' archival material consists of 94 cm of textual records as well as other material such as drawings and sketchbooks, over five thousand photographs (personal photos and source photos for his paintings), prints and segments of films, some personal effects, and five boxes of books and periodicals.<sup>4</sup> The fonds includes material related to his exhibitions, financial records, correspondence and material about the organization Canadian Artists' Representation (CAR)<sup>5</sup>, and working notes for his paintings and films. The fonds also contains the copious philosophical material that he compiled for his (unpublished) book *Red and Green*, along with a copy of the manuscript.

There is some additional relevant material on Chambers in the Avis Lang fonds at the AGO.<sup>6</sup> Lang, an art historian, curator and editor, corresponded with the artist for three years in the early 1970s, with the intention of contributing to a monograph on the artist.<sup>7</sup>

Her fonds contains correspondence with Chambers and Nancy Poole, interviews with friends of the artist, and reproductions of a number of his works.

A good deal of the material in the Chambers' fonds is incomplete, in particular his correspondence with dealers and art galleries and records of his financial transactions. Fortunately, some relevant material was available through several other fonds. The CARFAC fonds at the National Archives of Canada provided some useful correspondence and background information relating to Chambers' and Curnoe's involvement with CARFAC. The Nancy Poole fonds at the D.B. Weldon Library at the University of Western Ontario contains some records of Chambers' financial dealings with her gallery and some of his correspondence with the art dealer Av Isaacs. (Neither the CARFAC fonds nor the Nancy Poole fonds were thoroughly organized.)

Curnoe's fonds at the AGO, on the other hand, is extensive and comprehensive. Due to his obsessive nature, almost every scrap of paper that he ever wrote on, and anything that he considered relevant to his work or life, was kept. Some of the material was sorted by Curnoe himself in the early 1990s; the rest was organized after it was donated by his widow to the AGO in 1998 and 2000. The fonds consists of 6.4 metres of textual records and graphic material, almost two thousand photographs, over a thousand works on paper, hundreds of artefacts (including his collections of pop bottles and buttons, a number of rubber stamps, and a suit of clothing he wore to the opening of *300 Years of Canadian Art*), 85 audio cassettes, 34 linoleum blocks, 10 video cassettes, and some wood blocks and etching plates.<sup>8</sup>

The scope of the textual material is staggering, covering everything from his childhood sketchbooks and a lifetime of journals to his financial records and grant

applications. Decades worth of personal and private correspondence was kept, along with the artist's writings (published and unpublished), research and subject files, and a comprehensive record of his publicity material. This material was of the utmost importance, providing not only much needed factual evidence of his life and work, but also insight into his broad-ranging interests and obsessive nature.

The AGO has several other fonds that were helpful in researching Curnoe. Judith Rodger's fonds contains the research material she amassed while compiling the bibliography for the exhibition catalogue *Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff*.<sup>9</sup> There is also a fonds of material collected by the artist's mother, Nellie Curnoe, which contains a number of items related to Curnoe's younger years (such as elementary school records, childhood books, and some artefacts), correspondence from the Curnoe family, press clippings, and condolence cards.<sup>10</sup>

The London Room archives at the London Public Library proved to be a very useful source of information on the artists, and on the 'London scene' in the 1960s and 1970s. Run by Curnoe's brother Glen for many years, the London Room has copies of many local newspaper articles and reviews that are not available elsewhere. The library has copies of a number of hard-to-access films by Chambers and Curnoe, including Chambers' *Circle* (1968-69), *Mosaic* (1966), *R-34* (1967), and *Hybrid* (1967) and Curnoe's *Sowesto* (1969), and *Connexions* (1970).<sup>11</sup> The London Room also has a copy of *Vagabonds and Visionaries: The London Story* (1998), a film on the local history of the city. Importantly, the London Room has possibly the only complete run of *Region Magazine* (Curnoe's fonds at the AGO has an incomplete run of the periodical).

There is some relevant material in the archives at Museum London. Museum London's archives contain information and objects such as photographs of the inside of Curnoe's first studio in the basement of his parents' Langarth Street house. These photographs were taken in 2000 by the museum as a historical record after the Langarth Street house was sold following the death of Curnoe's mother the previous autumn. At the same time, the museum acquired a quantity of painted wood panelling from the room, and the studio door (to be discussed in Chapter 2).

The National Gallery of Canada curatorial and exhibition files also yielded some useful information, in particular correspondence between curators, exhibition organizers, the artists, and past directors of the gallery. This information provided some valuable and interesting insight into the heady atmosphere of the 1960s, when both artists were establishing their careers in tandem with the careers of the curators. There were also several source photographs by both artists that were useful in providing additional context for their artworks, and a couple of audio and videotapes of interviews with the artist.

The two artists are generally featured in Canadian art history survey books that include the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> While different authors stress different aspects of the men's work (in accordance with the author's particular agenda), the coverage of the two artists in survey texts is consistent, for the most part, with the particular mythologies that developed around their personae (the development of the artists' personae will be discussed in depth in Part I). The personae of the two artists were established quite early in their careers. Consequently, most writers present the two men in accordance with prevailing opinion. Episodes and events that were deemed noteworthy,

or works that were considered important are invariably mentioned, and a general consensus was formed regarding the proper portrayal of the artists. Because art history survey texts are aimed at a broad and general audience, they are limited in the scope of the material that they cover. Selectivity over which artists are included is also exercised. While Curnoe appears in every survey of Canadian art history from the early 1960s, Chambers does not. It should also be noted that although the two men have been accorded an important place in Canadian art history the two artists have rarely been featured in international art history survey texts.<sup>13</sup>

By the early 1970s the artists' personae were firmly established, and they were gaining a respected place in Canadian art history. Their work was also making its way into art history survey texts. Chambers and Curnoe were selected as two of twenty-four artists in William Withrow's *Contemporary Canadian Painting*.<sup>14</sup> Withrow, the director of the Art Gallery of Ontario, placed both Curnoe and Chambers at the centre of London's artistic activity and promoted the idea of the artists as men of rare and singular talent.<sup>15</sup> In 1973 Dennis Reid published *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*.<sup>16</sup> Because the first edition of Reid's book dealt primarily with painting prior to 1965, the two artists did not receive extensive coverage (although he called Curnoe "one of the finest creative spirits working in the world today"<sup>17</sup>). Reid did, however, situate Curnoe and Chambers at the heart of London's creative community. The following year Barry Lord devoted significantly more space to the two artists in *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art*.<sup>18</sup> Extremely left-wing and anti-American, Lord, not surprisingly, focused on those aspects of their work that resonated with his own ideology:

how the two men tapped into a working-class communal consciousness in London, and how they expressed “anti-imperialism.”<sup>19</sup>

The portrayal of Chambers and Curnoe remained remarkably consistent in the following decade. In 1983 David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff mentioned the two artists in *Contemporary Canadian Art*. Burnett and Schiff’s discussion of the two artists focused on their central role in London regionalism, which the authors contended was “an active engagement with the reality of living in a particular place at a particular time....”<sup>20</sup> In 1988, both men received additional coverage in the second edition of Dennis Reid’s book, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*. Reid promoted the idea that London’s artistic scene was unique, and contended that the promising art scene in London was “almost entirely due to the activities during the first half of the sixties” of Chambers, Curnoe, and Tony Urquhart.<sup>21</sup> Capitalizing on his personal relationship with Curnoe (and to a lesser extent Chambers), Reid provided his readers with an overview of the main stylistic influences and social and political interests of the artists (along with some good tidbits of contextual information about them). His inside knowledge helped to reinforce the idea of the artists as unconventional figures of extraordinary talent, who, despite obstacles, persevered in following their ‘calling’.

Art history survey texts in the 1990s and later continued to focus on established opinions about one or both of the artists. David Burnett, in *Masterpieces of Canadian Art from the National Gallery of Canada* (1990), singled out Curnoe for special mention, concentrating mostly on Curnoe’s commitment to his region and his rejection of outside influences.<sup>22</sup> Joan Murray, in *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century* (2000), discussed regionalism in London and mentioned the artists’ involvement with artist-run galleries

and Canadian Artists' Representation.<sup>23</sup> The following year in *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture*, Robert J. Belton also discussed regionalism and CAR.<sup>24</sup> Anne Newlands' *Canadian Art: From its Beginning to 2000* was more specific, examining only a single bicycle painting by Curnoe.<sup>25</sup>

Chambers has been the subject of several monographs. In 1967, Ross Woodman published a short interview with Chambers—*John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman*. In the small booklet Chambers responded to a series of questions posed by Woodman (questions that cleverly allowed the artist to present his audience with ways to interpret and understand his art).<sup>26</sup> The significance of Woodman's book will be discussed in depth in this dissertation. Two monographs were published after Chambers' death. A large coffee table book was published shortly after his death in 1978 by his art dealer Nancy Poole. *Jack Chambers, 1931-78*, was published in a limited edition of 300, and included a print by Chambers.<sup>27</sup> The text of the book was written by Chambers shortly before his death, and it provides the only substantial source of autobiographical information on him (although it is laden with nostalgia and not entirely factually accurate). A third monograph on Chambers, *To Rise With the Light: The Spiritual Odyssey of Jack Chambers*, was written by a Dominican priest, Val Ambrose McInnes, on the tenth anniversary of Chambers' death.<sup>28</sup> McInnes had known Chambers since they had met in 1944 at Saturday morning art classes at the London Public Library, and the two men remained friends for the rest of Chambers' life. McInnes' homage to Chambers is a chatty, informal book written in the first person, and deals with Chambers' intense spirituality. Most recently, Chambers' filmmaking was examined in *The Films of Jack Chambers*, a collection of essays edited by Kathryn Elder.<sup>29</sup> The interpretation of

Chambers' films by a number of noted scholars was particularly helpful in providing me with a deeper understanding of the importance of his experimental films.

Curnoe was the subject of two posthumous books: in 2001 his sister Lynda Curnoe published a personal memoir entitled *My Brother Greg: A Memoir*.<sup>30</sup> In her book she describes her upbringing and relationship with Curnoe. Although it does not provide a strict chronology of his life, or a comprehensive study of his career, *My Brother Greg* includes some useful background information on the author's family and some insight into Curnoe's interaction with his family and close friends. George Bowering, the Canadian poet and writer, also published a memoir about Curnoe—*The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe*.<sup>31</sup> Bowering reminisced through a series of short anecdotes about his long friendship with Curnoe.

There are several works at the Master's level on the art of Chambers and Curnoe, but they are written from very specific viewpoints, and do not address the artists in connection with each other. My Master's thesis, "Autobiographical Metaphors: The Interaction of Text and Image in the Works of Greg Curnoe," examined a selection of Curnoe's textual and figurative works that featured the view from his studio windows. Using theories of autobiography and metaphor, I demonstrated that these works functioned as metaphors of Curnoe's search for self-identity.<sup>32</sup> In "The Political and Social Subject Matter in the Art of Joyce Wieland and Greg Curnoe," Barbara K. Stevenson used Marxist theory to analyze the works of Curnoe and Wieland.<sup>33</sup> As an appendix to her thesis Stevenson included the transcription of an interview that she conducted with Curnoe, in which he expounded on how he felt about the reception of his art. Carol N. McDonald Master's research paper, "Jack Chambers and His Theory of

Perceptual Realism,” looks at how Chambers was influenced by philosophy and mysticism in developing his own theory of “perceptual realism.”<sup>34</sup> Prior to the present thesis, neither Chambers nor Curnoe has been the subject of any extended research at the doctoral level.

Both Chambers and Curnoe were, and continue to be, featured in exhibitions (both solo and group). A good deal of the information that circulated about them was made available through exhibition catalogues that were produced to accompany their exhibitions. There are several different types of exhibition catalogues: those that are ‘primary’ documents or sources and provide a good historical context (for example, when works are publicly exhibited for the first time); those that are merely hagiographic (these may accompany retrospective exhibitions that ‘celebrate’ an artist’s achievements and are aimed at a general readership); and those that are critical and offer fresh insights into the artist’s work. On the whole, the exhibition catalogues that feature Chambers’ and Curnoe’s works tend to fall into the first two categories and neither provide a scholarly, in-depth critical interpretation of the artists’ work nor present interdisciplinary analyses (Carl Johnson’s *Greg Curnoe/Serge Lemoyne: Deux nationalisms?/Two Nationalisms?*<sup>35</sup> is a notable exception).

Exhibition catalogues provide insight into the artists’ (and the curators’) approaches. They are the perfect forum for developing and publicizing the mythic persona of the artist. Both men were the subjects of several important solo exhibitions during their lifetimes: Chambers had a large retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1970, and Curnoe represented Canada at two international biennial exhibitions of art as well as being featured in a travelling

retrospective exhibition organized by the National Gallery of Canada in 1981. The catalogues for these exhibitions promoted a particular view of the artists' personae that was heavily conditioned by the artists' own beliefs and writings.

The two men have been featured in a number of posthumous solo exhibitions, and the catalogues from these exhibitions continue to portray the artists in a manner that is consistent with their portrayals while alive. *Jack Chambers: The Last Decade* was held at the London Regional Art Gallery (now known as Museum London) in 1981. José L. Barrio-Garay, who wrote the catalogue essay for the exhibition, relied heavily on Chambers' theory of perceptual realism and stressed the notion that the artist was a mystic.<sup>36</sup> In the essay for *Jack Chambers Retrospective* (held at the London Regional Art Gallery in 1988) David Burnett also focused on the transcendental and visionary aspects of Chambers' work,<sup>37</sup> and in 1992 Jacqueline Tardif curated an exhibition that focused solely on the 'perceptual realism' of his works.<sup>38</sup>

The publications for Curnoe's posthumous exhibitions are also faithful to the persona he established during his lifetime. Not only are the usual artistic influences (especially Dada), important events, and his unconventional behaviour replayed, but there is a marked reluctance by curators to veer from the artist's own ideas about himself. For example, Curnoe's suspicion of art history theory continues to exert an influence over those writing about him. Christopher Dewdney, in *Evident Truths: Greg Curnoe 1936-1992*, mentions Curnoe's "fear of pomposity or any hint of affectation."<sup>39</sup> Concerted effort continues to be made by curators to honour Curnoe's self presentation. As I discuss in my book review of *Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff*, the catalogue essays for Curnoe's

large posthumous retrospective in 2001 are entirely free of any type of theoretical analysis.<sup>40</sup>

Both artists have been the subjects of scholarly articles. For the most part, these articles tend to focus on a central issue (for example, the everyday aspect of Curnoe's work, the incorporation of text in art, Chambers' preoccupation with death, or Chambers' theory of perceptual realism), and they do not provide an extensive analysis of the artists in their historical context. Nor do any of the articles question the powerful myth of the artist. In fact, as this thesis demonstrates, they play an integral part in reinforcing the idea of the mythic personae of the artists.

The most ubiquitous written material on Chambers and Curnoe occurs in the myriad newspaper articles and exhibition reviews that have appeared over the years. While these are not scholarly writings, they provide an excellent overview of the men's careers. More importantly, newspaper arts reporters and critics helped to develop and disseminate the artists' individual myths. To my knowledge, I am the only person to address this aspect of the popular press coverage (my paper "Greg Curnoe: Portrait of the Artist as Everyman").<sup>41</sup> This dissertation extends this analysis to include coverage of Jack Chambers.

There is a significant body of literature on Chambers and Curnoe; however, much of it is lacking in scholarly depth and intellectual rigour. None of the literature on Chambers and Curnoe provides a comprehensive analysis of their lives and works in the context of cultural nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s.

Both Chambers and Curnoe were profoundly affected by their upbringing in London, Ontario. In order to situate this thesis historically, and to contextualize further

discussions of the artists, a background chapter is included. Chapter 2 provides a brief historical overview of the city of London, and biographical sketches of the two artists from their formative childhood years in the 1930s and 1940s to the early 1960s when they returned to London permanently. While this chapter does not theorize the “myth of the artist,” the nature of many of the biographical details provided in it may be retrospectively analyzed using theoretical material from subsequent chapters.

Part I, “*The Myth of the Artist*,” looks at the creation of the myth of the artist (focusing on Chambers and Curnoe) at a particularly important time in Canadian history. Chapter 3, “Developing the Persona,” looks at general theories of nationalism (modernism, ethno-symbolism, and post-modernism). Attempts by Canadian scholars to define a Canadian identity, and ongoing concerns over the viability of the nation’s sovereignty are then analyzed. Beginning with Canadian arts organizations in the 1920s, the myths and ideas that surrounded culture and the arts in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century are examined.

The idea that Canada possessed a national culture and the important role that artists could play in disseminating this culture was fostered by arts and intellectual organizations in the early decades of the twentieth century. The role of the artist received additional attention during World War Two at the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists, and the group of advocates that was spawned by this conference went on to present a brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) in 1945. Largely through the efforts of dedicated advocates the Canada Council for the Arts was established in 1957. The ideological framework that these activities set in place reinforced the belief that artists

had a vital role to play in articulating national identity, and positioned them in a vaunted position in Canadian society. However, the mythic conception of the artist as a redemptive figure needed constant reinforcement by a number of interested parties.

Sustaining the myth of the artist demands the participation of many individuals and organizations. At the front line of this effort are newspaper arts reporters who assiduously promote the work of selected artists to a local, and in some cases, national audience. The cultivation of new talent by arts critics has a reciprocal effect: artists benefit from the exposure that they are afforded by reviews and articles while the critics gain a cachet of 'cool' from their association with young, hip creative types. The artist plays an active role in this exchange, providing select information that puts forth his own particular view of his life and art. Chapter 4, "The Relationship Between the Popular Press and the Artist," looks at the crucial role that arts reporters (in particular the local London art critic Lenore Crawford) played in promoting the work of Chambers and Curnoe. The role that the two artists played in manipulating their own personae is also examined.

Once artists are 'discovered' they quickly become the subject of intense interest by various other parties. Academics and curators bestow an institutional imprimatur upon artists, while advancing their own careers in the process. Art dealers benefit financially from their promotion of artists, and patrons demonstrate their discriminating aesthetic taste and social stature through the purchase of artworks. Again, the personae of the artists that each of these parties supports is influenced by the artists' own opinions. Chapter 5, "Legitimizing Forces: Academics, Curators, Dealers, and Patrons," looks at

the interaction of the varied members of the 'art world' and the differing degrees to which they promoted the work of Chambers and Curnoe.

The mythic status of the artists as visionaries depended upon the acceptance by their peers that what they were doing reflected the cultural climate of the time. During the 1960s and 1970s, the two artists formed the nucleus of a group of artists and intellectuals in London. This group was not a homogeneous entity; instead, it consisted of a number of loosely allied individuals who were involved in various ways with the interests and affiliations of the two men. Throughout the two decades there were several important episodes, events, and activities that helped to solidify the sense of group identity among the artists and their friends, and with the larger artistic community in Canada. Part II, "*The Swingiest City in Canada*," discusses how these events helped to define and sustain this sense of community during a particularly interesting period of history. The broad conceptual framework for this chapter draws on Nancy Fraser's theory of subaltern counterpublics, a theory that was developed in response to Jürgen Habermas' ideas on the public sphere.<sup>42</sup>

Chapter 6, "The New 'Establishment'," looks at the role that shared memories played in defining a collective identity, and how the ideas and actions of young artists like Curnoe and Chambers destabilized the existing cultural establishment in London during the 1960s. This chapter draws upon the ideas of Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assman, Pierre Nora and Mieke Bal to demonstrate that collective identity coalesces around shared sites of memory. These shared sites may be single events or fixed moments or take place over longer periods of time. They can also accrue different meanings over time, particularly from a retrospective point of view. They can be transmitted in a number of

ways: through language, through objectivized culture, or through performative processes. The artist plays a central role in these processes, filtering and interpreting events and giving them concrete shape in their work. Once a narrative structure is imposed on memories, they can then be assimilated by the community.

One of the most significant occurrences in London during the 1960s was the shift in power between the city's cultural 'old guard' and the 'new establishment.' This was due to changing social and political conditions as much as it was due to any particular individual, but the result was that the mantle of power had fallen upon the shoulders of Greg Curnoe by the mid-1960s. The factors that led to Curnoe's ascendancy in London's cultural scene, in particular the history of the London Art Gallery and tensions between the younger generation of artists and the gallery's administration, are detailed.

When Curnoe and Chambers returned to London in the early 1960s they set up studios as professional artists. Their decision to do so animated their peers who congregated around Curnoe's studio in particular. Chapter 6 looks at the activities, events and dialogues that took place in these alternative spaces that helped solidify a sense of camaraderie among a generation of young people.

London's young artists were rapidly growing disenchanted with the city's public art gallery, which they felt did not represent their interests. This situation led to the creation of a number of artist-run spaces in London and to several pivotal exhibitions. Curators and critics soon took notice of what was happening in London, and they began to present it as a hip centre of cultural activity. Chapter 7, "New Directions: Artist Run Spaces and Alternatives to the Mainstream," looks at Chambers' and Curnoe's

involvement with the genesis of a number of artist-run cooperative spaces in the city, and their part in promoting London's 'swinging' reputation.

The 1960s was a decade of rebellion and uprising. Both Chambers and Curnoe were involved in activities that challenged the status quo: Curnoe was one of the founding members of the Nihilist Party of London and a member of the Nihilist Spasm Band, while Chambers was responsible for establishing the Canadian Artists Representation group. Currents of anti-Americanism simmered in the background of their activities and periodically surfaced in the artists' activism and artworks. These activities and groups fostered a sense of collective identity while at the same time providing alternative fora for dialogues and debates. Chapter 8, "Anarchy, Activism, and Anti-Americanism," traces the development and effect that these activities had on the cultural community in London in particular and the country in general.

The idea of regionalism is vital to any understanding of the work of Chambers and Curnoe. Part III, *Regionalism, Memory and Nostalgia: The Local and the Particular*, examines the development, promotion, and manifestation of regionalism in the works of the two artists.

Upon their return to London in the early 1960s, both men experienced a renewed attachment to their natal city and began exploring and celebrating the region in their art. Chambers was initially inspired by the memories that his birth city evoked, and this was reflected in a series of works that incorporated images of his ancestors into the regional landscape. He would soon begin to focus on the here-and-now of his everyday life in London, and his works became even more personal 'snapshots' of his experience of the region. Curnoe's commitment to London was equally profound, although he expressed it

differently. Regionalism often manifested itself in his work as a defiance of international (particularly American) art trends. As he himself once declared: “You either go to the source of the main influences or to the roots of your own experience.”<sup>43</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s regional distinctiveness came to be seen as an alternative to a monolithic national identity. Chapter 9, “The Problem of Regionalism,” begins with a discussion of the major debates on regionalism in Canada during these decades (with a focus on the notion of ‘limited identities’). Regionalism is a notoriously difficult concept to define, and means different things in different contexts; therefore, this chapter reviews how the term has been used in the disciplines of history, literature and art history.

Regionalism was rapidly adopted as a way to interpret London’s cultural production. Chapter 10, “Regionalism in London,” demonstrates how the writings and works of the artists, together with the efforts of critics and scholars, supported the idea of a distinct regional culture in London. The idea of London regionalism was reinforced by things like *Region* magazine and Region Gallery, both of which featured writing and art from the local community. The impact of these venues on fostering the notion of London regionalism, and the important part that Chambers and Curnoe played in promoting their local culture are discussed.

Chambers and Curnoe, along with critics and academics, supported the idea that their work was unique. This quality was believed to derive from their attachment to region. While both men were working in a number of international styles such as Dada, Pop Art, Surrealism and New Realism, the subject matter of their work was highly personal. Chapter 10 examines their choice of subject matter, in particular how they each believed in the primacy of personal experience (they emphasized ‘reality’ and

'authenticity') and how they frequently used moments from their daily lives to produce works that purported to have deep personal significance.

A significant number of Chambers' and Curnoe's artworks incorporate autobiographical material. Not only do their works immortalize many personal memories, they also tap into the collective memory of their peers. This, in turn, reinforced a feeling of community in London. Chapter 11, "Memories of the Present," re-examines memory (which was examined in Part II with respect to collective identity) and looks at the role that the artists played as custodians of their community's memory through their 'archiving' and collecting practices (in their art and lives). Through the discussion of a selection of the artists' works (paintings, writings, and films) that featured mundane moments from their lives, this chapter demonstrates how their highly personal art can, in fact, be seen to reflect the ethos of the national cultural community that they belonged to.

- <sup>1</sup> David Thompson, "A Canadian Scene: 2," *Studio International* 176, no. 905 (Nov. 1968): 183, 185.
- <sup>2</sup> Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 317.
- <sup>3</sup> See: Robert Fones, "Local Colour: Colour and Technique in the Work of Joanne Tod, Greg Curnoe and Jaan Poldas," *C magazine*, issue 38 (Summer 1993): 26-39; Carl Johnson, "Greg Curnoe/Serge Lemoyne: Deux nationalisms?/Two Nationalisms?" (Rimouski, Québec, Musée régional de Rimouski, 2001); Dot Tuer, "What if Daily Life in Canada is Boring?": Contextualizing Greg Curnoe's Regionalism," in *Fuse Magazine* 24, no. 3 (September 2001): 10-13; and, Scott Watson, "The Past of Our Practice: A Note on the 1960s, in *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future*, edited by Peter White (Banff, Alberta: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, Banff Centre Press, 1996). A recent compilation of essays *The Films of Jack Chambers* takes a more theoretical look at his work. Ed. Kathryn Elder, Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002.
- <sup>4</sup> "Jack Chambers fonds," Finding aid prepared by Judith Rodger (1995-1996); updated by Gary Fitzgibbon (2002) (Toronto: E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO, 1995-1995; 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> Throughout the documentation and articles on CAR there is inconsistent use of the apostrophe in Canadian Artists' Representation. Where I refer to titled documents or files I retain the original punctuation.
- <sup>6</sup> Sylvia Lassam, "Description and Finding Aid: Avis Lang—Jack Chambers Collection. CA OTAG SC091" (Toronto: E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO, 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> In 1982 Avis Lang [Rosenberg] published her correspondence with Chambers. Avis Rosenberg, "A Correspondence with Jack Chambers," *Vanguard* 11, no. 4 (May 1982).
- <sup>8</sup> In 2005 the Art Gallery of Ontario prepared an excellent finding aid to the Greg Curnoe fonds. Amy Marshall and Ben Featherson, "Description and Finding Aid: Greg Curnoe Fonds, CA OTAG SC066" (Toronto: E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO, 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Amy Marshall, "Description and Finding Aid: Judith Rodger—Greg Curnoe Collection, CA OTAG SC086" (Toronto: E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO, 2001).
- <sup>10</sup> Amy Marshall, "Description and Finding Aid: Nellie Curnoe—Greg Curnoe Collection, CA OTAG SC074" (Toronto: E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO, 2005).
- <sup>11</sup> Museum London had the films transferred from their original 16 mm format to videotapes which are now available to the general public through the public library.
- <sup>12</sup> They are not mentioned in J. Russell Harper's survey text *Painting in Canada: A History*, which only covered painting in Canada up until the end of the 1950s. The first edition of *Painting in Canada: A History* was published in 1966. The second edition, published in 1977, also stopped at the end of the 1950s. J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).
- <sup>13</sup> This is not unusual as few Canadian artists are ever featured in international art history survey texts. Hugh Honour and John Fleming's *The Visual Arts: A History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991) which presents a survey of Western art from 30,000 BC to 1989 does not include a single work by a Canadian artist.
- <sup>14</sup> William Withrow, *Contemporary Canadian Painting* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).  
There is at least one factual error in Withrow's book. He claims that Curnoe graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1960, when, in fact, Curnoe failed his final term at the school. *Ibid.*, 187.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 186.
- <sup>16</sup> Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973).  
Curnoe subsequently reviewed Reid's book in *The Canadian Forum*. Greg Curnoe, "The Dilemma of Provincialism: A History of Canadian Painting," *The Canadian Forum* 54, no. 648 (February 1975): 30-32.
- <sup>17</sup> Reid, *Canadian Painting*, 305.
- <sup>18</sup> Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974).
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.
- <sup>20</sup> David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff, *Contemporary Canadian Art* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd. and the Art Gallery of Ontario, 1973), 104.
- <sup>21</sup> Reid, *Canadian Painting*, (1988), 311.
- <sup>22</sup> David Burnett, *Masterpieces of Canadian Art from the National Gallery of Art* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990).

- <sup>23</sup> Joan Murray, *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto; Oxford: Dundurn Press, 2000).
- <sup>24</sup> Robert J. Belton, *Sights of Resistance: Approaches to Canadian Visual Culture* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001).
- <sup>25</sup> Anne Newlands, *Canadian Art: From its Beginning to 2000* (Willowdale: Firefly Books, 2000).
- <sup>26</sup> Ross G. Woodman, *John Chambers interviewed by Ross G. Woodman* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1967).
- <sup>27</sup> Jack Chambers, *Jack Chambers: 1931-78* (London, Ont.: Nancy Poole's Studios, 1978).
- <sup>28</sup> Val Ambrose McInnes, *To Rise With the Light: The Spiritual Odyssey of Jack Chambers*, (Toronto: Ontario College of Art, 1989).
- <sup>29</sup> Kathryn Elder, ed., *The Films of Jack Chambers* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002).
- <sup>30</sup> Lynda Curnoe, *My Brother Greg: A Memoir* (London, Ont.: Ergo Productions, 2001).
- <sup>31</sup> George Bowering, *The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993).
- <sup>32</sup> Katie Cholette, "Autobiographical Metaphors: The Interaction of Text and Image in the Works of Greg Curnoe," Master's thesis (Ottawa: Carleton University, 2001).
- <sup>33</sup> Barbara K. Stevenson, "The Political and Social Subject Matter in the Art of Joyce Wieland and Greg Curnoe," Master's thesis (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1987).
- <sup>34</sup> Carol N. McDonald, "Jack Chambers and His Theory of Perceptual Realism," Master's Research Paper (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1984).
- <sup>35</sup> Carl Johnson, *Greg Curnoe/Serge Lemoyne: Deux nationalisms?/Two Nationalisms?* (Rimouski, Québec, Musée régional de Rimouski, 2001).
- <sup>36</sup> José L. Barrio-Garay, *Jack Chambers: The Last Decade* (London, Ont.: London Regional Art Gallery, 1980).
- <sup>37</sup> David Burnett, *Jack Chambers Retrospective* (London, Ont.: London Regional Art Gallery, 1988).
- <sup>38</sup> Jacqueline Tardif, *Jack Chambers* (Hull: Galerie Montcalm, Maison du citoyen, 1992).
- <sup>39</sup> Christopher Dewdney, *Evident Truths: Greg Curnoe 1936-1992* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995).
- <sup>40</sup> Katie Cholette, Book Review (Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff), *Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review* XXVIII (2001-2003): 73-76.
- <sup>41</sup> Katie Cholette, "Portrait of the Artist as Everyman," Paper presented at the Universities Art Association of Canada Annual Conference (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 2001).
- <sup>42</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA, and London, U.K.: The MIT Press, 1992); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
- <sup>43</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Greg Curnoe 1936-" in "Ten Artists in Search of Canadian Art," *Canadian Art* 23, no. 1, issue #100 (January 1966): 64.

## **Chapter 2: A Brief History of London and the Artists' Early Years**

Well into the 1960s the city of London, Ontario had a particular ambiance that was largely conditioned by its settler past. In order to understand the effect that the city's deeply conservative roots had on the cultural scene in London and the impact that this milieu had on the lives and work of Chambers and Curnoe, this chapter will provide a brief history of the city of London and biographical sketches of the two artists. As the bulk of this dissertation focuses on the artists during the 1960s and early 1970s this chapter will concentrate on the formative years of their lives (from their childhoods to the point that they returned to London in the early 1960s). In particular I will be focusing on their family lives, education and influences. Because the two artists did not meet until the 1960s, I will discuss them separately.

Biographies are never as straightforward as they may appear; indeed, facts are culled from a variety of sources, none of which are impartial. Although there are undisputable facts in an individual's life, how those facts are combined, contextualized, included, or omitted often alters how they are interpreted. Who dispenses the information must also be considered, as should the circumstances of the biography. Chambers' and Curnoe's biographies are both conditioned in a large part by the artists' own autobiographical remembrances of their lives and were often compiled to accompany exhibitions or books on their artwork. There is a disparity in the amount of existing autobiographical and biographical material. Although Curnoe wrote extensively on his past, Chambers, in addition to being an intensely private man, was not a prolific writer. A good deal of the following biographical information that is available on him comes from

the text that he provided for the book *Jack Chambers*, published immediately after his death in 1978 by Nancy Poole. When considering the type of information included in the publication, it is worth bearing in mind both its intended audience, and the producer of the book (his art dealer). Poole's book therefore focuses on relevant incidents in his career, particularly those that indicate or substantiate the eventual direction that his art took or reinforce his mythic persona. *Jack Chambers* was also produced shortly before his death (although it was published posthumously), and I believe its nostalgic tone was conditioned by the knowledge of his impending death.

Like many Canadians in southern Ontario, Chambers and Curnoe came from working-class backgrounds with strong ties to the British Empire. Both men were born in London, Ontario's Victoria Hospital and grew up in the conservative environment of the small city. A brief history of the city will provide an understanding of the milieu that they were raised in.

The British colonial presence in London, Ontario, dates back to 1793 when Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe visited Upper Canada.<sup>1</sup> Simcoe, who had been an officer in the British army during the American Revolution,<sup>2</sup> was aware of the need for a defensive settlement in Upper Canada and was favourably impressed by the area at the forks of the Thames River.<sup>3</sup> Major E.B. Littlehales, Simcoe's Military Secretary, noted that Simcoe saw a number of advantages in the site: it enjoyed a central position between Lakes Erie, Huron and Ontario, it had a commanding aspect of the area, the Thames River was navigable, there was plenty of arable land and water, a ready supply of timber, and it possessed "a climate not inferior to any part of Canada."<sup>4</sup> In addition to these

natural advantages, Simcoe believed that the local native Indian population could be a useful trading partner for the British.

Simcoe was so enamoured of the district that he proposed the site on the forks of the Thames River as the future capital of Upper Canada, and set aside 4,000 acres as a Crown reserve.<sup>5</sup> His plans to make London the capital were never realized, however. In 1796 he resigned his post as lieutenant-governor and left Canada for good.<sup>6</sup> Despite Simcoe's efforts, European settlement in the area did not begin until several years after his initial visit; in 1800 the District of London was created and by 1810 surveying had begun in the area.<sup>7</sup> In 1818 London Township was opened and in 1826 the area was designated as the legal and administrative centre of the London District.<sup>8</sup>

The Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837 was pivotal in London's development. In 1838, forty-five years after Simcoe's visit to the forks of the Thames, British troops of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Royal Regiment were garrisoned at London. The troops, mainly infantrymen with some artillery, were stationed in London as a defensive strategy against possible invasion from the west or the lakeshores.<sup>9</sup> The presence of the garrison in the town boosted both its population and the local economy, and by 1840 the area was large enough to become incorporated as a town.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the monetary infusion, the troops also brought with them British customs and manners, the effects of which still linger in the city.<sup>11</sup> British troops remained stationed in London off and on for thirty years.<sup>12</sup>

Despite large fires in the town in 1844 and 1845 London's growth continued unabated. The population of London had burgeoned to over four thousand people by 1845, and it housed not only the garrison, but the London District courts, four banks, a

number of stores, and a new newspaper—*The London Times*.<sup>13</sup> By the 1850s the Great Western Railway had opened up economic trade with larger areas of North America and the population increased dramatically in the next few decades. In 1855 London was incorporated as a city, and a tinsmith, Murray Anderson, was elected as its first mayor. During the next two decades the city enjoyed prosperity, fuelled initially by American demands for grain during the Civil War. By the 1860s financial institutions were being established by London's wealthy merchants who set up the Huron and Erie Trust Company. Insurance companies such as the London Life Insurance Company, which was founded in 1874, were quick to follow.<sup>14</sup> In 1878 the Western University of London Ontario (which later became the University of Western Ontario) was founded.

London also grew dramatically in size in the late nineteenth century with the annexation of a number of suburbs, and by 1914 its population was approximately 55,000 people. A second major annexation occurred in 1961 when the incorporation of more suburbs added another 60,000 people to the city.<sup>15</sup> The area of the city increased from eleven to sixty-two square miles.<sup>16</sup> By 1976, a hundred and fifty years after its founding, London's population had grown to around a quarter of a million people. Ties to Britain are a persistent part of the London psyche, and the 'garrison mentality' continued well into the twentieth century. It was into this lingering colonial atmosphere that Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe were born.

John Richard Chambers was born on March 25, 1931, the second child of Beatrice McIntyre and Frank Richard Chambers. His only sibling, Shirley, was barely one year older than he. Jack and his sister were the first generation of Chambers to be born in Canada. His paternal grandfather, Richard Charles Chambers, came from England

and had served in the British army as an artificer. Reaching the rank of sergeant-major, he was stationed in Ceylon where his son Frank was born, and the family later emigrated to Canada.<sup>17</sup> Jack Chambers' maternal grandparents, John and Catherine McIntyre, were farmers in East William Township, about 25 miles north west of London. Jack's mother was born on the family's hundred-acre farm. The oldest of four children, she met Frank Chambers in London, where they married in 1928.<sup>18</sup>

Like many other families in Canada, the Chambers family experienced financial hardships in the 1930s. Frank Chambers was a welder who was frequently unemployed during the Depression. In the first years of their marriage he and his young family lived with his parents, Richard and Kate Chambers, at 646 Dufferin Avenue. These formative years with his extended family were important for Jack; his grandfather was an enthusiastic gardener, and Jack's early sensory memories were formed while playing in the gardens of Dufferin Avenue. Looking back on his time in later years he wrote: "In summer our garden was rich and beautiful... Black, red and white currants grew behind the peonies and I used to crawl around under the currant bushes and pretend wonderful things."<sup>19</sup>

After several years living at Dufferin Avenue, Frank and Beatrice moved across London to a rented house at 34 Byron Avenue, and Jack began attending Victoria Public School on Wharncliffe Road.<sup>20</sup> A sickly child in his first year at school, he remained a disinterested and unwilling student for most of his schooldays.<sup>21</sup> In his memoirs he recalled, "School was never my favourite pastime. If I liked my teacher I could cooperate and get things done. If I didn't, it was mischief time and drudgery. Learning things was never a game or a challenge for me. School was waiting between recesses and the

summer holidays.”<sup>22</sup> School was not unremittingly grim, though; in retrospect there were a few bright moments, most of which centred on his artistic creations and the positive reaction that they elicited from his teachers. Chambers recalled how on several occasions in Grades 4 and 5 he was called upon to illustrate his history lessons with chalk drawings on the blackboard. His tendency to perfectionism was evident even then: “I found something wrong with it then, and rubbed it out and did it again. Better, I thought.”<sup>23</sup> In Grade 7 Chambers again showed evidence of his artistic talent, this time gaining the favour of his teacher, Miss Dunston, who liked several of his drawings so much that she kept them for thirty-five years before presenting him with them.<sup>24</sup> He was extremely grateful to Miss Dunston not only for nurturing his interest in art, but for carefully guarding early examples of his work. In his final year at elementary school, Chambers received public acclaim when he took second prize in the school art competition. The prize was a set of oil paints that he had coveted.

Grandfather Chambers had died when Jack was nine years old, and about a year later, in failing health, Grandmother Chambers moved in with Frank and Beatrice. After Grandmother Chambers died in 1944, Jack and his family moved back across town to the house on Dufferin Avenue and he began attending high school at Sir Adam Beck Collegiate Institute. He continued to exhibit little interest in school, apart from art class and gym (although he acknowledged that his performance at track and field was mediocre at best).<sup>25</sup> He did, however, have the good fortune to study art with Selwyn Dewdney, who taught at Beck during Chambers’ first year there.

Selwyn Dewdney played an extremely important part in Chambers’ development as an artist. The son of an Anglican bishop, Dewdney was born in Prince Albert,

Saskatchewan in 1909. He attended the University of Toronto where he studied general arts before specializing in art at the Ontario College of Education. Dewdney subsequently studied at the Ontario College of Art and immediately upon graduation in 1941 he moved to London, Ontario to teach art at Sir Adam Beck Collegiate.<sup>26</sup> A man of strong principles, Dewdney quit his job at Beck Collegiate in 1946 in protest after a Jewish colleague was passed over for promotion.<sup>27</sup> From this point onwards he worked as a full-time artist and novelist, serving as a model for London's younger artists like Chambers and Curnoe.<sup>28</sup> Herman Goodden noted that Dewdney "galvanized a later generation of artists when he threw aside his responsible teaching job and made a living from art."<sup>29</sup> Dewdney was a man of varied interests: he worked as an "art therapist, art teacher, novelist, Indian pictography researcher and expert, book illustrator, muralist, [and] commercial and visual artist."<sup>30</sup> Curnoe later claimed that Dewdney's early efforts at multi-disciplinarity influenced many of London's young artists.<sup>31</sup>

Chambers' meeting with Dewdney was a pivotal moment in the young man's life; the older artist recognized his talent, gave him confidence in his ability and encouraged him to follow his heart. Chambers would become lifelong friends with Dewdney and his wife, Irene.<sup>32</sup> In 1945, when Chambers was fourteen years old, he submitted an abstract painting to the *Western Ontario Annual Exhibit* at the London Art Gallery on the advice of Dewdney. His painting was accepted and hung, and he claims that it was the "first abstract painting the Gallery had ever shown."<sup>33</sup> (It was also one of the few abstract works that Chambers ever did.) Many years later, in an obituary for Dewdney, James Reaney the playwright recalled that it was at Dewdney's home that he saw his first Chambers painting and came to hear the name of Curnoe for the first time.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of his second year at Beck Collegiate, Chambers was informed that due to his lacklustre performance he was not going to be accepted back at the school (although he would pass the year). In 1946, at the urging of Dewdney he began attending H.B. Beal Technical School, where he met several other people who influenced his choice of an artistic career. The first of these was McIntyre (Mackie) Cryderman. Cryderman, who began her career as an elementary school teacher, studied art under Franz Johnston and later at the Ontario College of Art before coming to H.B. Beal in 1927, where she was appointed the first head of the vocational art department, a position she held until 1963.<sup>35</sup> Although the focus of Beal's art program was on commercial art, it also offered fine art courses. Chambers took life and still-life drawing classes and began to feel vindicated in his interest in art. What he was doing at school finally mirrored his interests at home. Believing that he was finally in his element, he noted, "School for the first time was furthering my education."<sup>36</sup>

From this point forward Chambers began to pursue his art education more seriously, visiting the public library to read books on famous artists such as Rembrandt and Grunewald and persuading friends and family to model for him. He also began to sketch out-of-doors, and claimed that he "began to discover landscapes and cityscapes that seemed very special for me."<sup>37</sup> The significance of these special places was something that he rediscovered when he returned to London years later and they became a prominent feature of his mature art.

The second important individual that Chambers met at H.B. Beal was Herbert J. Ariss, who began teaching at H.B. Beal in 1947. Ariss, a recent war veteran and educator, was an enthusiastic man who was instrumental in nurturing and encouraging the talent of

several generations of young London artists, among them Chambers and Curnoe.<sup>38</sup> He approached his job in a very disciplined manner, and his attitude gave his students confidence in their belief that art was a valid career path. Herbert Goodden claims that “[t]he high-school art department Ariss developed had more to do with London’s artistic coming-of-age than any other single influence.”<sup>39</sup> Ariss firmly believed that discipline was required to become a good artist and as part of his curriculum he taught an hour of life drawing each day (albeit with fully clothed models in the early years).<sup>40</sup> Chambers remembered, “Herb brought a much more professional and mature attitude to work and discipline than the normal regimentation that most high schools could muster.”<sup>41</sup>

In 1949, the year Chambers left high school, he submitted two paintings to the *Annual Western Ontario Exhibit* at the London Art Gallery. One of these, a floral still life called *Lilies*, won the award for an artist under age thirty. Chambers claimed that this honour made him realize that he would need to “move on and get proper training,”<sup>42</sup> training that he did not believe he would find in Canada or the U.S.A.

By his own account, Chambers’ upbringing in the 1930s and 1940s seems idyllic (apart from the strictures of school), due in no small part to his gender. In these decades young boys, whose lives were not governed by the same domestic constraints as their sisters’, were encouraged to spend their spare time engaging in adventurous outdoor pursuits. The happiest memories of his childhood centred on typically boyish pastimes—climbing trees in his garden, playing in Lake Erie’s water on his family’s annual trips to Port Stanley, swimming, fishing and hunting with slingshots at London’s Thames Park in the summer, and ice fishing and building snowmen in the winter. Consistent with many

other lads of his age, he showed a rebellious side; in his memoirs Chambers confessed that he and his friends snuck the occasional cigarette on these outings.<sup>43</sup>

Although these pastimes were certainly not out of the ordinary, Chambers' memories of them is interesting. Describing many details sensuously, Chambers appears to have been unusually aware of his reactions as a child to the physical experiences evoked in response to his immediate environment. His heightened sense of awareness is consistent with the mythology of the artistic temperament that is more in tune with a sense of perception than ordinary people (to be discussed in Part I). Chambers wrote that he experienced a type of spiritual or personal awakening at the age of seven or eight, claiming that it was at this point that he "became a child of the morning."<sup>44</sup> For the next ten years or so he would wake daily with a feeling of happiness and wonder. This state of childish joy lasted until he was seventeen, at which point things abruptly changed. He wrote: "One morning I awoke and found that I had become a father of night and its pleasures had replaced the child of the morning. I tried, however, for many years to recover my fled glory through the instruments of its leaving, and because of this I treated the landscapes of my world with some disdain."<sup>45</sup>

In 1949 Chambers graduated from high school and began his quest for personal fulfilment in earnest, although he lacked any particular direction. Realizing that he wanted to become an artist, he travelled to Quebec City. He believed that what he sought might be found in the 'otherness' of the French culture. He rented a room in Quebec for a few weeks and decided to spend his time engaging in artistic pastimes, but was unable to discover what these might be. In the end he spent most of his time in Quebec playing

snooker at poolrooms and drinking beer. He claimed that he was better at these activities than at painting for the next few years.<sup>46</sup>

After Chambers left Quebec City he worked at a variety of odd jobs around the London area, and in the autumn of 1949 he decided to travel to Mexico. Armed with a letter of introduction to a Mexican artist, and some cursory information about the art schools at San Miguel de Allende and the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, Chambers boarded a bus from London.<sup>47</sup> After five days on the bus he reached Mexico, only to find out that the school at San Miguel had closed. Although the Escuela de Bellas Artes was still open, Chambers concluded that it was not what he was looking for, claiming that “[i]t seemed to have little organization or accomplishment.”<sup>48</sup> Impressed by the raw vitality of the landscape, and brimming with unfocused energy, Chambers decided to stay and rented a room in a pension and worked sporadically on his own. As he had in Quebec City, he soon began to realize that he was wasting his time in Mexico, and returned to London after several months.<sup>49</sup>

The experience in Mexico was not particularly fruitful and Chambers only became aware of artists like the Mexican social realist José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) after he returned to London. What impressed him about Orozco was not so much his style or subject matter, but his technical ability. Chambers then realized that what he was seeking was formal training; he wrote, “I wanted a realistic standard of ability which was craft and not art.”<sup>50</sup> It was several years before he would actually decide to do something about it, though.

Chambers continued to have difficulty settling into a steady occupation: in January of 1952, after several years of working at a series of factory or construction jobs

and pursuing his art sporadically, he decided to learn a trade and got a job grinding optical lenses. This occupation lasted all of two weeks before he quit and began upgrading his high school credits in order to enrol at university. In September 1952 he enrolled in the general arts program at the University of Western Ontario in London.<sup>51</sup> It was during his short stay at university that he first met Ross Woodman, who taught English at Western for forty-six years.<sup>52</sup> The two men met in Woodman's first year English class. Many years later Woodman recalled that Chambers was not a forthcoming student. The professor was nevertheless impressed by Chambers' quiet intensity, or as he put it, the "force of his silent presence."<sup>53</sup> Chambers eventually worked up the nerve to approach Woodman outside class and asked him to comment on some poems that he had written (bashfully presenting them as the work of a 'friend'). Woodman was sufficiently impressed to suggest that Chambers consider publishing the poems (which he eventually did in James Reaney's magazine *Alphabet*). Chambers and Woodman became friends—Woodman was invited over to Chambers' parents' house on Dufferin Avenue to look at some of his paintings. Woodman recalled looking at portraits of Chambers and his sister in an extremely small room. Woodman wrote: "My sense of him in that room was like my sense of him in the classroom: constricted energy waiting to explode."<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, that energy would soon become mobilized. Finding that university did not provide the answers he was seeking, Chambers had dropped out of classes at Western by March 1953. He began working at several menial jobs simultaneously (he worked in a restaurant, a factory and the post office). Still managing to paint in his scant free time, Chambers saved over one thousand dollars toward a trip to Europe. By September 1953 he had earned sufficient funds, and booked a one-way passage to Europe. The night

before he departed he dropped off his paintings at Woodman's house, asking if he would look after them in his absence. It was almost nine years before he returned to claim the paintings.<sup>55</sup>

The following day Chambers travelled to New York City where he booked a passage on a ship bound for Naples. When he set sail for Europe Chambers had no clear idea of what he would do there, or, indeed, what life would be like in Europe. A number of years later he described his trip to Europe as "an odyssey with no direction."<sup>56</sup> In his autobiography he elaborated: "I set sail for a strange place whose name I knew but about which I had no information, or if I had information, it had no relation to this adventure or to a destination."<sup>57</sup> This was, perhaps, fortunate—having no preconceptions left him unfettered and receptive to what he encountered there. Lacking a clear itinerary also meant that he could travel where and when he wanted. His initial few months in Italy, Austria, and the south of France were loosely structured through a series of chance meetings with people who suggested places for him to visit and stay.

At the invitation of a German family that he met on board his ship from New York, Chambers decided to go to Rome, where he subsequently took lodgings for two months. During his stay in Rome he walked extensively, sketching as he went. Lacking models, he painted self-portraits with the assistance of a full-length mirror in his lodgings. Chambers was woefully unaware of European art history and the major monuments in Rome at the time of his visit. He wandered into St. Peter's Cathedral by chance, but on entering the Sistine Chapel never thought to gaze upward at Michelangelo's painted ceiling. Indeed, he claimed that it was not until years later that he was even aware that Michelangelo had painted the ceiling.<sup>58</sup>

By November 1953 Chambers decided to travel to the town of Graz in Austria, where he stayed with a family recommended by his German shipmates. His host family did not live in luxurious circumstances and what seems to have impressed Chambers most about his stay in Graz was the disciplined, rigorous schedule followed by the family—he noted that, with only a single woodstove to heat the house, they partook of cold showers every morning at 7 a.m. In order to keep warm, Chambers took on the chores of wood chopping and cleaning. The family also kept animals in the yard, and the slaughter of several young goats (and their subsequent transformation into sausages) made a lasting impression on Chambers (this incident probably forming the basis for one of the themes in his film *The Hart of London*, to be discussed in Chapter Three). During his stay in Graz Chambers used an unheated out-kitchen as a studio for a couple of months, but by January 1954 he had had enough of the cold and decided to move on to France in search of an art academy.<sup>59</sup>

Again lacking any firm plans, Chambers disembarked from his train at Cannes when he learned that Pablo Picasso lived in the neighbouring town of Vallauris. After brazenly confronting the famous artist in the private grounds of his house, Chambers was summarily advised by Picasso to go to “the school in Barcelona,”<sup>60</sup> advice that was not surprising considering it was where Picasso himself had trained. Taking Picasso’s advice Chambers set off again, armed with as little knowledge of Spain as he had been of Italy. He arrived in Barcelona only to leave a few days later for the island of Mallorca. While travelling around the island he encountered a local painter who directed him to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid. The painter showed Chambers a brochure on the school, and Chambers was impressed by the school’s strong emphasis on

academic life drawing, painting and sculpture. He wrote: "The hound had found his fox."<sup>61</sup> At the end of March 1954 he set off for Madrid armed with a letter of introduction to a local artist and teacher, José Manaut Vigliette.

With the help of Vigliette, Chambers found lodgings in Madrid and began preparing for the entrance examinations at the Academia. Underestimating the weight that the Spanish school (and indeed, most art academies in Europe at the time) placed on traditional academic-style drawing, Chambers' first attempt at his exams in June 1954 was unsuccessful. He persevered, however, and hoping to improve his chances of success, re-took his exams in the city of Valencia in August. This time he passed and promptly transferred his matriculation back to Madrid.

He studied for the next five years at the Academia, and stayed in Madrid for an additional three years afterwards. The money that he brought with him from Canada only lasted until the winter of 1954; he occasionally supported himself by working as an English teacher several nights a week.<sup>62</sup> He rented the same tiny room in Madrid for eight years, living in conditions that were far from luxurious.<sup>63</sup> He did not appear to mind; on the contrary, the element of deprivation seems to have filled some need in him. During these years he became extremely close to his landlords, noting that they became like a family to him.<sup>64</sup> He also made a number of other close friends, with whom he shared summer painting trips, picnics, and excursions to events like bull fights.

The curriculum at the Academia was rigorous and disciplined, qualities that Chambers had sought during the previous years. Although he found the work challenging, and at times frustrating, his technical skills improved immensely.<sup>65</sup> He began to receive tangible recognition for his efforts. In the spring of 1957 Chambers received a

nine hundred dollar scholarship from the Greenshields Foundation in Montreal. He decided to use it to travel outside Spain for the summer, and confidently sent off a letter and photographs of his work to the sculptor Henry Moore to offer his services as an assistant for the summer. Moore declined his services but referred Chambers to a painter in Suffolk who rented out studio space with room and board for a reasonable sum.<sup>66</sup> Chambers set off for the small village of Stoke-by-Clare where he enjoyed four months of informally structured painting and drawing classes with local painters.<sup>67</sup> He organized an art exhibition and sale at the end of the summer, and visited Henry Moore, who volunteered one of his works for the show. Chambers made a tidy sum of money from the show and returned to Spain with five hundred dollars in his pocket. This enabled him to quit his job teaching English, but did not stop him from searching for other means of support.<sup>68</sup>

In November 1957 Chambers applied for a Canada Council scholarship, and took advantage of that summer's meeting with Henry Moore by soliciting a letter of recommendation from him. Moore wrote: "Mr. Chambers came to see me in the summer of 1956 and showed me photographs of his work. Judging from the photographs his work shows a very strong sense of observation, which promises well for his future. I hope he will be successful in his application."<sup>69</sup> Chambers' second letter of reference from Clare Bice, Curator of the London Public Library, was less enthusiastic. Bice brought the Council's attention to Chambers' previous Greenshields Foundation grant and reasoned that "he has had this opportunity for experience and study in Europe, and [...] there must be many other young Canadians equally deserving who have not yet been given this benefit. I doubt that his promise places him beyond the consideration which might be

given to other young artists in Canada.”<sup>70</sup> (Bice also referred to Chambers as “rather unstable and sometimes, I feel, rather designing.”<sup>71</sup>)

Around the time that he returned to Spain from his summer in England, Chambers became convinced that the undisciplined way in which he was spending his spare time was interfering with his work. In 1959 he underwent a religious conversion from the Baptist religion he was raised in to Catholicism, believing that this religion could provide him with the structure and moral and spiritual discipline that was lacking in his life.<sup>72</sup> He claimed that “[o]ne of the reasons I became a Catholic at this time was that the moral rules provided me with a tangible spiritual discipline that I could work at, in much the same way that the academy provided standards to direct my anxieties into specific problems to be solved.”<sup>73</sup> He hoped that by adhering to stricter moral rules, his artistic vision would be purified; he stated, “I believed that serious obedience to the rules governing spiritual growth would have the effect of gradually cleansing the so-called window of perception.”<sup>74</sup> Chambers believed that his new and enhanced vision would permeate his art.

In the summer of 1958 he won a scholarship from the Academia that provided him with three months room and board in Segovia, where he was free to paint the Castilian landscape. With all their practical needs catered to, the students were able to devote all their time to painting. Chambers thrived in this atmosphere, and developed a love for the Castilian landscape. He later claimed that the months he spent in Segovia were his “most enjoyable months in Spain.”<sup>75</sup>

By the end of his five years at the Academia Chambers had had enough. He later recalled, “I was tired of the school and anxious to work on my own.” Working from his

room, he maintained a disciplined schedule of work for the next few months. In the spring of 1959 Chambers began dating Olga Sanchez Bustos, the Argentinian-born daughter of Spanish parents, who was living in a residence run by nuns.<sup>76</sup> Fondly recalling his previous stay in Segovia, Chambers decided to retreat to the countryside again the next summer, and together with a friend he rented a small, ramshackle house in the small hill village of Chinchon. He remained in Chinchon for the next year and a half.<sup>77</sup>

Chambers returned to Madrid in 1960 and relinquished the room he had rented for eight years. He bought a flat on the outskirts of Madrid where he set up studio. That spring his parents came to visit him and his sister (who was living in Germany with her husband) and he travelled with them to Germany. He took the opportunity to do a bit of travelling on his own, and revisited Italy, attending the *XXX Venice Biennale*.<sup>78</sup> (The overwhelming emphasis at the 1960 Biennale was on abstraction.<sup>79</sup>)

1961 was a tumultuous year. Chambers had his first one-man exhibition at the Lorca Gallery in Madrid.<sup>80</sup> In the spring of that year he received a letter informing him that his mother was very ill and in April he left Spain to return to Canada.<sup>81</sup> Despite forming lasting attachments in Spain, Chambers was finally coming back to the place where he ultimately believed he belonged. Shortly after his return to London he met Greg Curnoe and the two men soon became close friends.

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Gregory Richard Curnoe was born to Nellie Olive (Porter) Curnoe and Gordon Charles Curnoe on 19 November, 1936. His parents both came from families of strong British heritage. Greg was the first of three children; his brother Glen was born in 1939

and his sister Lynda in 1943. Curnoe's paternal grandfather, Richard Curnoe, had emigrated with his family from Cornwall in 1879 when he was nine years old.<sup>82</sup> The son of a minesmith, Richard spent his working life as a 'striper'—a rail-car painter for the London and Port Stanley railroad. Curnoe's paternal grandmother, Sarah Cundick, was born in Canada in 1871, two years after her family emigrated from England. The two met and married in London, Ontario, and subsequently had four children. Curnoe's father, Gordon, was born in 1909.

Curnoe's sister Lynda remembers the roisterous Curnoe family as "earthy and practical, more interested in popular style than aesthetics."<sup>83</sup> The Curnoes were never wealthy, and like the Chambers family they suffered financial hardships during the Depression. Strongly working class, they were very concerned with earning a living (something they passed along to their first born). For most of his career Curnoe's father, Gordon, worked for *The Farmer's Advocate*, a Canadian farming magazine that was published in London. Curnoe recounts: "Father turned down an offer from Bryant Press to work in Toronto because he did not want to move from this community. I suppose I have inherited this idea and probably will pass it on to my children."<sup>84</sup>

The slightly more genteel maternal side of Curnoe's family emigrated from England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Curnoe's maternal grandfather, William Porter, was a carpenter who had trained in the shipyards in the east end of London, England, before emigrating to Canada in 1907 with his wife Grace.<sup>85</sup> Once settled in Canada, William Porter continued to work as a builder, eventually setting up his own construction company.<sup>86</sup> The Porters also experienced deprivation during the Depression; many London contractors who owed William Porter money had gone

bankrupt. Before her marriage Nellie Porter often gave her parents part of her salary from her job at Smallman and Ingram.<sup>87</sup> When Curnoe's parents, Gordon and Nellie, first got married in June 1935 they rented a house on Springbank Drive in South London.<sup>88</sup> In 1936 they moved to a house that Nellie's father William built for them as a wedding present at 75 Langarth Street East in South London.<sup>89</sup> This would remain the Curnoe family home until it was sold after Nellie died in 1999.

Curnoe was especially influenced by his maternal grandfather. Sarah Milroy points out that grandfather Porter, in addition to his keen interest in local history, was "an avid reader [and] an enthusiast of all things British."<sup>90</sup> He had a strong influence on his grandchildren; Glen Curnoe was the librarian at the London Room Archives in the London Public Library for many years, and Greg became involved in a number of aspects of local history (not least of which was how local history could provide a valid subject for his art).

Curnoe's childhood was as carefree as Chambers', also due to his gender. Growing up male in the 1940s and 1950s in London was very different from the female experience. Curnoe, by all accounts, spent a great deal of time playing with his friends free of parental supervision, and was allowed a much greater range of pastimes than his sister. Lynda recalls that boys and girls played differently during the 1940s and 1950s: boys were encouraged to play sports and engage in outdoor activities or masculine pursuits (such as rifle practice, experimenting with woodworking and electrical tools) whereas "girls' play focused on domesticity."<sup>91</sup> This was particularly true in the Curnoe household; although Nellie Curnoe favoured creative toys for all her children, Gordon Curnoe "preferred sports or weapons-related toys." for his sons and 'feminine' presents

for his daughter.<sup>92</sup> Lynda remembers “Dad always won. The boys were given toy trains and cars, sleeping bags for scout camp, guns, holsters and other cowboy gear.”<sup>93</sup> This sometimes led to predictable consequences: “After being given boxing gloves for Christmas, Greg promptly knocked Glen down.”<sup>94</sup>

The Curnoe family was extensive, and Greg grew up with relatives in all parts of London. In his early years, though, his world consisted of his immediate neighbourhood and his family. He was especially close to his cousin Gary Bryant, who lived a few doors down the street from the Curnoes. Bryant, an only child, spent a lot of time with Curnoe, whom he admired greatly.<sup>95</sup> Bryant recalls spending “countless hours down the street at my older cousin’s home in a futile attempt to keep pace with Greg’s developing skills in creating cartoons and comic books.”<sup>96</sup> The two boys engaged in many pursuits that involved “building things of wood and metal, and finding new uses for scrap and intriguing objects found by scavenging through basements, attics, garages, and backyards.”<sup>97</sup> It was evident very early that Curnoe had a magnetic charisma; Bryant notes: “In all our childhood and early-teen creative activities Greg always provided the enthusiastic spark. A way of life was developing, a style, that would stay with him.”<sup>98</sup>

Lynda Curnoe also acknowledges the effect her oldest brother had on others:

“Neighbourhood groups formed and leaders developed with Greg becoming leader among a group of boys who lived around Langarth Street. It seemed as though all the kids were playing in the same way but, somehow, it was Greg’s way. He expanded play, made it better, more competitive and, above all, he measured and recorded it.”<sup>99</sup>

Curnoe was introduced to art at an early age, and showed a natural aptitude for it. His brother Glen recalls that “an abundant supply of scrap paper and pencils were made

available to us at all times in our home for our use [...] We were always encouraged to use our creative talents.”<sup>100</sup> His mother, Nellie, who did not work outside the home, pursued amateur painting in her spare time, and encouraged her children to be artistic. Curnoe was attracted by popular forms of art, and he was devoted to his collection of comic books, which he bought with money from his paper route.<sup>101</sup> His sister notes that he would lie transfixed on the living room completely surrounded by comics, which he organized into piles.<sup>102</sup> He soon began to make his own comics with his cousin. As Gary Bryant recalled, “[u]ndisturbed by any television, we turned out dozens of comic books.”<sup>103</sup>

In 1941 Curnoe started school at Wortley Road Public School at the south end of Langarth Street. He demonstrated an interest in art and the principal soon appointed him Resident Cartoonist at the school. By Grade 4 he had decided to become a cartoonist.<sup>104</sup> Overall though, Curnoe was not a stellar student—he balked at the routine imposed by his teachers and was unable (or unwilling) to apply himself diligently. His Grade 1 teacher noted that he was “very lazy”; his Grade 2 teacher called him a dreamer who worked “very slowly” and his Grade 3 teacher believed that his main fault was his “untidiness.”<sup>105</sup> Throughout public school he continued to receive mediocre report cards, and was described again as “a dreamer at times.”<sup>106</sup>

Curnoe continued to be interested in art, though, and in 1948 when he was in Grade 7 he won a prize at the London Hobby Fair for drawing and modelling. The same year he created a twelve-page handmade book called “London’s History,”<sup>107</sup> which featured a picture of pioneering lumberjack on the cover. His teacher noted on the cover: “Satisfactory. You could be neater.” He also began to take Saturday morning art classes

at the London Public Library and Art Museum that year. In 1949 he won more prizes at the London Hobby Fair, among them a \$5 gift certificate for a work called “Triumph in Plasticine.”<sup>108</sup> In 1950 he again won a prize at the fair.

In 1950 Curnoe began high school at London South Collegiate Institute, where he remained until 1954. He did not like much about South Collegiate beyond his art courses, where he had some exposure to modernist works by the Canadian artist Tom Thomson.<sup>109</sup> Although he had grown up supremely confident in his local environment, Curnoe was uncomfortable in larger surroundings. Lynda notes that he could be quite shy, especially if he was not the centre of attention or if he was “forced to leave the world he was comfortable in.”<sup>110</sup> At South Collegiate he felt like an outsider, partly due to his family’s tight finances. In an interview in the 1960s with the artist John Boyle, Curnoe noted: “I felt so shitty at South Collegiate because I didn’t quite have enough.”<sup>111</sup> In 1954 Curnoe left South Collegiate and entered H.B. Beal Technical School and an entirely new world of art education opened up for him. This was due largely to the influence of Herb Ariss, who had a profound impact on Curnoe (as he had had seven years previously on Chambers). Curnoe commented: “When I first attended Beal after four years at South Collegiate, the contrast was startling. I was taking art all day, which made school a pleasure for the first time in my life. Herb Ariss had a lot to do with that contrast and pleasure.”<sup>112</sup> Ariss’ enthusiasm was not confined solely to visual art—he was also interested in music, poetry and literature and encouraged his students to broaden their own interests. Curnoe recalled that Ariss

had his own pantheon of twentieth century cultural heroes. He passed on his enthusiasm for those people and many of them remain important to this day. It is difficult to convey how unusual it was, in 1954, to have a high school art teacher

urging his students to listen to Bartok's String Quartets or urging them to read Franz Kafka, but it happened and it happened here in London, Ontario.<sup>113</sup>

During the two years that he spent at Beal Tech, Curnoe studied under several other artists. Among them was John O'Henly, a Toronto artist who had been hired on Ariss's recommendation to teach general art in 1952.<sup>114</sup> Ross Woodman credits O'Henly with being instrumental in fostering Curnoe's interest in the Dada movement.<sup>115</sup> Another important influence on Curnoe was Mackie Cryderman, who had also taught Chambers several years earlier. The original approach that these teachers followed motivated Curnoe.

Whereas Chambers had been impressed by the rigour and discipline that Ariss brought to his teaching, Curnoe was more impressed by the radically new way that the students and teachers interacted at Beal and how he was allowed to learn in a non-directive environment. He wrote:

... in the midst of cultured London, at Beal Tech of all places (the working class high school), Mackie Cryderman began to develop an important art department, staffed by artists like Herb Ariss and John O'Henly who knew Selwyn Dewdney and taught in such a way that the traditional gap between student and teacher was narrowed considerably.<sup>116</sup>

Curnoe flourished in this environment. Years later he recalled:

When I finally got to Beal, I couldn't believe it, that I could actually do what I wanted to do all day long—and this was school! [...] In the mid-1950s, in London, these guys knew all about A.S. Neill and Summerhill. You had this autonomous department in a high school run by these people who were all wired up on the notion of free schools [...]. They'd talk about [...] Dadaism, cubism, surrealism—ask questions, point out doors that I didn't even know existed [...] and I just ran with it.<sup>117</sup>

Curnoe established his first studio in the basement of his family home at 75 Langarth Street East in the spring of 1956.<sup>118</sup> On the plywood door to the studio he painted "Curnoe's Inferno."<sup>119</sup> The studio soon became the first of many gathering places

for Curnoe and his friends. Nellie Curnoe recalled that “all kinds of sessions” went on in Curnoe’s Inferno: “It wasn’t just an art studio. A lot of young men—not just young men, a lot of people—came. They gathered down there and had big discussions....”<sup>120</sup> The visitors were not only artists, his mother noted: “He made friends with everybody.”<sup>121</sup>

The year after he graduated from Beal Tech Curnoe pursued a variety of interests and occupations. From June to October 1956 he attended the Doon School of Fine Arts in Doon, Ontario, a small town situated mid-way between Kitchener and Galt. The school, which was started in 1948 by Ross Hamilton in Homer Watson’s old house and studio, offered summer courses in fine art and accommodations to aspiring artists.<sup>122</sup> During Curnoe’s stay in 1956 there were a number of well-respected Canadian painters at the school; Carl Schaefer had been teaching there since 1952 and in 1955 Clare Bice, Herb Ariss and Dorothy Stevens were hired.<sup>123</sup> Curnoe took classes with Schaefer and Alex Millar and also met the famous landscape artist and former member of the Group of Seven, A.Y. Jackson (a member of the Doon School’s advisory board).<sup>124</sup> Although his encounter with Jackson apparently left him unimpressed, and he dismissed his fellow painters at Doon as amateur painters and school teachers,<sup>125</sup> Curnoe gained something from his months at Doon. John Boyle writes: “At the Doon School [...] he learned to appreciate the nineteenth century painter Homer Watson, who celebrated his own region in his art.”<sup>126</sup> In fact, he even returned from Doon with the easel that Watson, a native of Doon, had used, and installed it in his own studio.<sup>127</sup>

Following his return from Doon, Curnoe worked at a commercial art firm, Stewart Bender Screen Printing Company, in London (from November 1956 until April 1957),

where he learned to make silkscreens. From May to August 1957 he worked for the City of London in the Engineers Department.<sup>128</sup>

When Curnoe enrolled at the Ontario College of Art in September 1957 his high school art education seemed even more unusual in retrospect. Encountering what he considered to be a staid and inflexible teaching philosophy at OCA, Curnoe wrote: "it was like stepping back in time."<sup>129</sup> Beal Tech's art programme had, by contrast, "a considerable amount of freedom with the way they dealt with students." Curnoe pointed out that although "it wasn't a free school [...] it was much looser than the other departments." He also noted that because Beal Tech was a public school it was potentially accessible to all students. Students wishing to enter universities and colleges, on the other hand, were 'filtered out' by their income. Ever anxious to emphasize his connection with the working man, Curnoe reasoned that Beal was "in many ways [...] a working class high school."<sup>130</sup>

Due to the intensive art training that he received at Beal Tech, Curnoe was accepted into OCA with advanced standing and he entered into second-year courses. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm that he brought with him from London was not sustained in Toronto. With the exception of the young artist and part-time instructor Graham Coughtry, Curnoe was unable to achieve the same rapport with his instructors at OCA that he had enjoyed in high school.<sup>131</sup> He felt that the majority of the art teachers at OCA were too traditional and unwilling to experiment, concluding that "OCA was dull. It was also sterile. The instructors were formalists pure and simple."<sup>132</sup> Moreover, Curnoe believed that the instructors at OCA were not as 'provocative' or 'aware' of what was happening in art as the teachers at Beal were. He claimed that Coughtry, however, "was

very supportive in the final year when I was having terrific fights with my teachers.”<sup>133</sup>

His negative experiences at OCA were useful, though, and Curnoe recalled that “[i]t was a good experience mind you to be in that kind of a situation. To find out what you don’t want to be.”<sup>134</sup>

Curnoe considered many of the teachers at the Ontario College of Art to be too traditional and old-fashioned. During the 1950s the printmaker Fred Hagan taught at OCA, as did John Alfsen. Alfsen, a forty-year veteran of the college who had trained at a French academy, was best known for his draughtsmanship and portraits. The landscape painter and teacher Dorothy Hoover also worked as the librarian at OCA for many years. Curnoe was dismissive of the teaching methods of Doon and the OCA: “In both cases this was my first extended exposure to Fine Art in its narrowest sense, people who believed in a culture that had no connection with popular culture. I did not get along at these schools.”<sup>135</sup>

Away from the stultifying atmosphere of OCA, Curnoe made a couple of important professional contacts during the years he was in Toronto. He encountered the famous film-maker, photographer and photo-journalist Michel Lambeth, and Michel Sanouillet, one of the leading experts on the European Dadaists. Sanouillet taught French Literature at the University of Toronto and owned a bookstore—the *Librairie Française*.<sup>136</sup> Sanouillet and Curnoe would continue their friendship until Curnoe’s death in 1992.

In general, Curnoe did not like the atmosphere in Toronto in the late 1950s. He claimed: “There was a general and total lack of interest in politics and a suspicion of any kind of government support. There was also, to me, an intimidating hipness and a lack of

interest in the environment outside of art.<sup>137</sup> He did, however, manage to find some like-minded individuals among his fellow students and in 1957 Curnoe began to exhibit his work in group exhibitions in Toronto and London. Over the next two years he participated in several group exhibitions at the Garrett Art Gallery, a co-operative artist-run gallery that he had co-founded with several school-mates from OCA (to be discussed in more depth in Chapter Two). In the summer of 1959 he exhibited a work in the *nineteenth Annual Western Ontario Exhibition* at the London Public Library and Art Museum. During the summers, however, he returned home to work for the City of London's Engineer's Department, and in the spring of 1960 he returned home permanently.

<sup>1</sup> Simcoe visited Upper Canada in February and March 1793. Two years previously the Province of Quebec had been divided into two sections: the Western portion became the British colony of Upper Canada and Simcoe is appointed governorship of the new colony by King George the Third.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Spicer, ed., *Descriptions of London and its Environs, 1793-1847* (London: University of Western Ontario, 1970-79), 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Thames River has played a prominent part in the development of the city of London. Originally valued for its navigability, it later produced hydroelectric power for the city. Long before the British conquest, Père Charlevoix, a French Jesuit priest, and a cartographer Nicolas Bellin mapped the Thames River. It was known as *La Tranche* to the French.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Baker Littlehales, *Journal of an Exploratory Tour Partly in Sleighs, but Chiefly on Foot from Navy Hall, Niagara, to Detroit, Made in the Months of February and March, A.D. 1793 by his Excellency Lieut.-Gov. Simcoe, with Introduction and Notes by Henry Scadding, D.D.* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1889; reprint ed. Toronto, Ontario: Canadiana House, 1968), 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> In 1796 the provincial government bought an area of land around the forks from the Chippewa Indians. <http://www.london.ca>. 26 October 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Suffering from ill-health, Simcoe applied for a leave of absence from Upper Canada in 1796. He officially resigned two years later and Peter Russell, his receiver-general took over the administration of the colony. John Mombourquette, "London Postponed: John Graves Simcoe and His Capital in the Wilderness," in Guy St-Denis, ed., *Simcoe's Choice: Celebrating London's Bicentennial, 1973-1993* (London: Dundurn Press Limited, 1992), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Much of the surveying was carried out by Mahlon Burwell, under the instruction of Colonel Thomas Talbot (Simcoe's private secretary). <http://www.london.ca>. 26 October 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Edward G. Pleva, "Planning in the London Area: An Overview," in St-Denis, *Simcoe's Choice*, 250.

<sup>9</sup> C.F.J. Whebell, "The London Strategem: From Concept to Consummation, 1791-1855," in St-Denis, *Simcoe's Choice*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> The population increase consisted of the soldiers, their families, and the civilian support system that they needed. <http://www.london.ca>. 26 October 2004.

<sup>11</sup> In 1949 Orlo Miller wrote that the presence of the garrison changed the character of London from a "thoroughly American" bush town to a thoroughly British one. He claims that the garrison "inflict[ed] British customs on London, British reticence, British snobbery." Orlo Miller, *A Century of Western Ontario: The Story of London, "The Free Press," and Western Ontario, 1849-1949* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), 32.

<sup>12</sup> Museum London's Historical Artifacts: The Garrison.

<http://www.londonmuseum.on.ca/Artifacts/FrontierTown/webgarrison.html>. 21 July 2005.

<sup>13</sup> London had eight newspapers between 1830 and 1845: *The London Sun, The Wesleyan Advocate, The Times and London District Gazette, The Times Patriot and London District Advertiser, The Freeman's Journal, The London Inquirer, The Upper Canada Times, and The London Herald*. Miller, *Century of Western Ontario*, 35.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.london.ca>. 26 October 2004.

<sup>15</sup> A number of smaller annexations had occurred between 1950 and 1959. Pleva, "Planning," in St-Denis, *Simcoe's Choice*, 253.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Frank Chambers' older brother Tom died in Ceylon and was buried there; he also had a sister, Christina. Jack Chambers. *Jack Chambers, 1931-1978* (London, Ont.: Nancy Poole's Studio, 1978), 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

<sup>20</sup> This is located in the old south community of Wortley Village.

<sup>21</sup> Jack was ill with pneumonia and other childhood diseases for most of his kindergarten year. Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-38.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy Poole, *The Art of London 1830-1980* (London, Ont.: Blackpool Press, 1984), 107.

<sup>27</sup> Dewdney later wrote about this incident in his novel *Wind Without Rain*. Greg Curnoe, "Region," Unpublished transcript of lecture given at "Regionalism Conference," University of Western Ontario, 1 October 1983. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Toronto. Box 2, 1983 Writing.

<sup>28</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles: A Guide to the Creative Ferment During the '40s and '50s," *London Magazine* (March 1982): 23.

<sup>29</sup> Herman Goodden, "The Big Picture." *London Guidebook* (Fall 1993), 12.

<sup>30</sup> Dewdney was an active member of the local arts community, serving at various times as Executive Director of the Artists' Workshop and as President of the Western Art League.

<http://www.tvdsb.on.ca/links/octOpenDoors.htm>. 26 January 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>34</sup> James Reaney, "A Farewell Portrait to Selwyn Dewdney," *Artscanada* 36, no. 232/233 (December 1979/January 1980): 80.

<sup>35</sup> After leaving H.B. Beal, Cryderman served on the Board of Governors of Fanshawe College where she helped develop its Division of Applied Arts.

<http://www.londonmuseum.on.ca/Historical/NewBeginning/cryman.html>. 21 January 2005

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>38</sup> Ariss worked under Mackie Cryderman at H.B. Beal for 17 years before becoming Head of the Art Department when she retired in 1964. He taught at H.B. Beal until his retirement in 1977. In his years at H.B. Beal he taught a number of people who went on to become well-known artists, among them: Robert Hedrick, Walter Redinger, Ed Zelenak, Ron Martin, Murray Favro, Lynn Donaghue, Tom Benner and Jamelie Hassan.

In addition to teaching at H.B. Beal Ariss taught summer school at the Doon School of Fine Arts in Southampton from 1952 to 1956. He also belonged to a number of art organizations: in 1956 he was elected to the Canadian Group of Painters; in 1958 he was elected president of the Western Art League (the precursor to the London Art Gallery Association), and he served on the Art Advisory Committee of the London Art Gallery Association Board and the Acquisitions Committee of the London Regional Art Gallery; in 1977 he was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy. Paddy O'Brien, "Encounters," *Encounters: An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings from 1967-1982 by Herbert Joshua Ariss* (London: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983), 9, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Goodden, "Big Picture," 12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Ariss claimed: "Drawing is the bones of art." H.J. Ariss, *Journal* 8 (August 1977-June 1978), 40, quoted in O'Brien, "Encounters," *Encounters*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 16-27.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>47</sup> Chambers received the letter of introduction from a Mexican friend of the Dewdneys. Ibid., 42.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> *The Jack Chambers Film Project* (London, Ontario: London Regional Art & Historical Museum, 2001), unpaginated.

<sup>53</sup> Ross Woodman, "The Act of Creation: A Question of Survival," in Kathryn Elder, ed., *The Films of Jack Chambers* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

- <sup>56</sup> Jack Chambers, "People Worth Knowing: Jack Chambers" A conversation between Dennis Young, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and Jack Chambers (28 minutes, black and white, sound) (Ontario Education Communication Authority, 1970).
- <sup>57</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 49.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>62</sup> Chambers taught English at the Mangold Institute in Madrid until the summer of 1957. *Ibid.*, 65.
- <sup>63</sup> He described his room in Cautro Caminos in North Madrid as being "about nine-foot square on the third floor. It had a bed, a table, a chair, a washstand, a mirror, a little glass shelf for a toothbrush and razor, a clay bottle with drinking water and a large window that opened vertically and looked out onto the roof of the sawmill next door." *Ibid.*, 65. See also *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.
- <sup>65</sup> Chambers wrote that he first encountered difficulties in his second year drawing class. Through many attempts and experimentation he had a technical breakthrough and began to assert an individual style in his work. A similar, and slightly more laborious, pattern followed with his painting. *Ibid.*, 60, 63.
- <sup>66</sup> The painter charged three pounds a week for room and board and studio space. *Ibid.*, 74.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>69</sup> Henry Moore, Letter to the Canada Council regarding Chambers' scholarship application, 11 November 1957. Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 21-8, Grant Applications.
- <sup>70</sup> Clare Bice, Letter to the Canada Council regarding Chambers' scholarship application, 14 November 1957. Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 21-8, Grant Applications.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *Chambers Film Project*, unpaginated. Also Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 76.
- <sup>73</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 76.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.
- <sup>75</sup> Each of the Royal Academies in Spain awarded scholarships to two or three students whose landscape paintings were exceptional. Chambers also received a State Prize for his figure painting. *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>77</sup> Chambers went to Chinchon with his friend Jose Luis Balaguero, a friend he knew from Zaragoza. They arrived in mid-summer and Chambers stayed until the spring of 1960. *Ibid.*, 80, 82, 84.
- <sup>78</sup> Some of the artists who exhibited at the 1960 Venice Biennale were Victor Pasmore (representing Great Britain), Philip Guston (representing the United States), Hans Hartung (representing France), and Willi Baumeister (representing Germany). Hartung was awarded the Venice Biennale's Grand Prix for painting. <http://www.fondationhartungbergman.fr/expo/temp/engl/xxxbiennale%20de%20venise1960.htm>. 3 February 2005. See also: Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 86.
- <sup>79</sup> "Brickbat Biennale," *Time* (4 July 1960): 54.
- <sup>80</sup> *Chambers Film Project*, unpaginated.
- <sup>81</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 88.
- <sup>82</sup> Lynda Curnoe, *My Brother Greg: A Memoir* (London, Ont.: Ergo Productions, 2001), 53.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> Greg Curnoe, *CHAT: The Newspaper of the Hamilton Road Area Council* (London, Ontario) 55, (November 1975),
- <sup>85</sup> The Porters initially settled on a farm in Glendale, a small rural area south of London. In 1919 they moved to the city of London, Ontario. *Ibid.*, 32-33, 36, 41
- <sup>86</sup> Milroy, Sarah, "Greg Curnoe: Time Machines," in *Greg Curnoe: Life & Stuff*, eds. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (Toronto and Vancouver: Art Gallery of Ontario and Douglas and McIntyre, 2001), 15.
- <sup>87</sup> William Porter and Son also eventually declared bankruptcy. L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 38.
- <sup>88</sup> L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 20.
- <sup>89</sup> Curnoe, *CHAT*.

- <sup>90</sup> Milroy, "Time Machines," 15.
- <sup>91</sup> L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 85-86, 88.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>95</sup> Gary Bryant's older brother Kenneth died in 1933 of complications from appendicitis. He was three years old at the time. Gary Bryant was born four years later in 1937. *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>96</sup> Gary Bryant, "Greg Curnoe—My Cousin," *The Independent National Edition* (Elmira, Ont.) (7 December 1992), 12.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>99</sup> L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 79-80.
- <sup>100</sup> Glen Curnoe, Annotated Curnoe Chronology, March 2000. Private papers of Glen Curnoe. Quoted in Rodger, "Chronology." *Greg Curnoe: Life & Stuff*, 138.
- <sup>101</sup> L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 92.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.
- <sup>103</sup> Bryant, "My Cousin," 12.
- <sup>104</sup> Ross Woodman writes: "His earliest ambition was to be a cartoonist and this ambition he realized when, at Wortley Road Public School, the Principal, Mr. Cushman, made him Resident Cartoonist, official image-maker for all significant events." Ross Woodman, *Greg Curnoe*, Essay for *Greg Curnoe's Series Exhibition* (London, Ont.: 20/20 Gallery, February 14-March 5, 1967), 1. See also: Milroy, "Time Machines," 17.
- <sup>105</sup> L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 95-96.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.
- <sup>107</sup> Rodger, "Chronology," *Life and Stuff*, 139.
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>110</sup> Lynda writes: "This happened less and less frequently as he developed his career and became famous." L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 93.
- <sup>111</sup> Curnoe quoted in Milroy, "Time Machines," 17.
- <sup>112</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Appendix A: Comments by Former Students," *Encounters*, 29.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>114</sup> John O'Henly initially worked as a student-teacher from the Ontario College of Education before being hired full-time. *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>115</sup> Woodman, *Greg Curnoe*, 3.
- <sup>116</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Region," (1 October 1983). Greg Curnoe Fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 2, 1983 Writing.
- <sup>117</sup> Curnoe quoted in Goodden, "Big Picture," 13.
- <sup>118</sup> Rodger, "Chronology," *Life and Stuff*, 140.
- <sup>119</sup> The door remained in situ until after his mother's death in 1999 at which point the studio was dismantled and moved to the London Regional Art and Historical Museum [LRAHM] storage facilities. L. Curnoe, *My Brother Greg*, 107.
- <sup>120</sup> Nellie Curnoe, July 27, 1999. Quoted in Rodger, "Chronology," 140-141.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>122</sup> The school operated for eighteen years until 1966 when, due to financial pressures, Ross Hamilton's widow Bess sold the premises. Victoria Baker. "A School for its Time." In Kenneth McLaughlin, Victoria Baker, Darlene Kerr, *Doon School of Fine Arts (1948-1966)* (Kitchener, Ontario: Homer Watson House and Gallery, 1998), 15
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- <sup>124</sup> Pierre Théberge, *Greg Curnoe: Rétrospective/Retrospective* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1982), 57. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 271.
- <sup>125</sup> Greg Curnoe, Autobiographical text. *Statements: 18 Canadian Artists*, Exhibition catalogue (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery), 40.
- <sup>126</sup> John B. Boyle, "Reflections on Greg Curnoe: He Is Us." *Carnet* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 20.

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<sup>127</sup> Rodger, "Chronology," *Life and Stuff*, 141.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> David MacWilliam, "Bikes, U-Roy, Fiddles and Curnoe," *Georgia Straight* (31 March-7 April 1977): 22.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Curnoe writes that Coughtry "was a real encouragement to me. He was teaching there part-time in the fifties. He was someone I felt I could talk to. He was a young working artist who had what I thought was a professional attitude and who was involved with a commercial gallery and we talked about that a bit. He was well read, interested in poetry, interested in music. Somebody I could talk to about these different things." Robert McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," *Descant* 9, nos. 1-2, issue nos. 20/21 (1978): 229-230.

<sup>132</sup> Judith Fitzgerald, "Curnoe Memory paintings: Hospitals, Bicycles, Politics." *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 30 July 1983.

<sup>133</sup> Robert Fulford and Greg Curnoe, "Toronto Art in the Sixties," *Passages*, no. 4, (July 1989): 2.

<sup>134</sup> McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," 229.

<sup>135</sup> Curnoe, *Statements*, 40.

<sup>136</sup> Théberge, *Greg Curnoe* (1982), 11.

<sup>137</sup> Greg Curnoe, "The Dilemma of Provincialism: A History of Canadian Painting," (review of Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*), *Canadian Forum* LIV, no. 648 (February 1975): 31.

## Part I: *The Myth of the Artist*

*Artists see themselves, and are seen by their supportive audiences, as not simply adding to a boneyard of art history, but as renewing the vision of civilization and revitalizing the present society.*

—Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City*

In the mid twentieth century a number of strategies were employed in the creation of a distinctive mythology around Canadian culture. Anxious to demonstrate the country's independence from colonial ties and its autonomy from the influence of American culture, institutions and individuals attempted to assert Canada's cultural uniqueness. Building on the efforts and ideology of several generations of dedicated arts advocates, young artists in the 1960s willingly assumed the role of cultural spokespersons for the newly imagined nation. A vital element in this arrangement was the development and promotion of the persona of the artist.

The creation of Chambers' and Curnoe's artists' personae was a complex and interdependent project that had many players: critics and newspaper columnists, intellectuals, curators, dealers, patrons, the artists themselves and their peers all played a part in the development and dissemination of a particular image of the artists. In addition to this, the federal government, through the bestowal of a number of grants and bursaries, also helped promote the idea that the two artists were special. One of the consistent aspects of the personae of Chambers and Curnoe was the idea that, as artists, they were geniuses who were endowed with special, visionary powers. This was not a new concept—the idea of the artist as an inspired genius is one that can be traced back to

Giorgio Vasari's *The Lives of the Artists* (1568). Nor was it a recent phenomenon in Canadian history.<sup>1</sup> What was new, though, was the way in which artists were re-conceptualized during the 1960s in Canada. In this section I investigate why the myth of the artist as a visionary was so important at this particular point in Canada's history. In doing so I look at the organizations, collectives and individuals who were responsible for supporting this view.

Implicit in the idea of artistic genius is the belief that the artist is responsible for creating a superior or innovative form of art. In Canada, in the 1960s, the idea of genius was tied to the idea of revolution and change; artists asserted their individuality and creativity by attempting to sever any connection with past art practices, which were deemed to be derivative or imitative. No longer were artists confined to creating works that followed a European, or more recently American, tradition—instead, they claimed to be inventing new styles of art that were devoid of external influences. This new art was seen as democratic, un-hierarchical, and included many practices such as craft, performance art, and multi-media works which had previously been excluded from traditional definitions of fine art. While a select segment of Canadians eagerly embraced this ideal, the average Canadian remained relatively unaffected by what was happening in the realm of the arts. Many members of the public were confused and alienated by contemporary art and some were enraged by the government's expenditures on the arts. Despite claims that art in the 1960s was more democratic and less controlled by the élite, funding and sanctioning bodies such as the Canada Council, academics and intellectuals, and those who worked in the national cultural institutions continued to occupy a privileged position in Canadian society. However, the foundation of the Canada Council

indicated that a paradigm shift had occurred in the structure of the 'art world' in Canada.<sup>2</sup> This shift reflected the development of the country into a fully-fledged independent nation.

In order to understand why the idea of the artist as visionary became so powerful in the 1960s some background is necessary. The first chapter of this section will provide an overview of some of the main theories of nationalism, examine the ongoing quest to define a Canadian identity, look at the role that myths play in national identity, and chronicle the development of a body of arts advocates who were responsible for promoting the idea of the artist as cultural saviour and petitioning the government to provide funding for the arts. The subsequent chapters of this section will examine the creation and dissemination of Chambers' and Curnoe's personae.

### Chapter 3: Developing the Persona

Throughout the course of the twentieth century a number of scholars have debated the question of nationalism. These scholars (who were mostly European) questioned the nature of nationalism, tried to determine its origins, and argued over its continued relevance. Through an examination of some of the theoretical arguments put forth by the leading exponents of nationalism during the second half of the twentieth century (arguments that continue to evolve to the present), it will become clear that none of their theories can be applied simply to the Canadian context of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Nationalism and the nation are notoriously difficult concepts to define.

Definitions of nation, nationalism, national identity, and the state shift according to the intent and focus of individual theorists; however, in the twentieth century there have been two main schools of nationalist thought—modernism and perennialism. As Anthony D. Smith writes, “[o]ne of the major dividing lines in the study of nationalism concerns the antiquity of nations.”<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, modernists believe that nationalism (and nations) did not arise until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, with events such as the American and French Revolutions, while perennialists or primordialists believe in the pre-modern origins of nationalism (some scholars interpret the origins of nationalism as stretching as far back as antiquity). A third group of scholars, the ethno-symbolists, attempt to bridge the gap between modernists and perennialists. Recent decades have seen broader approaches to nationalism, for example, post-modernism.

In 1960 the modernist scholar Elie Kedourie published *Nationalism*, an in-depth study of nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Kedourie took a social philosophy approach to nationalism, but, as

a political scientist, his other area of interest involved analyzing the impact of nationalism on politics. Kedourie was an historian of ideas who placed “weight on the power of ideas which act as a homogenizing force.”<sup>5</sup> He claimed that nationalism was “a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century,”<sup>6</sup> that grew, partly, as a result of the declining importance of religion. He also believed that cultural nationalism was essentially a linguistic movement. Kedourie did not view nationalism as a positive, but as a powerful and possibly destructive force. He stated: “A nationalist ideology is clearly not *ipso facto* a guarantee of prosperity or of good and honest government.”<sup>7</sup>

Kedourie examined the intellectual origins of nationalism through a discussion of Kant and Fichte, Herder and Schleiermacher. He focused on the philosophy of Kant and Fichte in particular because he believed that the idea of self-determination (a feature of their theories) was fundamental in understanding nationalism (full self-determination for individuals could only be realized if they also had national self-determination).

The philosopher Ernest Gellner was another modernist scholar of nationalism. A Jew who was born in Paris and raised in Prague, Gellner experienced first-hand the impact of the rising tides of nationalism in Europe leading up to and during the Second World War.<sup>8</sup> In 1983 Gellner published *Nations and Nationalism*, an extended essay in which he summed up his theories of nationalism.<sup>9</sup> This was a rejection of previous theories of nationalism (particularly the history of ideas approach of Kedourie) as well as a condemnation of Marxist theory (although he did use the Marxist idea of the centrality of economic determination in industrial societies).

Gellner claimed: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>10</sup> He adopted Max Weber’s

definition of the state as “the agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence.”<sup>11</sup> Acknowledging that a definition of *the nation* is more difficult to articulate, Gellner nevertheless came up with two criteria for a nation: there must be a shared dominant culture or “a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating,”<sup>12</sup> and a recognition between people that they belong to the same culture (a voluntaristic definition).

Gellner divided the history of humanity into three phases: the hunter-gatherer, the agro-literate, and the industrial.<sup>13</sup> Gellner contended that it was during the last phase, the (modern) industrial phase, that nationalism and nations developed. Gellner placed a great deal of importance on the need for a centralized education system (what he referred to as a ‘high culture’) and a centralized economy and state. Through the confluence, interdependence and cooperation of these systems a cohesive democratic nationalism can be forged (although Gellner did not believe that all cultures become nations). Gellner believed that the modern state (or ‘industrial high culture’ as he called it) was no longer linked to a faith or church. Instead, it required the cooperation of various different sectors (economic, cultural and state) to become a nation.

Although he is also classified as a modernist, the Marxist historian E.J. Hobsbawm took a decidedly different approach in his study of nationalism. His best-known contribution on the subject was *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, a compilation of lectures that he delivered in Belfast in 1985.<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawm has been called “the most outspoken critic of the ‘new nationalisms’ in Europe”<sup>15</sup> and his theory of nationalism has been described as an attempt to (re-)write the history of modernity.<sup>16</sup>

Hobsbawm's theory has several points of convergence with Gellner's. They both believed that political and national unit should be in accord, and they both considered that the nation was a largely invented tradition. Hobsbawm contended, however, that the traditions were invented by political élites to serve their own ends, rather than for the good of the common people. Hobsbawm took the view that the nation was the result of 'social engineering,' mythical construction, and reality that arose from the historical conditions around it.

As a Marxist, Hobsbawm asserted that one of the main faults with previous nationalist theory was that, for the most part, it ignored the role of the people, in particular their popular attitudes and values, in shaping nationalism. While he agreed with Gellner that nations and nationalisms were essentially constructed from above, Hobsbawm claimed that they could not be "understood unless analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist."<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps one of the best-known modernists is Benedict Anderson, whose most influential work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, was published in 1983.<sup>18</sup> A social anthropologist whose area of specialization is Southeast Asian studies, Anderson's groundbreaking (at the time) position was that nationalism must be understood as a style of imagining, not as an intellectual system.<sup>19</sup> Anderson provided a useful definition of the nation:

[I]t is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.<sup>20</sup>

Anderson stressed the difference between his idea of the nation as an *imagined* community and Ernest Gellner's conception of the nation as something that was *invented*. He pointed out that Gellner's theory equated invention with 'fabrication' and 'falsity' rather than with 'imagining' and 'creation.'<sup>21</sup> This idea, and in particular the catch-phrase "imagined community," has since been widely adopted by theorists in numerous disciplines.

Anderson's book was an attempt to provide a "reorientation of perspective" to Marxist and liberal theories of nationalism. He proposed that nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism were all "cultural artifacts."<sup>22</sup> According to Anderson the cultural origins of nations could be traced to the development of three things: "a change in the conceptions of time, the decline of religious communities and of dynastic realms," and the growth of print-capitalism (all of which occurred roughly around the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe).<sup>23</sup> Anderson believed, however, like other modernists, that nations did not come into being until the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast with modernists, perennialists believed in the pre-modern origins of nations. Perennialism (or primordialism as it is sometimes called) is a theory that has generally fallen out of favour since the Second World War; however, some of the ideas developed by perennialists have been adopted by a branch of nationalist scholars called ethno-symbolists. Ethno-symbolists, while they do not agree with the continuism of perennialism (they accept that there were important transformations wrought by modernism), do not believe that modernism is completely responsible for creating nationalism and nations. They seek to find a theory that will explain the links between pre-modern ethnic communities and modern nations.<sup>25</sup> Two of the best-known ethno-

symbolists of second half of the twentieth century are John A. Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith, both of whom subscribe to the idea that modern nations have pre-modern origins.

John A. Armstrong disagreed with the basic tenet of modernist theory, that nations are a modern phenomenon, arguing that it was older ethnic ties that formed the strongest base of nation-formation. He did agree, however, with Anderson's and Hobsbawm's idea that nationalism was an invention. A political scientist, Armstrong took an anthropological approach to nationalism in his most famous book, *Nations Before Nationalism*,<sup>26</sup> a work that is considered to be his 'magnum opus.'<sup>27</sup> Armstrong is often described as the 'founding father' of ethno-symbolism (although he never applies this term to himself).<sup>28</sup> He has also been called a 'perennialist' because he believes very strongly in the existence of nations before the advent of nationalism(s) in the nineteenth century (unlike the modernists who believe that nationalism created nations). Indeed, Armstrong sees nations as recurrent phenomena in every historical epoch (which is why he has also been called a primordialist). Armstrong used an 'extended temporal perspective'—or the *longue durée*—to demonstrate that ethnic consciousness has a history that reaches as far back as antiquity. Armstrong claimed that contemporary nationalism was only the last stage of a much larger cycle of persistent ethnic consciousness (hence the need to adopt an extended temporal perspective).<sup>29</sup>

Persistent attitudinal factors such as myth, symbol and communication are important aspects in creating ethnic consciousness (this is where the term ethno-symbolism comes from). Armstrong called these persistent factors 'collective memories' or 'nostalgic myths.' The factors that ensure the persistence of myth, symbol, and

communication are: ways of life (nomadic versus sedentary), religion (in particular Christianity and Islam), the development and growth of the city, and language (which Armstrong contends is a product of the modern state).<sup>30</sup>

Armstrong emphasized the importance of boundaries (used metaphorically rather than physically) in his theory of nationalism, adopting the 'social interaction model' or 'attitudinal boundary approach' of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth. Barth argued that "groups tend to define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics, but by exclusion, that is, by comparison to 'strangers'."<sup>31</sup> Armstrong liked Barth's theory because it allowed for the possibility of change within the cultural and biological content of the group (provided certain boundary mechanisms were maintained), and it proved that ethnic groups were not necessarily based on the occupation of specific, exclusive territories. As a result, there may often be significant overlap between ethnic, religious and class loyalties.<sup>32</sup>

If Armstrong is considered the 'founding father' of ethno-symbolism, then Anthony D. Smith is his most famous progeny. Indeed, Smith has been called the "leading exponent of ethno-symbolism."<sup>33</sup> Smith has written several books on nationalism, including his famous work *Ethnic Origins of Nations*.<sup>34</sup> In 1991 Smith wrote *National Identity*, in which he took many of the ideas developed in *Ethnic Origins of Nations* and applied them to the modern world in an analysis of the development of nations and national identity.<sup>35</sup> In his introduction he stated that he aimed "to provide a straightforward introduction to the nature, causes and consequences of national identity as a collective phenomenon."<sup>36</sup>

While Smith was part of the London School of Economics' debates on nationalism that included the modernists Elie Kedourie and Ernest Gellner, he disagreed with them on one fundamental point. Smith's approach to the study of nationalism was based on a critique of modernism.<sup>37</sup> "We cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics," he claimed, "but must treat them as cultural phenomena as well."<sup>38</sup> In order to understand this conception of nations and nationalisms as cultural phenomena more fully it is necessary to examine the role that ethnic bases play in modern nation formation.

As an ethno-symbolist Smith also believed very strongly in the importance of rituals and ceremonies in modern national identity formation. He called this "the realization of fraternity through symbols, rites and ceremonies, which bind the living to the dead and fallen of the community."<sup>39</sup> The enactment of these rituals (which have their roots in the ethnic past of the people) are vital in forging and sustaining a national identity. In addition to myths and symbols, Smith also emphasized the importance of land and territory in his theory. He defined the nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members."<sup>40</sup> Smith also discussed the impact of economic and cultural globalization on specific national identities. He concluded that while these may be increasingly potent forces, they do not, in fact, affect national identities adversely. Conversely, they may act to strengthen pre-existing or emerging national identities (leading to pan-regionalism, rather than pan-nationalism).

Recently, postmodernists have approached the subject of nationalism in a very different manner than either the modernists or the ethno-symbolists. Homi Bhabha's postmodern approach has also been called the 'hybridity theory' of nationalism. In *Nation and Narration* Bhabha focused on the cultural difference 'within,' rather than the idea of a unified nation.<sup>41</sup> In a world that is increasingly influenced by immigration, and as colonies become sovereign, Bhabha contended that nationalism could no longer be understood as a 'performative' reproduction of the people, but must be viewed in terms of the 'Other'.<sup>42</sup>

*Nation and Narration* is a collection of essays by various authors, which includes an introduction and summative essay by Bhabha, the editor. Bhabha used the writings of Derrida, Fanon, Foucault and Lacan to discuss the role of marginalized people on the borders of the nation. (Bhabha's idea of borders is more permeable than Armstrong's theory that boundaries work by excluding the 'other' and creating an identity for those who are inside the boundary.) Bhabha theorized that marginalized or 'hybrid' people produce counter-narratives that contest dominant constructions of nation and nationalism.<sup>43</sup>

Each of these approaches has its limitations when one tries to apply them to the Canadian context. Because modernists subscribe to the belief that nationalism is essentially a political movement they ignore the ethnic and cultural aspects of nation building. In a country like Canada that has competing nationalisms (among them, French, English, and Aboriginal) modernist theories are patently inadequate. There are difficulties with each theorist's individual approach. Kedourie's theory that cultural nationalism is merely a linguistic movement cannot account for the surge in cultural nationalism in *all*

parts of Canada during the 1960s. Gellner's belief that nationalism is the result of industrialization does not explain recent surges in patriotism and newly emerging nationalisms in already industrialized countries, and his detached approach ignores the passions incited by nationalism.<sup>44</sup> While there is merit in Gellner's idea that the nation is the result of cooperation between different sectors, I do not believe that the political and national unit necessarily needs to be congruent for nationhood (the limitations of this approach become even more evident if one considers new forms of collective identity such as the Nation of Islam or Queer Nation that are laying claim to nationhood in the twenty-first century). Hobsbawm does not consider nationalism to be a "major vector of historical development" at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> Anderson's theory is also problematic; he has been accused of being culturally reductionist and of underestimating the political aspects of nationalism, although he does believe that nations are artificially constructed to serve the interests of the élites' political and economic ambitions. Anderson also disregards a number of material factors, such as land and territory, politics, class, gender, ethnic identity, and government intervention that influence nationalism and national identity on an ongoing basis.<sup>46</sup>

One of the major problems with modernist theory is that it largely ignores the important role that myths and symbols play in nation building. This does not mean that one may simply appropriate the theories of ethno-symbolists to discuss Canadian nationalism. While it is true that myths and memories play an important part in Canadian nationalism (to be discussed below), Western myths and memories are relatively recent. Therefore, the most obvious difficulty with trying to apply ethno-symbolist theories to Canada is that Canada's origins as a nation are not pre-modern. Anderson's idea of the

*longue durée* is problematic in a multi-ethnic country like Canada—what past does Canada refer back to, and whose collective memories or language form the basis for a pan-Canadian national consciousness? And, although Smith's belief that a nation has to share an historic territory, common myths, and historical memories may be applicable to certain groups in Canada (for example, First Nations), it also does not apply to the nation as a whole. In a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-national country it is impossible to look to a single, shared pre-modern ethnic identity.

Canadian nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s cannot be adequately analyzed from either a modernist or an ethno-symbolist stance, but rather, must be considered as a complex combination of elements from the two schools. Rather than being a solely political doctrine invented by the élites to serve their own purposes, or a culturalist phenomenon that derives from pre-modern myths and symbols, Canadian nationalism incorporates and intermingles elements from each side. While nationalism may be a doctrine invented by the élites (the government and intellectuals), it is by no means uninfluenced by the willing participation of the people they wish to control (a voluntaristic definition). And while the modern myths and symbols that represent Canada may be manufactured or promoted by the government and cross ethnic boundaries, they nevertheless play an important role in creating the impression that there is a national identity.

It is evident that the aforementioned theories of nationalism cannot be simply applied to Canada. However, Canada has never really developed a coherent theory of nationalism, although there has been a lengthy debate over the problem of Canadian identity. For over a hundred years writers and scholars have tried to define Canadian

identity and justify the continuation of a Canadian nation. In 1891 the historian and journalist Goldwin Smith published *Canada and the Canadian Question*, considered one of the most important early works on Canadian nationalism.<sup>47</sup> Smith, an Englishman who emigrated to the United States in 1868 and then to Canada in 1871, was a Manchester liberal—one of a group of Englishmen who subscribed to the belief that the abolition of tariffs and the institution of free trade between nations would prevent wars. Smith initially believed in Canadian nationalism, and at one time he was a supporter of the Canada First movement.<sup>48</sup> However, he came to believe that Canada was not a true country in either a geographic or economic sense; instead, it was created for political reasons.<sup>49</sup> (Smith cited the north-south geographical barriers that separated the four different regions of Canada and the ethnological barrier that separated French and English Canada to substantiate his thesis.<sup>50</sup>) In *Canada and the Canadian Question*, Smith predicted that Canada would inevitably become annexed to the United States resulting in the “moral unification of the Anglo-Saxon race” in North America.<sup>51</sup>

Written in the decades following Confederation, *Canada and the Canadian Question* took a pessimistic view of the future of the nation. There was a strong continentalist focus to Smith’s work; indeed, the purpose of his book was to promote and support freer trade between Canada and the United States. He believed that a union with the United States “would raise the value of property in Canada...it would bring with it a great increase in prosperity.”<sup>52</sup>

Smith’s work has been criticized for being full of exaggerations and misrepresentations, and his views are now seen as racist, classist and sexist.<sup>53</sup> In addition to this, he is viewed as an outsider who only saw the economic advantages of a Canada-

United States alliance, and was unable to understand “the sentiments and emotions which underlay the sense of Canadian nationality.”<sup>54</sup> Notwithstanding these criticisms, Smith’s work on nationalist thought is important “because he asked the question which all Canadian nationalists have since tried to answer: what positive values does the country embody and represent that justifies her existence?”<sup>55</sup>

Not everyone supported Smith’s desire for a stronger union with the United States; in fact, anti-Americanism became very pronounced by the mid-twentieth century. This was not an entirely new sentiment; indeed, it had been a recurrent theme at least since 1940 when John MacCormac wrote *Canada: America’s Problem*, a book in which he examined Canada’s relationship to both the United States and to Britain. The scope of MacCormac’s project was massive; his aims were to “describe Canada, to estimate her vast potentialities, to measure her not inconsiderable development of them, and to indicate the highly complicated character of her population, her politics and economics.”<sup>56</sup> MacCormac looked at the history of Canadian foreign policy in relation to that of the United States. He also attempted to find out if there was a Canadian nationality (he concluded that there was not, although he conceded that there was a French-Canadian nationality).<sup>57</sup> In addition, MacCormac examined the country’s vast natural resources, its industrial production, and financial situation.

The question of whether or not there was such a thing as a uniquely Canadian identity, and the effect that other countries (chiefly the United States) had on Canada were issues that MacCormac wrestled with in his discussion of the Canadian economy. He vacillated between praising the United States and denying any differences between it and Canada, and blaming the United States (and to a lesser extent, Britain) for Canada’s

slow economic growth. He stated that Canada's foreign policy was its refusal to have any.<sup>58</sup> Clinging tenaciously to her ties with Britain (typical of his generation, MacCormac gendered the nation as female), MacCormac believed that Canada followed British policies on all matters of importance (in this case economics and foreign policy).

Canada's close ties to Britain were not considered as damaging as the influence of the United States, though. Calling the United States "a benevolent vampire draining Canada of her best product—her people—while refusing to buy her other goods unless they were indispensable raw materials," MacCormac stated that "[t]he reason for Canada's tardy growth is to be found in her spiritual dependence on Great Britain which has often paralysed her energies, but to a far greater extent in her geographic proximity to the United States."<sup>59</sup> Despite the negative impact that Britain and the United States had on Canadian economic maturity, MacCormac did not foresee an economically independent Canada. He claimed that Canada's main role would be realized in providing an economic link between the United States and Britain (he called Canada a "hybrid, half British, half American").<sup>60</sup>

MacCormac placed a great deal of importance on the physical properties of Canada. He identified the vast size of Canada and its regional diversity as barriers to a nationally cohesive identity—he wrote that Canada had "trouble growing up," partly because "[s]he has too much geography and it is not even all of one piece."<sup>61</sup> He also subscribed to the stereotypical idea of Canada as a northern wilderness, calling Canada "a vast and lonely land," that was "gigantically framed and wildly clad."<sup>62</sup>

*Canada: America's Problem* was praised at the time of its publication for providing important information about Canada to Americans (which they were felt to

know little about). It was also lauded for showing “Canadians in a light in which they have seldom before seen themselves.”<sup>63</sup> In it, MacCormac articulated the two main reasons for Canada’s lack of national identity—its strong colonialism, and the problem of living in the shadow of a more powerful nation. These two reasons are ones that were repeatedly examined by subsequent generations of scholars.

*Canada: America’s Problem* was not consistently anti-American; while MacCormac discussed the historical distrust between Canada and the United States he remained slightly awed by the United States and strove to minimize any difference between the two countries; indeed, he said that “Canadians and Americans are more alike than any other two separate peoples in the world.”<sup>64</sup> However, MacCormac raised many issues that were seized upon by later Canadian writers who were more vocally anti-American in their nationalism.

Canada’s ambivalent relationship with the United States continued in the years following the Second World War. In 1951 the Massey Commission (to be discussed below) warned of the pernicious influence of American mass culture on Canadian identity, and highlighted the need to safeguard various aspects of Canadian culture through the institution of a number of recommendations such as regulations on broadcasting, the creation of an arts funding agency and increased funding for universities. The Canadian government heeded the warnings of the Massey Commission and in the next two decades spent unprecedented amounts of money to promote Canadian art and culture. As Gail Dexter points out, the anti-Americanism of the Massey Commission did not spring from political concerns, rather “it derived from their valuation of American culture as commercialized and vulgar.”<sup>65</sup>

The search for the values that defined a Canadian identity continued to preoccupy scholars into the 1960s. By the beginning of the decade Canada had existed as a nation for almost a century. However, the prevailing sentiment was still that it did not yet possess a truly unique identity. A variety of reasons were posited for this lack of identity, among them, the lack of a revolutionary break from the United Kingdom, the vast geographic area of the country, the French-English divide, and the growing ethnic diversity of Canada's population.

In 1961 the historian W.L. Morton presented his views of Canada in *The Canadian Identity*.<sup>66</sup> In his preface to the first edition Morton stated that the main point of his book was to demonstrate that if Canada was to continue to be an independent nation (with respect to the Commonwealth and the United States), it must develop a "self-definition of greater clarity and more ringing tone than it has yet done."<sup>67</sup> For Morton, this clarity of vision rested on certain qualities; he wrote: "Canadian freedom is based on unshakable moral foundations and...Canadian nationhood is, in fact, a fruitful experiment of dignity and value."<sup>68</sup> For Morton, Canada was a nation based on 'allegiance' (to the state) unlike the United States which was based on a 'covenant.'<sup>69</sup>

Morton originally studied the regions of Canada (particularly the West and the North). Beginning in the mid-1950s his focus began to change and by the time that he wrote *Canadian Identity* his writing had moved from a study of the regions of Canada towards the idea of the nation as a whole. Nevertheless he did not abandon some of his earlier ideas. A.B. McKillop writes that Morton "consistently sought to combine his commitment to regional distinctiveness with his concern for elucidating the nature of the Canadian identity, particularly as it was shaped and structured by imperial links with

France and England.”<sup>70</sup> As Morton put it: “the moral core of Canadian nationhood is found in the fact that Canada is a monarchy.”<sup>71</sup>

Morton emphasized the important role of history in understanding Canada’s future. He claimed that Canada’s history was not a dual one (French and English) but rather “one narrative line” that was a continuation and extension of that prior to 1760.<sup>72</sup> He cited four permanent factors that account for this common history—Canada’s “northern character, a historical dependence, a monarchical government, and a committed national destiny.”<sup>73</sup> The common history or experience that Canadians shared (what he called a “common psychology...of endurance and survival”<sup>74</sup>) formed the basis of a national identity (although he used the term destiny rather than identity).

Canadians continued to be worried about the influence of the United States on Canada in the 1960s. One of the direst warnings about Canada’s increasing dependence on the United States came in 1965 when the political philosopher George Parkin Grant published his famous work, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*.<sup>75</sup> Grant, a university professor, was the grandson of George Monro Grant and Sir George Parkin (both of whom believed that the future of Canada’s independence rested in maintaining strong ties to Britain—a view that G.P. Grant shared.) Grant was an early supporter of the NDP who later became a ‘Red Tory.’ Although best known for being a Canadian nationalist, Grant gradually began to question the whole future of the Western world.<sup>76</sup>

*Lament for a Nation* was written in response to a decision made in 1963 by the Canadian government to allow U.S. nuclear weapons into Canada. A Christian pacifist, Grant was outraged and distressed by this act, which he felt undermined Canada’s

sovereignty.<sup>77</sup> Using Nietzsche's idea of the 'will to power' (human conquest over nature), Grant was highly critical of the profit-making ethics of capitalism (which he blamed primarily on the U.S.).<sup>78</sup>

*Lament for a Nation* had a broad readership in the 1960s, appealing to academics as well as the general public. Charles Taylor notes that it "attracted wide attention for its somber conclusion that Canada—a nation with conservative roots—was doomed to disappear in the American-led empire of modern liberalism, which for Grant is an inexorable force leading to a universal and homogenous state of almost certain tyranny."<sup>79</sup> Grant was heavily criticized for being overly pessimistic about the demise of Canadian nationalism without offering any possible solutions to the situation. It was believed that the hopelessness of his book led to inaction in his readers.<sup>80</sup> Art Davis, one of his former students, wrote that Grant disagreed with this strongly, believing that it was better to be truthfully pessimistic about what was happening to Canada than to ignore the situation. It was only by facing up to the truth that Canadians could be mobilized into action to save the country.<sup>81</sup>

Not all scholars thought that the country was suffering from a lack of national identity, or that the situation was as grim as George Grant had suggested. In 1971 the historian Ramsay Cook published *The Maple Leaf Forever*, a series of essays examining historical and contemporary nationalism.<sup>82</sup> In an attempt to understand "the current Canadian crisis over the 'national question'" Cook explored the different tendencies of nationalism in Canada, and concluded that Canada was suffering from a surfeit of nationalism rather than a lack of it.<sup>83</sup> A long-time friend and advisor to Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Cook argued for equal citizen rights and responsibilities (liberal pluralism)—

believing that individual self-interest was at the root of Canadian nationalism.<sup>84</sup> Cook also believed strongly in the role that ideas play in shaping national identity, and stressed the importance of mutual understanding between English and French Canada.<sup>85</sup>

In “True Patriot Love” Cook made a distinction between the nationalist-state and the nation-state. A nationalist-state is a sovereign state in which a dominant culture imposes its ideological will over all citizens. Cook called this kind of state a ‘garrison state,’ and contended that it is essentially illiberal. A nation-state, on the other hand, is one where individual and collective rights (regardless of the cultural or national ideological claims of the individuals and groups) are protected by the political and judicial systems. Cook contended that Canada was the latter—a nation-state. Cook came to the conclusion that “while a patriot is a man who loves his country, a nationalist is a man who hates it.”<sup>86</sup> He argued that “[n]ationalism in Canada, as elsewhere, is very often the doctrine of the discontented.”<sup>87</sup> Cook held that nationalism was an ideology that various competing factions seize upon to legitimize their own interests (groups that are not happy with the way things are seek to re-make the country in their own image). In a country such as Canada, which Cook claimed lacks a unifying myth (such as the American War of Independence), nationalism may be a “divisive rather than a unifying force.”<sup>88</sup>

Cook believed that nationalism was an inappropriate ideology for Canada, as it tended to promote centralism and uniformity in a country that was “by nature federal, sectional, and pluralist” (most particularly French-English).<sup>89</sup> Instead of the homogenous conformity that nationalism aimed to achieve, Canada’s identity rested in its heterogeneous pluralism. Cook’s ideology was highly idealistic, however, presuming that

Canada could ignore cultural or ideological differences among individuals and groups. Furthermore, as Donald Smiley points out, Cook's formulation was fundamentally flawed because it ignored the fact that our institutions are by no means culturally neutral. Nor does Cook's conception take into account the varied aspects of contemporary nationalism.<sup>90</sup>

Anti-Americanism reached a peak during the late 1960s partly due to a reaction against the Vietnam War and a growing awareness of racial tensions in America. As Canada prepared to celebrate its centennial, Canadians sought to define a unique identity and many people became increasingly sensitive to American domination of the Canadian economy and culture. During the next decade a growing number of left-wing academics and writers articulated their beliefs that the economic and cultural domination of Canada by the United States was having a significant negative impact on the country's national identity. In 1977 Ian Lumsden edited *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.: The Americanization of Canada*, a collection of essays by an assortment of individuals (mostly political scientists and academics) that expounded on the concerns surrounding the growing Americanization of Canada. In order for Canada to assert a national identity of its own, the authors called for a separation or withdrawal from the influence of the United States.

The essays in the anthology attempted to explain the influence of the United States on the social, political, economic, and cultural life of Canadians. Dealing with a wide variety of issues from economics, defence policies, and natural resources to hockey, universities, and art, the authors unanimously decried the 'Americanization' of Canada. Lumsden, a political scientist, defined Americanization as "the process by which the nature of a country's development, particularly its economic development, becomes

increasingly determined by that which has taken place in the United States.”<sup>91</sup> Lumsden claimed that the ‘overdevelopment’ of the United States was taking place at the expense of the poor of the nation. The ideology that creates overdevelopment also manages to set a standard that the rest of the world feels it must live up to if it is to be perceived as developed. Lumsden concluded that the only way to reverse the process of Americanization was to reject this ideology and substitute an alternative world view in its place.<sup>92</sup> Lumsden saw the universities as the place where this new world view would be disseminated. He gave this task to the New Left, whose socialist intellectuals would spread their alternative world view to ‘radical students’ (and then down to the masses).

The other authors in *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.* shared Lumsden’s concern for the future of Canada. Philip Resnick (a political scientist) blamed the liberal capitalist élites, whose desire for continentalism (and the security that allying themselves with the United States brought), “let American imperialism into the gates”;<sup>93</sup> and John W. Warnock (also a political scientist), writing about the monopoly press in North America, stated that “the future is bleak for Canada.”<sup>94</sup> Some of the contributors proposed solutions to the problem (although their solutions were sometimes vague and idealistic). Gail Dexter, an art critic and freelance writer and broadcaster, wrote that in order to achieve a Canadian art one must destroy “an art that is propaganda for the American ruling class and replace it with an art that is meaningful and functional for the Canadian people”;<sup>95</sup> and James Steele and Robin Matthews (who at the time were both English professors at Carleton University) called for government legislation to end the American monopolies in Canadian universities.<sup>96</sup>

Another major school of nationalist thought that emerged in the 1960s was economic nationalism (although it would not be given full voice until the 1970s). The best-known proponent of this theory was the public servant, politician, and accountant Walter Gordon, whose main concern was the control of foreign investment in Canada.<sup>97</sup> Although he had no formal economic training Gordon became minister of finance in Lester B. Pearson's Liberal government in 1963. He was not successful at this post—although he remained in politics for five years his first budget was considered unworkable by his colleagues.<sup>98</sup> In the 1970s he initiated the Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC)—a group that he conceived with Peter Newman and Abraham Rotstein to promote Canadian economic (and cultural) independence.

In 1978 Gordon wrote *What is Happening to Canada?*<sup>99</sup> Based on a series of lectures that he gave at York University in October 1977, the book presented Gordon's views on the Quebec crisis, foreign (by which he meant mostly the U.S.) control of the Canadian economy, the energy crisis (which he called a 'situation'), the economy (which was in pretty bad shape in the 1970s), and Canada's relations with the U.S. (which he felt were generally good with the exception of American control of Canadian industry and resources). Gordon claimed that the United States lay at the root of the problem: he believed that the desire of the U.S. to increase its own power and profits through expansion into other countries came at the expense of Canada's economy. Gordon concluded by warning that the future of Canada as a nation could only be ensured if Canadians regained control over their own economy.

During the 1960s and 1970s the notion of cultural nationalism gained popularity as Canadian scholars sought ways to articulate a national identity. However, there is no

comprehensive theory of Canadian cultural nationalism. It is helpful, therefore to look at the theories of John Hutchinson. There are several aspects of Hutchinson's writing that are relevant to the rise in cultural nationalism in Canada during this period.

Combining a sociological and an historical approach in his work, Hutchinson believes very strongly in the power of cultural nationalism to effect change. He asserts that "every nationhood in the modern world has everywhere been preceded by emerging cultural nationalist movements."<sup>100</sup> Hutchinson also believes that cultural nationalism (or cultural revivalism) has played an important role in modern and recent European separatist movements. Using the specific case study of three cultural revivals in Ireland (1780-1798, 1830-48, and 1890 to 1921), Hutchinson claims that cultural revivalism is a crucial part of the modernizing process rather than a nostalgic or romantic throwback.

Hutchinson refutes theories that cultural nationalism is essentially a linguistic movement. Because he believes that cultural nationalism aims to morally regenerate the national community, not necessarily create an autonomous state, Hutchinson claims that historical memory rather than language "serves to define the national community."<sup>101</sup> While cultural nationalism and political nationalism are not as easily separated as Hutchinson suggests, there is validity in his claim that cultural nationalism is not merely a linguistic movement, but instead has more to do with historical memory. Canada's official bilingual status obviously indicates the difficulty of claiming that cultural nationalism is merely a linguistic movement. Furthermore, by the 1960s, Canada was an autonomous state, and therefore did not need to assert physical independence. What it did need to do though was to clarify and articulate a new sense of identity. This was partially achieved through state-sanctioned strategies such as the creation of a new flag (the red

and white maple leaf) and national anthem (“O Canada!”), and the lavish Centennial celebrations. It was also achieved by harnessing Canadian culture for the promotion of national identity.

Hutchinson believes that cultural nationalism is more than a regressive reaction to modernization. This is particularly true in the Canadian context. During the 1950s and 1960s Canada was experiencing unprecedented economic and cultural growth, yet instead of harkening back to a pre-modern past, cultural nationalists in Canada increasingly celebrated the nation’s achievements in these areas (for example, Expo 67). While cultural nationalism may have started as nostalgic and regressive, by the 1960s it had (at least on the surface) evolved into a celebration of the modern.

There are portions of Hutchinson’s theory that are problematic, notably his contention that cultural nationalism is separate from political nationalism.<sup>102</sup> If one examines the degree of state involvement in the promotion of Canadian culture in the twentieth century it is clear that cultural and political nationalism are more deeply entwined than Hutchinson’s theory allows (and increasingly interdependent in Quebec).<sup>103</sup> His belief that nationhood is always preceded by cultural nationalist movements is also not entirely applicable. Although Canada already existed as a nation in the mid-twentieth century, it was a nation with a strong colonial past and an uncertain future (partly due to the dominance of the neighbouring USA). Cultural nationalism may not have created a new nation but it certainly helped present the country as a newly defined nation in the 1960s.

Hutchinson discusses two types of cultural nationalist intellectuals: humanist intellectuals and the secular intelligentsia. Humanist intellectuals, he contends, are mainly

historical scholars, writers, and artists who have an important moral innovative role in creating cultural nationalism—they are “the formulators of the historicist ideology of cultural nationalism and established its first cultural institutions”.<sup>104</sup> The intellectuals are small in number, but

...they play an important role as moral innovators, constructing new matrices of collective identity at times of social crisis. These identities, created from myths and legends, when translated into concrete economic, social and political programmes by journalists and politicians regularly attract a rising but disaffected intelligentsia.<sup>105</sup>

The secular intelligentsia (usually journalists and politicians) also play an important role as they adopt and disseminate the cultural nationalism generated by the humanist intellectuals. Hutchinson believes that the intelligentsia is attracted by the ideas of the intellectuals and makes up the bulk of the cultural nationalist movement.<sup>106</sup>

The two categories of intellectuals are not separate, as Hutchinson implies; for example, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was both a humanist intellectual and a member of the secular intelligentsia. In the 1960s, a number of the humanist scholars (curators and academics) also functioned as a secular intelligentsia through their promotion and dissemination of the ideas of Chambers and Curnoe. Likewise, the artists themselves often helped to popularize and spread the intellectual and philosophical ideas of the humanist scholars. The degree of interdependence, instead of creating confusion, in fact helped establish a particularly strong sense of collective identity in London, Ontario at a crucial point in Canadian history. Although their aim was not specifically to foster nationalism, artists contributed to a strengthened sense of both regional and national identity during this period. In order to understand how artists achieved their privileged

position in the 1960s it is important to consider the part that myth and memory play in national identity.

Young nations like Canada lack the long history and centuries of traditions and collective memories that many European nations enjoy, and as a result, many of their defining memories or historic moments occurred very recently. With Canada's desire to shed colonial ties while avoiding assimilation into the United States in the 1960s, new myths that had nothing to do with Britain or the United States had to be discovered, created, or even invented. These nouveau myths instantly became part of the established fabric of Canadian culture, although their veracity was sometimes dubious. In the long run, the factuality of the myths made little difference. Anthony D. Smith discusses the relative unimportance of truth in the overall national project. He writes:

The truth-content of unearthed memories is less important culturally and politically than their abundance, variety and drama (their aesthetic qualities) or their examples of loyalty, nobility and self-sacrifice (their moral qualities) that inspire emulation and bind the present generation to the "glorious dead."<sup>107</sup>

Other scholars support Smith's contentions. Benedict Anderson inferred that there is a large degree of voluntary consensus among the general population as to what constitutes a nation, when he coined his popular phrase "imagined communities."<sup>108</sup>

The Canadian historian Daniel Francis also examines the role that memories and myths play in promoting national identity. In his book *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History*, Francis proposes that Canadian identity is actually a fiction that is created and reinforced by mythical imagery (things like the North and the canoe) and by icons (for example, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). Francis claims that 'truth' is not a fundamental component in mythmaking and refers to national identity as a "consensual hallucination."<sup>109</sup>

Francis contends that Canada's major myths are neither true nor innocuous. Mythmaking can play a strategic role in the establishment and maintenance of national identity, particularly during times of political, economic, or social duress. As Francis points out, myths are sometimes deliberately created by agencies such as the government, or by private corporations for distinctly self-serving reasons.<sup>110</sup> Why, then, do most Canadians embrace these myths so wholeheartedly? Francis believes that they do so "because they seemed to express something that we wanted to believe about ourselves."<sup>111</sup>

In *National Dreams* Francis tries to "locate and describe some of the most persistent images and stories in Canadian history ... [that] seem to express the fundamental beliefs that Canadians hold about themselves."<sup>112</sup> Francis calls these persistent images and stories our "core myths—myths that, through repetition come to form the mainstay memory of the culture." Core myths form the master narrative of a culture, allowing it "to express its overriding purpose."<sup>113</sup> In short, they tell a nation who it is.

Francis defines a nation as "a group of people who share the same illusions about themselves." Using Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities,' Francis claims that the stories that communities (or nations) tell about themselves reinforce their "image of communion."<sup>114</sup> This is particularly true of Canadians. Francis writes: "Because we [Canadians] lack a common religion, language or ethnicity, because we are spread out so sparsely across such a huge piece of real estate, Canadians depend on this habit of 'consensual hallucination' more than any other people." Francis believes that Canadians have a civic identity; he calls this a "framework of ideas and aspirations which expresses

itself in allegiance to certain public policies and institutions” (things like the CBC, hockey, universal health care, our social safety net, etc.).<sup>115</sup> Our civic identity needs to be constantly reinforced, and it is partly through the stories that we tell and the myths that we choose to believe in that we do so.

Although Francis uses the term ‘myth’ to refer to the important images and stories that have emerged from our history, and he sometimes finds that they lack veracity, he does not mean to imply that all of these myths are necessarily falsehoods. He believes that myths are not (always) lies; indeed, he claims they often “express important truths.”<sup>116</sup> It is not their purpose to document events, but instead, to fulfil other functions. On one hand they can idealize—they can help to “select particular events and institutions which seem to embody important cultural values and elevate them to the status of legend.”<sup>117</sup> Conversely, they can demonize, marginalizing those who do not support the “main cultural project” (historically, groups such as Indians, communists, or Quebec separatists have been vilified).<sup>118</sup> Francis writes: “Myths organize the past into a coherent story, the story of Canada, which simplifies the complex ebb and flow of events and weaves together the disparate threads of experience. Myths are echoes of the past, resonating in the present.”<sup>119</sup>

Many people are excluded or marginalized by Canada’s core myths—Francis maintains that core myths have traditionally belonged to the *élite* “who use them to reinforce the status quo and to further their claims to privilege.”<sup>120</sup> This does not mean that they are false, but that they are only partially true and, especially during the past few generations, are under threat from challenges to the master narrative by those proposing alternative, or counter-narratives. As Canada is being re-imagined, Canadians are also

becoming nostalgic for past myths (nostalgia will be discussed in more depth in chapter 3).<sup>121</sup>

The conflation of culture with national identity has a venerable history in Canada, and the myth of the artist that flourished in the 1960s had its roots in the early part of the twentieth century. As Mary Vipond points out, there was a blossoming of organized cultural activity during the 1920s, a time of post-war prosperity in Canada. The intellectual *élite*—artists, writers, and university professors—believed that it was their place to foster national identity by bringing an awareness of ‘culture’ to the masses. Indeed, the intellectual *élite* saw it as their duty to formulate new responses to rapidly changing social conditions, and to “develop institutions which could cope with [them].”<sup>122</sup> Vipond contends that “[t]hey saw themselves, as intellectuals and artists, performing the critical function of crystallizing community identity by dispensing meaningful symbols and articulating common goals.”<sup>123</sup> By banding together intellectuals were able to develop and disseminate their theories of a set of common myths and symbols that would express Canadian identity within a like-minded group of individuals. The formation of various groups also provided increased exhibition possibilities for the artists among them. Despite their lofty ideals, the nationalistic attempts of the intellectuals were not as successful as they anticipated, in large part because the general population remained relatively uninterested in the pursuits of the *élite*. Vipond points out that cultural policy in Canada has traditionally been developed by the *élites* to serve their own purposes, an idea she shares with modernist scholars of nationalism.<sup>124</sup> As the *élite* in Canada looked for ways in which they could promote the nation, they not surprisingly laid claim to culture.

The purpose of arts and intellectual organizations in the 1920s was varied: in addition to providing an entertaining social milieu, intellectuals were responding to both the generalized angst after World War I, and to their perceived loss of status in society. The common cause that they threw themselves into helped them recover psychologically more than it helped those they intended to illuminate.<sup>125</sup> Vipond notes that the intellectuals were not interested in overturning the existing social order—they merely sought “a new focus and sense of purpose for it.”<sup>126</sup>

Arts and intellectual organizations had another, more wide-reaching consequence: they functioned as fora for debate and discussion on a number of issues. This may be understood through an examination of the conceptual framework of Jürgen Habermas and his ideas of the ‘public sphere.’ According to Habermas, the public sphere is the dialogue that occurs when a group of bourgeois individuals come together to debate issues that relate to what they consider to be the common good. Habermas’ important work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962, translated into English in 1989) introduced the idea of the ‘public sphere’ into theoretical debates about sociology. Habermas, a one-time member of the Frankfurt School, contended that the public sphere was a space of rational debate and dialogue among the bourgeoisie that was centred in coffee houses, literary and intellectual salons, voluntary associations, and in the print media during the eighteenth century in England, France, and Germany. The public sphere was a space that existed between the individual or private sphere (the family and activities that occurred in the home) and the state, and it came into existence when groups of individuals came together to engage in public debate. Habermas claimed that the ideal form of the public sphere was “made up of private

people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state.”<sup>127</sup>

The debates formulated in the public sphere had a significant influence on state policies, but the public sphere did not remain in its ideal form for long. In fact, Habermas contends, it began to be eroded as soon as it formed, through the blurring of the boundaries between the private and public realms. An increased bureaucratization of public life, growing state intervention in the private realm (for example, the welfare state), the increase in public status by private organizations, and the “consumption of mass culture” led to the breakdown of the public sphere and the “refeudalization” of society.<sup>128</sup> The refeudalization of society resulted in the continued illusion that the public sphere was effecting change, when in actual fact, it was used “to give sanction to the decisions of the leaders.”<sup>129</sup>

Habermas’ theory of the public sphere has come under criticism for not paying enough attention to subordinated social groups (in particular, the proletariat, racial minorities and women), for dealing insufficiently with cultural matters, for not discussing nationalism, and for presupposing that the public sphere’s boundaries are fixed.<sup>130</sup> One particularly interesting critique comes from the feminist political scientist Nancy Fraser who introduces the idea of “subaltern counterpublics.”<sup>131</sup> These oppositional counterpublics are groups of marginalized people who come together and create their own arenas of debate in an attempt to try to change the dominant orthodoxies and gain an increased voice in the mainstream public sphere.<sup>132</sup> (London artists of the 1960s and 1970s will be discussed as a subaltern counterpublic in Part II.) Despite recent criticisms,

Habermas' basic idea of the public sphere continues to be a useful stepping-off point for further inquiries into group formation and sites of action by groups of individuals.

The debates and discussions that circulated among members of the arts organizations and intellectual groups created an ideological and intellectual milieu akin to Habermas' public sphere. In their desire to foster a greater appreciation of high culture in Canada, which it was hoped would strengthen nationalism, English Canada's nationalist intellectuals believed that they were working toward the betterment of society (the public good). Like Habermas' public sphere, though, this group came from a narrow and privileged social strata: the white, predominantly male, bourgeoisie. As Vipond points out, many of these élites were "middle-aged, well respected, and well established."<sup>133</sup>

If the nationalistic projects of the early 1920s failed to permeate the imagination of the entire nation, they were not entirely without effect. Spurred by the nationalistic thrust of groups like the Canada First movement with their imperialist beliefs, Canadian culture in the early decades of the century developed along well-established European patterns that promoted a heroic view of the artist as a redemptive figure, and a narrow definition of culture. During the second decade of the twentieth century arts and intellectual groups fostered the myth of the artist's important role in society. The role of the artist in Canadian society was an issue that would surface repeatedly throughout the twentieth century, particularly in response to major events.

Maria Tippett maintains that there have been several important moments during the twentieth century when Canadian art "reflected the mental climate of the majority."<sup>134</sup> She claims that this happened two times in response to external events (World War I and the Great Depression of the 1930s), and two times in response to internal events

(Canada's Centennial and Expo 67, although one could argue that the latter two events can be considered as part of the same overall project.<sup>135</sup> Tippet believes that rallying on a common cause helped artists express a common culture (albeit one which was centred around Toronto and marginalized new Canadians, the First Nations and Québécois during the two world wars). Tippet neglects to mention that the same thing happened during the Second World War when members of the arts community came together to discuss a number of areas of concern. Among the issues that were raised was increased government funding for the arts.

The seeds of large-scale federal funding for the arts can be traced back to late June 1941, when a conference was held at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. The Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists attracted artists and intellectuals from all over Canada and the United States, who came together to discuss a number of concerns. As was previously discussed, a public sphere of a sort began to form among English Canadian intellectual nationalists in the 1920s (although most of the individuals involved knew each other, and their efforts ultimately had a limited impact outside their immediate circle). At the Kingston Conference, however, a large number of individuals came together, expressed a number of common concerns, and set in motion agents of change that would profoundly alter the way in which artists and the Canadian government interacted.

Not surprisingly, because the Conference took place during the Second World War, the overriding concern of the participants was the redefinition of the role of the artist during wartime (this was partly in response to the New Deal in the United States). The participants were also concerned with the relation of the artist to society ("artists as

intellectuals could participate in the reconstruction of a more humane and generous society”<sup>136</sup>), the role of art museums, regionalism, the exclusivity of artists’ organizations,<sup>137</sup> and the threat of continentalism.<sup>138</sup> The participants’ concerns were partly a response to the upheaval of the second major war in just over twenty years; they were also a reaction to the unstable economic and political climate of the time. While the main recommendations of the Conference did not come to fruition, its ultimate importance was that it stimulated the formation of the Federation of Canadian Artists, which went on to lobby the federal government for increased funding for the arts in Canada.<sup>139</sup>

The Canadian government became increasingly interested in the links between culture and identity and in the post-war decades there were four royal commissions on culture and identity. The four enquiries were the Massey Commission, the Fowler Commission, the O’Leary Commission, and the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission—which dealt, respectively, with the arts, letters and sciences, radio and television, magazine publishing, and bilingualism and biculturalism. Although they had different foci, these four commissions shared the belief that culture played a vital role in the formation and sustaining of national identity.<sup>140</sup> The most significant of these commissions was the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, popularly known as the Massey Commission. In 1945 the Federation of Canadian Artists presented five briefs to the Massey Commission, one from the national organization and four from regional chapters.<sup>141</sup>

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1951 the report of the Massey Commission was tabled in the House of Commons. Among its recommendations was increased government funding for a number

of sectors: universities, public broadcasting, and the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts.<sup>142</sup> Although, as Paul Litt points out, the Commission was initially concerned with determining what the threatening issues around Canadian culture were and acting to defuse them, it would end up having a significant and lasting impact on how Canadians viewed culture. The Commission was framed as “a politically expedient way of dealing with two potentially explosive issues: the regulation and structure of broadcasting,”<sup>143</sup> and the financial crisis in Canadian universities. It ended up having a much greater impact than was expected. As Litt notes,

[a]lthough it was specifically directed only to investigate broadcasting, federal cultural institutions, government relations with voluntary cultural associations, and federal university scholarships, it parlayed these instructions into a crusade for Canadian cultural nationalism.<sup>144</sup>

Litt claims that the cultural elite were “bound together by ideology as well as self-interest.”<sup>145</sup> The ideology of liberal humanism offered high culture as the way for Canadian individuals to find self-enlightenment (this derives from Matthew Arnold’s idea that culture could liberate the individual). ‘High culture’ was promoted as stimulating to intellectual growth, and as such, it was opposed to ‘mass culture,’ particularly that which emanated from the United States and which was seen as a mind-numbing threat to Canadian nationalism. It was argued that government support of the arts (through funding of organizations such as the CBC, the NFB, and the National Gallery, and assorted non-profit groups and individual artists) would ensure the sovereignty of the Canadian nation-state. In fact, the Commission “offered high culture as a panacea for the ills of modernity,” an idea that Litt maintains “appealed to members of the culture lobby because it ennobled their cultural interests and cast them as saviours of the Canadian nation, if not Western civilization as a whole.”<sup>146</sup>

Although, as Litt points out, few of the recommendations of the Massey Commission were actually implemented,<sup>147</sup> it continued to exert a strong ideological hold over Canadian intellectuals. Its ideological influence was also felt in governmental circles: “the liberal humanist formulation of cultural nationalism [that the commission espoused] also continued to appeal to the Canadian state because it proffered a national identity that justified the existence of Canada as an independent nation.”<sup>148</sup> Canadian artists in the following decades were eager to take on the responsibility of saving the nation, although by the 1960s their ideas of ‘high culture’ were shifting.

One of the recommendations of the Massey Commission that was implemented was the formation of the Canada Council for the Arts. The Canada Council was established by an Act of Parliament in 1957 and Governor General Vincent Massey presided over the opening ceremonies on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957.<sup>149</sup> Funding for the Council was provided by massive death duties from the estates of Sir James Dunn and Izaak Walton Killam, two wealthy industrialists. The government allotted \$50 million of the windfalls to endow the Canada Council. Generous though the amount was, within a few years it became evident that the Council needed more than the original \$50 million. In 1960-1961 Claude Bissell, the Council Chairman, called on the government to increase funding for the Council, reasoning that the Council was “providing support to the arts and to scholars at a critical time in our history.”<sup>150</sup> In the Council’s 1963-64 annual report the plea was repeated, and it was noted that, despite the growth of the Council, there had been no augmentation of the endowment fund since the Council was founded in 1957.<sup>151</sup> In April 1965 Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson agreed, and proposed that the government augment the endowment fund and provide the Council with an appropriation of \$10

million.<sup>152</sup> The appropriation eventually became an annual one. The benefit for the visual arts was significant; in 1964-65 the amount given to the visual arts was \$41,000, the following year it had risen to \$147,000.<sup>153</sup> Artists, especially those in central Canada, benefited from the post war advocacy and the resulting actions.

By the 1960s many Canadians accepted the idea that artists played a central role in defining Canadian identity. Whether or not there was any actual basis for this idea did not really matter. I propose that one of the most popular myths that was promoted and popularized in the 1960s and 70s was the myth that Canada had an indigenous and distinct culture that was expressed by artists. This myth was supported by curators and scholars, critics and reporters, dealers and artists who made up the 'art world.' The members of the 'art world' then, for a variety of reasons, tried to disseminate it to the public.

The idea of the artist as visionary genius was not unique to Canada; the legacy left by the powerful mythology of the Group of Seven is ample evidence of the heroic aura that surrounds artists. During the 1960s, the myth of the artist as a heroic figure that articulated truths about the nation gained fresh momentum with a new, younger generation of artists. This particular mythology was the result of the interactions of a large group of individuals and organizations.

#### **Chapter 4: The Relationship Between the Popular Press and the Artist**

During every stage of a successful professional artist's life a number of players are actively involved in promoting his or her work. Firstly, the artists themselves work to make art and bring it to the attention of interested and receptive parties. Art teachers promote their former students and often claim credit for recognizing and nurturing their young disciples. Arts reporters and critics debate the merits of the artist's work and also claim responsibility for 'discovering' promising new talent. Academics contextualize the work, legitimize it, and hope to advance their own careers by doing so. Curators also build their own careers in tandem with the artists as they curate exhibitions of exciting new works by innovative art movements. Art dealers promote artists as modern and hip in the hope that they will profit financially from their association with the artist. Arts funding agencies provide financial support for individuals and organizations and bestow institutional imprimatur. The artist's peers can also benefit by increased public exposure as their work is associated with more advanced artists. Private patrons can demonstrate benevolence and showcase their superior taste by buying work of new talent. Even the artist's family members experience fame by association with a successful artist. Through their own efforts, the artists themselves influence all of the other players. Together with the efforts of other members of the art world, a receptive audience (or "interpretive community") allows the artists' work and personae to flourish.<sup>154</sup> The particular historic moment that an artist is living in can also be important; Chambers and Curnoe were fortunate to have been creating art in a period of Canadian history when a growing number of people involved in the cultural sector were responsive to the idea of the artist

as a cultural saviour and visionary. Not all of the players in the art world are equally active at any given time, and there is often a highly competitive spirit among them. This is particularly true the more successful an artist becomes. All contribute, however, to the product that is the artist's persona.

The artist's persona is not a monolithic entity; it incorporates the individual character and personality traits of the artist as well as certain preconceived notions of what constitutes an artist. As Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz point out, the myth of the artist is malleable and several different versions of it may coexist simultaneously.<sup>155</sup> Kris and Kurz note that, despite this variation, there are a number of stereotypical or core themes concerning the image of the artist such as the belief that the artist possesses an innate talent that is apparent in childhood, an opportune 'discovery' of the artist, the association of artistic creativity with inner vision, the role of the artist as a 'seer', and the ability of the artist to overcome obstacles to fulfil their destiny.<sup>156</sup> The promulgation of the myth of the artist depends, to a large extent, on biographical and autobiographical writings that present and disseminate common conceptions of artistic behaviour. The popular press also plays a significant part in promoting the myth of the artist. To enliven their reviews writers rely heavily on the use of anecdotes to expose foibles or present 'secret' information about the artist. Well-chosen anecdotes (which are often supplied by the artists themselves) help to humanize and familiarize the reader with the artist.<sup>157</sup>

Shortly after Chambers and Curnoe moved back to London in the early 1960s, newspaper arts reporters and critics began to write about them. How each artist was portrayed in the popular press varied, as did the amount of coverage he received. From the early 1960s until Chambers' death in 1978, Chambers and Curnoe shared a close

friendship. Despite the fact that they were living and working in the same milieu during the same time period, Chambers and Curnoe were two very different artists. Not only were their approaches to art and their choices of styles highly individual, but their personalities were radically different as well. Chambers was an introspective and private man whose intense work ethic and unwillingness to compromise created an aura of untouchable mystique around him. Curnoe, on the other hand, was an extroverted and gregarious individual with a knack for self-promotion. His insistence that art must be relevant and drawn from immediate experience led critics to portray him as an unpretentious 'everyman.'

Curnoe's approachability and willingness to speak about his interests, combined with his involvement in headline-grabbing activities, made him especially appealing to newspaper arts reporters and critics. For three decades arts reporters and critics played an important role in the fostering and perpetuating of Curnoe's persona as a colourful and outspoken, but down-to-earth artist who derived his inspiration from the ordinary events around him. In fact, newspaper arts reporters were the first individuals to publicly promote his work and highlight the link between his art and his life.<sup>158</sup>

One of the most important figures to champion Curnoe was Lenore Crawford, visual arts critic for the *London Evening Free Press* from 1948 until 1974. It was largely due to Crawford's efforts that Curnoe was brought to the public's attention in the early 1960s. Crawford was not by any stretch of the imagination an expert on contemporary art but over the years she had gained a solid grasp of London's art scene.<sup>159</sup> She made up for any shortcomings in expertise with an open-mindedness and eagerness to embrace new and exciting trends. Curnoe was the perfect person to educate her and he taught her well.

Their relationship was pleasantly reciprocal: Crawford provided Curnoe with regular publicity and professional validation and in turn, Curnoe's cosmopolitan bohemianism and 'coolness' reflected back on her.

Crawford was one of the first arts reporters to cover Curnoe's work. In December 1960 she wrote a review of the 8<sup>th</sup> *Annual Young Contemporaries Exhibition*, a group exhibition that was organized by the London Public Art Museum.<sup>160</sup> Crawford was initially cautious about Curnoe's work; in her review she wrote: "The value of some of the media has to be tested—Mr. Curnoe's for example, might be valid for commercial art work but inexcusable for anything wanted two months hence—but young artists should experiment."<sup>161</sup> Her reservations were short-lived, however, and she soon became Curnoe's greatest supporter.

Crawford's support of Curnoe was most important in the early years of his career, when he was a relatively unknown artist. Her tireless efforts at promoting the young artist were commendable, and helped to explain his sometimes incomprehensible works to a conservative London audience. In 1961 Crawford wrote several more reviews of Curnoe's work for the *London Evening Free Press*. In February she reviewed the *Young London Artists' Exhibition* at the London Public Library. The columnist singled out Curnoe's work *Yelling Man in the Black Hat* for special praise, calling it "emotionally effective."<sup>162</sup> In the autumn of 1961 Curnoe was featured in his first one-man show in London. The show, *Exhibition of Things*, was held at the Richard E. Crouch Branch Library. It included a number of drawings, paintings and humorous Dada-esque constructions that baffled some viewers.<sup>163</sup> In her review of the exhibition Crawford noted with amusement the puzzlement of one visitor: "An unidentified man, gazed in

stunned silence, then exclaimed: 'It looks like our kitchen after breakfast.'"<sup>164</sup> Crawford did not like everything in the exhibition and stated that Curnoe had not yet learned to be selective in his choices. Despite his "gimmicky" tendencies, she believed that he was developing into a capable artist. She wrote: "In the midst of the spoofs though—those that have impact and those that don't are things that are evidence of a competent craftsman and a sensitive artist."<sup>165</sup>

Crawford's championing of Curnoe was astute—while she was circumspect with her praise at first (implying to her readership that her approval was considered and not easily won) she soon began to present him as a developing artist of rare talent. If she had been too fulsome with her praise in the beginning she might have risked giving the readers the impression that he was an artist whose full potential had already been realized. After committing herself to the promotion of Curnoe, Crawford rapidly bestowed legitimacy on him when she began presenting him as a well-established artist with a clear lineage of work.

In 1963 Curnoe was featured in a two-person show at the McIntosh Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Western Ontario in London (the other featured artist was Kate Taylor Cumming). In her review of the exhibition, Crawford contended that Curnoe's massive works, which had been completed over "a period of four years...gave a retrospective view of his work." Analyzing Curnoe's works in the show, Crawford claimed that Curnoe's most recent painting in the exhibition "indicated a breakthrough in style that should be interesting for future development."<sup>166</sup> In just three years Crawford had helped establish a reputation of an artist worth watching. Evidence of Crawford's bias toward Curnoe was evident in the article. Most of the article was devoted to Curnoe,

while K.T. Cumming, who had been painting for 40 years, merited only a single cursory paragraph at the end.

While Crawford was undeniably committed on an intellectual level to promoting the arts in London, she may also have been romantically infatuated with Curnoe. Her reviews, which hint at a fascination with his person as much as his persona, often comment on his physical presence and his assertive, forthright manner. For example, in 1964 she wrote: "Twenty-eight year-old Greg Curnoe strode into the office yesterday to announce he had just sold a painting to the Vancouver Art Gallery [...] the tall, lean Greg expressed his satisfaction that after about five years of concentration on free-lancing as an artist...recognition is coming his way."<sup>167</sup> In an article two years later she repeatedly referred to his physical presence and gestures, commenting on how he strode around his studio, swiping on paint, and stretching his "over-six-foot frame" over the furniture.<sup>168</sup>

What was especially significant about Crawford was that, as London's local arts reporter, she came into contact with Curnoe and Chambers in their milieu. This meant that she interacted with them on a more personal level than many arts reporters, who wrote about the artists based solely on the impression that the works had on them and on pre-existing material (other reviews, press releases and gallery promotional material). While Crawford's opinions were probably influenced by her relationship with Curnoe, she was not afraid to express her own views, and, if she considered any work to be inferior, she did not hesitate to say so. In 1966 she published an unfavourable review of *Artists of Our Region No. 16: John Boyle, John Chambers and Greg Curnoe*, a group exhibition held at the London Public Art Museum.<sup>169</sup> In her review she claimed that Curnoe was exhibiting 'leftover' art that did not represent his present work.<sup>170</sup> Her rare

criticism of him probably helped to show her discernment as a critic without doing much damage to his career. Curnoe, however, took great exception to the review, and wrote a rebuttal to the *London Free Press*. In his letter to the editor he pointed out that the overall calibre of the exhibition had been affected because Clare Bice, the curator, had deemed several works to be obscene and had excluded them from the show.<sup>171</sup> A canny self-promoter, Curnoe's allusion to obscenity in his works no doubt titillated some readers and added to the 'bad-boy' aspect of his persona.

One of the functions of art critics is to act as intermediary figures between the artist (who makes the cultural product) and the public (who need to be educated about culture). Art critics like Crawford play a necessary role in the art world; they function as secular intelligentsia, adopting the ideas of humanist intellectuals (artists and scholars) and then disseminating these ideas to the populace. During the 1960s the relationship between artists and critics was not always congenial; in fact, there was often a good degree of antagonism between the two, particularly between the London artists and critics from Toronto. There was also considerable antipathy between the different generations of art critics—the younger critics believed that older writers were out of touch with what was happening in the 1960s. Robert Fulford recalls,

Pearl McCarthy was *the* art critic in Toronto when I was starting journalism. She was more retired than not, and was paid \$25.00 a week to write one little article for every Saturday's paper. She would see three or four shows and write this tiny article. The *Globe* took her seriously, but nobody in the art world took her seriously.<sup>172</sup>

Curnoe was dismissive of the calibre of art writing in Toronto during the 1960s, claiming that it was inferior to what was coming out of Montreal at the time. He did not lay the entire blame on the writers themselves; he believed that the mediocrity of

Toronto's art coverage could be attributed to the fact that Toronto artists were not generating the same sort of controversy that Montreal artists were (for example, he claimed that the Toronto group the Painters Eleven did not take any social or political position).<sup>173</sup> While he freely criticized Toronto writers for the blandness of their reviews, Curnoe rarely spoke ill of Crawford. It was Curnoe's fervent hope that London artists would generate controversy, and he constantly worked toward this end. An astute self-promoter, he recognized that he had a willing ally in Crawford. While London may not have been as 'happening' as Montreal, Crawford's tireless efforts to promote local cultural events helped generate the impression that London did have an exciting art scene.

At the same time, Crawford was aware of the conservative nature of the majority of Londoners, and their skepticism of contemporary art in the 1960s. She sought to reassure her readers by emphasizing the ordinary nature of the Curnoe's personality. In a January 1965 review of the 12<sup>th</sup> *Annual Young Contemporaries Exhibition* in London (at which Curnoe was a juror), Crawford described him and fellow juror David Blackwood as "young men who might look perfectly at ease as bank cashiers."<sup>174</sup> She went on to describe their manner as "hesitant," "cautious," "polite," "well-mannered," and "conservative"—traits not usually associated with young contemporary artists in the 1960s, but which may have helped popularize him with a larger audience. In order to explain his art to the layperson, Crawford wrote that his works "had intimacy, appeal, humour: a 'the world is in your own backyard' philosophy about them."<sup>175</sup> Curnoe may have been presented as a well-behaved young man with humble origins in this instance, but he was certainly not always so docile and down-to-earth. Incidents from his life that demonstrated his rebellious nature came to define him as much as his ordinariness.

There is a strong link in the public imagination between the idea of artistic talent and unconventional behaviour (or bohemianism). The belief that artists possess extraordinary talents and a sensitive temperament dates back to antiquity, when Aristotle made a connection between artistic genius and a melancholic humour.<sup>176</sup> The idea of the inspired genius flourished in ancient Greece, when craftsmen were elevated to the status of artists. The idea recurred again in the fifteenth century in Renaissance Italy, and has remained part of the myth of the artist ever since. The myth of the artist has not remained static, though; as Rudolf and Margot Wittkower point out, there is no “timeless constitutional type” of artist.<sup>177</sup> In *Born Under Saturn* they demonstrate how the idea of the artist has evolved throughout history to reflect changing historical, social and economic conditions. Public attitudes of the times condition attitudes towards artists, and the artists themselves foster and often lead these trends.<sup>178</sup> While there have been variations in how artists are perceived over the millennia, the basic idea of an artistic temperament continues to be ingrained in the myth of the artist.

In the mid-twentieth century, outrageous or deviant behaviour in artists was condoned and often encouraged. The myth of the ‘saturnine’ artist was promoted by arts critics, who were aware that stories of artists’ unusual behaviour captivated their readers. As a result, their coverage highlighted the unconventional aspects of the artists’ lives. Curnoe provided them with plenty of material, and critics were quick to promote ideas such as his status as an art school dropout.

Standards by which contemporary artists were measured changed in the 1960s: in the climate of revolt and growing distrust of the “establishment,” an academic training was no longer considered a necessity. Indeed, it was increasingly seen as a hindrance (at

least in some circles). It was not formal training that was important, but accessing an essential truth. As the rebelliousness of an artist was considered a fundamental component of self-expression, it was only by flouting rules and conventions that artists could be true to their own beliefs and express fundamental truths.

In May 1960 Greg Curnoe returned to London after failing his final year at the Ontario College of Art. In a short letter the registrar wrote: “Dear Greg: We regret to inform you that because of your failure to obtain a pass mark in Composition 2, Costume W.C., Life Drawing and Murals and less than the minimum total percent required for promotion, a pass cannot be granted to you.”<sup>179</sup> Curnoe found the experience humiliating although he later recounted it with bravado: “It was terrible. I’d spent all this money and slogged away for four years, then I got into a big argument and I told my teachers how little I respected them. They went and failed me, and my father had to come up and help me move my stuff back to London.”<sup>180</sup> Apprehensive of his father’s reaction, Curnoe recalled:

I was really worried about how he’d take the news. My parents always got the usual guff from friends—‘Has Greg got a job yet or is he still painting?’—stuff like that. And so much of my art was geared to outrage everybody—parents included—that I couldn’t really expect them to understand or approve but at least they usually had the patience to let it happen. When I told my father that I’d failed, that I wanted to set up a studio on my own, I remember he told me, ‘Well, you’ve got to do what you think is right.’ He understood. That was a revelation to me. A real milestone in our relationship.<sup>181</sup>

Curnoe was encouraged by his father’s reaction, and determined to make a living as an artist. Instead of having to slink home in disgrace, Curnoe found that he could return to London with a ready-made bohemian reputation. Flunking out of art school lent him an anti-establishment cachet that endeared him to a burgeoning group of like-minded individuals in London. Sarah Milroy writes: “It was as if his release from the strictures of

OCA had propelled him, like a shot from a cannon, into a new level of creative intensity.”<sup>182</sup> His status as an art school ‘dropout’ became a celebrated fact instead of a shameful failure, and inspired many of the younger generation of artists in London. The implication that Curnoe could only create true art by rejecting his academic training became part of his myth. This myth was not just the result of critics and writers; Curnoe himself helped to propagate it.

Curnoe, Chambers, and their fellow artists were as likely to disseminate their ideas themselves (through autobiographical writings and interviews), as they were to rely on the help of the intelligentsia. While the support and attention of arts critics was invaluable, perhaps no one played a greater role in the promotion of the artists’ personae than the artists themselves. Through their own interventions, both Curnoe and Chambers managed to exert considerable sway over how their lives and art were portrayed and perceived. They influenced not only the general public’s opinion but conditioned the response of academics, critics, dealers, and their peers. The facts and fancies that they chose to present for consumption were, to a large degree, selected carefully to present themselves in a particular manner: Curnoe as a non-conformist, avant-garde and highly political artist, Chambers as a dedicated, cerebral and visionary genius.

Curnoe began creating a public persona in London almost as soon as he returned to the city in the early 1960s. The hand-produced magazine *Region* that he co-founded in January 1961 provided the perfect forum for him. *Region* began modestly; the first issue of the magazine consisted of a mere four pamphlets that were circulated among interested parties in London.<sup>183</sup> (*Region* magazine will be discussed in more depth in Part II). Although the magazine did not reach the general population of London, it began to

circulate the idea of Curnoe as a multidisciplinary artist concerned with the 'here and now' of his life amongst his peers. In the inaugural issue of *Region*, Curnoe contributed an untitled stream-of consciousness poem in which he documented his sensory perceptions at a particular time and place (in his studio on January 13<sup>th</sup> 1961). The spontaneous appearance and mundane subject matter of his work would soon become one of Curnoe's most defining features. Curnoe continued to use the magazine to expound on what he felt was important. In a poem that appeared in the second issue of *Region*, he professed his dislike for culture (by which he meant 'high culture'), extolled the virtues of local artists, contended that "hockey players are of us", and mused on personal memories of people and places.<sup>184</sup>

Inherent in the idea of artistic genius is the belief that artists can, in some way, see and express things that ordinary people cannot. Critics and writers were quick to ascribe visionary qualities to both Chambers' and Curnoe's art. This is not to imply that the two artists were interested in similar realities, or that they shared stylistic traits. In fact, they were concerned with quite different 'truths.' Curnoe was concerned primarily with what was happening in his everyday life and his immediate surroundings. His personal experience was the only 'truth' he believed in, and it was this that he tried to convey in his art. Critics believed that there was a greater significance to his work than the purely personal. By portraying his own experience, he became an everyman expressing a universal truth. Robert Fulford, in a review in the *Toronto Star*, wrote that Curnoe found "a sense of joy in the act of creation and communication."<sup>185</sup> As did most other critics, Fulford emphasized Curnoe's matter-of-fact nature, plain-speaking art, and interest in the everyday. (The use of quotidian subject matter will be discussed in Part III.)

One of the hallmarks of good contemporary art in the 1960s was the veracity of the artistic impulse—artists had to paint what was real to them, not what was merely trendy or saleable. In a review of Curnoe's work at the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Annual Western Ontario Exhibition* in 1963, J. Bruce praised Curnoe's originality and claimed that "his sincerity is beyond question."<sup>186</sup> Crawford also promoted the idea that an artist could only be true to himself if he painted what he knew. In a review in *Canadian Art* she wrote: "Greg Curnoe, 26, who rebelled at the academic atmosphere of the Ontario College of Art about five years ago [...] returned to his native London to paint on his own."<sup>187</sup> Her implication was that a real artist did not need any formal training, and extraneous influences (such as those in Toronto) could be detrimental to his own style. Only when he returned to his spiritual home could he express himself truly.

Curnoe's persona as an unconventional artist was just as likely to be the result of his actions and general comportment as of his artworks. His behaviour often appeared especially outrageous when compared to some of the more conservative members of Canada's cultural establishment. Crawford was not the only reporter to comment on his persona; he received widespread attention as the result of several well-publicized events during the 1960s.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1967, *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* opened at the National Gallery of Canada. The ambitious show was the biggest exhibition of Canadian art ever organized in Canada and presented works from the French colonial period to 1966.<sup>188</sup> The exhibition was planned as part of the celebrations marking Canada's centennial, and was intended to demonstrate the country's cultural coming of age. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* was billed as "the greatest achievements of the artists of Canada—the

heights of the creative efforts of the Canadian people.”<sup>189</sup> The director of the gallery, Jean Sutherland Boggs, called the exhibition an “ideal collection, a *musée imaginaire*, of Canadian art.”<sup>190</sup>

A comprehensive exhibition catalogue was produced and a set of study reproductions and postcards was approved for sale at the gallery.<sup>191</sup> After the exhibition was over the National Gallery of Canada decided to produce educational sets of slides of works of Canadian art from the exhibition and sent the participating artists letters requesting their permission to allow their works to be used (without offering to pay the artists any sort of fees for doing so).<sup>192</sup> The National Gallery’s presumption that artists would be glad to give the reproduction rights of their works for free sparked an enormous controversy with Jack Chambers that led to the eventual foundation of Canadian Artists’ Representation (to be discussed in Part II).

Curnoe and Chambers both had works included in the exhibition<sup>193</sup>; Curnoe was represented by his large painting *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* (1965-66) (Fig. 1), and Chambers was represented by a smaller painting *Antonio and Miguel in the U.S.A.* (1965) (Fig. 2).<sup>194</sup> Chambers work received scant mention in the press coverage, while Curnoe fared slightly better. J. Russell Harper singled out Curnoe as “the only significant Canadian ‘pop’ artist.”<sup>195</sup>

*Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* was well attended (it was visited by 67,000 people in Ottawa and by 35,272 people in Toronto during the approximately six months that it was exhibited),<sup>196</sup> and it received significant press coverage; however, critical reception, while it acknowledged the historical importance of the exhibition, fell somewhat short of expectations. J. Russell Harper claimed that the exhibition had “few

surprises for those familiar with the Canadian scene.”<sup>197</sup> He believed that overworked gallery curators and a lack of critical scholarship led to an over-reliance on “key canvases” from the National Gallery. He claimed that Canadian art suffered from an “inferiority complex in institutions of higher learning where virtually all undergraduate study is concerned with basic traditions, and with postgraduate students training in the United States or abroad where the very word ‘Canada’ is unknown to the art world.”<sup>198</sup> Despite these complaints, Harper contended that the exhibition was “a most important show and a *must* for all those interested in the historical development of Canadian art styles.”<sup>199</sup> Robin Neesham claimed that *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* was “pretty dull,” singling out the contemporary section for special criticism. He stated: “the kindest thing one could say about the selector of the section “The Twentieth Century 1951-” is that he [Jean-René Ostiguy] has very little idea of what’s happening.”<sup>200</sup> Despite the negative reviews the National Gallery put on a brave face. The director claimed that “the radio and press reviewed the exhibition with enthusiasm and altogether it [had] been one of the most successful exhibitions ever shown here.”<sup>201</sup>

The muted reception that the exhibition received was probably because there was a surfeit of Canadian art exhibitions in the centennial year. In addition to *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, the National Gallery organized two other major exhibitions: the *International Fine Arts Exhibition* at Expo 67 and *sculpture '67*, which was installed in Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto (outside Toronto’s newly-built City Hall).<sup>202</sup> The Art Gallery of Ontario also mounted a commemorative exhibition in 1967—the *Ontario Centennial Exhibition*—and The Royal Ontario Museum featured a centennial exhibition of Canadian clothing.<sup>203</sup>

If the show fell flat, the same could not be said of the opening celebrations, the likes of which the Canadian art establishment had never seen before. As part of the festivities the artists and lenders, along with a selection of dignitaries and the press, were invited to a dinner. After the official opening of the exhibition, guests were to be ferried to the basement of the gallery in a freight elevator, where a buffet dinner was served. (The organizers feared that the party might become unruly, and decided that the basement would be a more suitable place for the reception and supper than the gallery floors.<sup>204</sup>) To set the mood, the organizers decided that additional decorations were needed for both the invitations and the basement. Pierre Théberge, the assistant curator of Canadian art, was entrusted with finding someone to provide music for the event and Brydon Smith, the curator of contemporary art proposed a light show for the opening.<sup>205</sup> A group of five musicians from Toronto called the Kinetic Improvisation Unit were hired for the “all-inclusive fee of \$300.”<sup>206</sup>

Dessert consisted of an enormous cake. This was no ordinary cake; in preparation for the exhibition the organizers decided to hold a competition for the design of the cake’s icing, and sent letters to fifteen of the youngest artists in the exhibition, inviting them to submit designs.<sup>207</sup> The rules for the cake decorating competition detailed the specifications for the 21-square-foot one-layer cake, and outlined the procedures involved in creating the cake (to be done by the winning artist with the help of “an experienced pastry cook, if necessary”<sup>208</sup>). The winning prize for the cake design competition consisted of “two 7-day passports to Expo ’67 and two tickets to the Confederation Wax Museum in Ottawa.”<sup>209</sup> The cake was featured in the Gallery’s promotional campaign; a few days before the exhibition opened the gallery’s public relations officer stated: “The

cake will not be included in the 300 Years exhibition.... We'll eat it that night. How's that for 'disposable' art."<sup>210</sup>

Curnoe's winning design was selected by the "famous Toronto painter" Harold Town, the lone juror.<sup>211</sup> Similar to both his word paintings and his Pop-inspired works of the same period, Curnoe's winning design consisted of text outlined with brightly coloured, bacon-flavoured icing (in a tongue-in-cheek note to Pierre Théberge Curnoe inquired if the icing should be kosher).<sup>212</sup> The content of the text was adapted from a current hit record "Wild Thing" by the British rock band *The Troggs*. Inscribed on the cake were the words:

300 YRS OF CANA  
 DIAN ART I THINK  
 I LOVE YOU!  
 BUT I WANT TO KN  
 OW FOR SURE!  
 300 YRS OF CANA  
 DIAN ART, HOLD ME  
 TIGHT! I NEED YOU.

Curnoe not only designed the cake's icing, he helped a pastry chef decorate the cake (Fig. 3). Calling it a "Dadaist performance," *Time* magazine documented the proceedings: "Hovering over a 21-sq.-ft. orange cake, Painter Greg Curnoe, who was himself gussied up in a canary yellow suit, chartreuse shirt and blue tie, deftly applied the icing...."<sup>213</sup> Robert Ayre of the *Montreal Star* commented on Curnoe's "poisonous green and orange cake," claiming: "The best Pop was given the proper catalogue identification, but it didn't get into the show. It was Greg Curnoe's cake and it didn't last the night."<sup>214</sup> The artist himself commented on the cake, noting that although it was the first time he had "used icing as a medium" he liked it. "I have a sweet tooth," he said.<sup>215</sup>

With Curnoe at her side, the secretary of state, Judy LaMarsh, cut the cake with a huge, ceremonial sword after the dinner (Fig. 4).<sup>216</sup> LaMarsh had been enticed to open the exhibition when the director offered her the task of cutting the cake with Curnoe. Boggs persuaded her by claiming, “It’s quite possible that there will be television and film coverage of this party that evening.”<sup>217</sup> LaMarsh entered into the spirit of the evening; *Time* magazine noted: “Judy LaMarsh, somewhat less stately than usual in a blue print chiffon dress, blue stockings and coonskin cap, surveyed the scene with unabashed approval.”<sup>218</sup> The professional Ottawa photographer John Evans documented the event and images of Curnoe and LaMarsh appeared in a number of newspapers the following day.<sup>219</sup>

The exhibition invitation specified “festive attire,” which was timidly construed by most of the guests. Ayre noted that men interpreted festive dress very conservatively:

Some men took this to mean white tie and tails, others settled for black tie. There were one or two failures of nerve—a dignified academician left his funny hat in the car and a young executive kept his jacket buttoned over a gorgeous hand-painted cravat—but a gallery man went as far as a university blazer with crest, an elderly collector from Toronto was the sporting gent in a plaid jacket, and a writer from Montreal wore a green and red Eskimo touque (with tassel) from Port Harrison.<sup>220</sup>

Ayre reported that the women were a much more festive bunch “in canary colored stockings or flowery paper shifts, and one of them brandished a tall peacock feather,” and the hostesses wore trendy full-length paper dresses in bright colours designed by John Burkholder of Toronto (*Style* magazine had a small article on the dress design).<sup>221</sup>

Curnoe took the opportunity to indulge his flamboyant dress sense with a lurid get-up that received significant attention in the media. Ayre commented that among the conservatively dressed artists, Curnoe “was turned out in a sharp yellow suit and green

shirt, to match the cake, or vice versa.”<sup>222</sup> *Time* magazine’s reporter commented on his attire, and the *London Free Press* reported, “London artist Greg Curnoe, in yellow suit, chartreuse shirt and sky-blue tie, was among celebrants at a swinging party Thursday night....”<sup>223</sup>

The opening was a much more ‘hip’ and outrageous event than anything the National Gallery had previously held, a fact that was noticed in many newspaper reviews. One heavily syndicated review began by commenting on the opening: “Oh swinging man. Like so far out of sight you couldn’t know.”<sup>224</sup> The *Ottawa Journal* critic called the party “mind-bending,”<sup>225</sup> and the reviewer for *Time* magazine reported: “Lights flashed on Hefneresque pinups, [and] a combo called a kinetic ensemble played in a discordant frenzy....”<sup>226</sup> Ayre wrote: “The evening ended with mad combo beating the bejesus out of drums, guitars and saxophones, amplified to the threshold of pain [...] Such high jinks are seldom seen in the National Gallery and could only have taken place in the basement....”<sup>227</sup>

The secretary of state thoroughly enjoyed herself: LaMarsh later wrote to Boggs, claiming that “it was indeed a very enjoyable evening and I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.” LaMarsh also thanked the director for sending her a piece of Curnoe’s “artistic looking but nevertheless delicious cake.”<sup>228</sup> The opening was also appreciated by some of the artists in attendance. Jack Bush sent a letter to Boggs thanking her for her hospitality at the opening, writing, “It was quite an Opening! I’ll never be the same, after that whole day, and I find myself wondering how it will all sit with the stuffed shirts and the swingers.”<sup>229</sup> Mary McDonald, assistant education officer, Exhibitions and Education, wrote after the opening to Mr. Burkholder, the designer of the hostesses’ paper dresses, to

tell him that the dresses “were a real hit.”<sup>230</sup> She also reported that “the party itself was great—way-out music, decorations, etc. and most everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.”<sup>231</sup> Pierre Théberge sent Curnoe a letter thanking him “for having helped so much to make the opening of the exhibition a success.”<sup>232</sup>

In August of the same year Curnoe received international attention when he was included in the exhibition *Canada 101* in Edinburgh. One of his works, *24 Hourly Notes*, contained coarse language that offended conservative visitors to the exhibition. Scottish critics deemed the work obscene and negative reviews of his work appeared in a number of Scottish papers. One enraged Edinburgh magistrate and city councillor went so far as to call his work “an insult to the city of Edinburgh.”<sup>233</sup> News of the affront was reported back in Canada and cemented Curnoe’s reputation as the ‘bad boy’ of contemporary Canadian art.<sup>234</sup> The publicity that resulted may have had another benefit; the following month the well-known British Pop artist Richard Hamilton visited Canada. He was taken to Curnoe’s studio by Dennis Young of the Art Gallery of Ontario and decided to include Curnoe in the *Canadian Artists '68* exhibition.<sup>235</sup>

Many arts reporters unquestioningly quoted Curnoe’s own views on his art, aided by the circulation of artists’ statements and press releases for exhibitions. They reported that he was a regionalist, an anti-American, that he believed things had to be ‘real,’ that he didn’t like ART, was a rebellious art school dropout and so on. He had a strong personality and his forcefulness negated the possibility of dissenting opinions (after all, who knew his work better than he did?). By the late 1960s the prevailing opinion on Curnoe had been established largely by the artist himself. Prefacing an article in *artscanada* in 1969, John Chandler wrote: “Presumptuous of me to write on Greg Curnoe

and his environment.”<sup>236</sup> Curnoe’s persona was so well developed, and constantly reinforced by a circle of loyal friends who knew him, that critics feared writing the wrong thing about him.

In addition to featuring in numerous reviews and articles over the years, Curnoe also wrote a number of letters to the press. He was often motivated by a desire to defend himself and when an unfavourable review of his work appeared, or when a critic expressed an opinion that he believed was untrue, Curnoe rapidly responded. For example, in 1967 Curnoe gained national attention when his ill-fated Dorval mural was removed from the Montreal airport (to be discussed in more depth in Part II). He had received significant press coverage when he received the commission, partly due to the fact that he was paid \$12,500 of the public’s money for his work. The removal of the mural generated even more coverage and Curnoe helped nurture the controversy by sending statements to the press. In a statement he sent to the editor of *La Presse* Curnoe detailed the uproar and defended his position. The incident dragged on publicly for several months and provided him with considerable publicity. The claims that there was inflammatory political content and anti-Americanism in the work, and the press coverage that it received, bolstered Curnoe’s reputation as one of Canada’s most outspoken artists.

Throughout the 1960s Curnoe’s public persona developed, aided greatly by press coverage and his letters to editors. In 1970 he expounded on the perils of urban renewal in an article for the *London Free Press* (Curnoe’s involvement with urban renewal will be discussed in Part III).<sup>237</sup> In the preface to his article he was described as “internationally known as a painter” and “a man of many metiers.”<sup>238</sup> It is evident that in the preceding decade Curnoe had become a figure of considerable import in his hometown.

As Kris and Kurz note, differing legends of the artist can coexist simultaneously. It is interesting to note that two very different versions of the myth of the artist were at work simultaneously during the 1960s. Curnoe was portrayed as a gregarious, outspoken and outrageous artist who flouted convention, rejected academic training and courted controversy. Chambers, on the other hand, epitomized the solitary, melancholy genius who made an epic journey to Europe to study art and who was devoted to his art to the point of obsession.

Chambers' persona was also developed and firmly established within a few years of his return to Canada, helped by the efforts of newspaper arts reporters and critics. Lenore Crawford promoted Chambers' work, but, like other reporters, her relationship with him was always characterized by formality. As a result, she presented him in a very different manner than she had Curnoe. Whereas for Crawford, Curnoe's appeal was in his ordinariness and lack of pretension, with Chambers it was his foreign experiences and academic training, his determination, and the enigmatic self-expressive quality of his art that defined his persona. Crawford was particularly taken with his technical ability, his artistic 'drive,' and the 'surreal' or 'dream-world' effect of his early paintings. Her first article on Chambers appeared in the *London Evening Free Press* in January 1962 when she reviewed a group show that he was part of at Toronto's Isaacs Gallery. Commenting on the feeling of "emotional excitement" that his paintings inspired, she declared that "they impressed me with their complete divorce from anything being done by other Canadian artists today."<sup>239</sup>

Over the next two and a half years Chambers was mentioned sporadically in the local paper; in 1964 his inclusion in the National Gallery's first exhibition of Canadian

watercolours was mentioned, and the Vancouver Art Gallery's purchase of *Olga Visiting Graham* was noted underneath a reproduction of the work.<sup>240</sup> It was not until 1965, when the London Art Gallery purchased one of his works, that Crawford devoted any substantial attention to him. *Olga and Mary Visiting* (a work that Crawford identified as *Olga Drinking Tea*) was sold to the gallery for \$1,700, a significant sum of money. In fact, as Crawford noted, the amount was "one of the highest prices ever paid by the art museum."<sup>241</sup> In her article, Crawford discussed Chambers' academic training and credentials and the shock of the Canadian art world at the high prices he charged for his works when he first returned to London. It was the audacity of his prices, as much as his technical prowess, that Crawford contended made Canadian galleries and collectors reach for their wallets.<sup>242</sup>

During the mid-1960s other arts reporters noticed the academic rigour of Chambers' figurative work. In the autumn of 1965 Chambers had a solo exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto. The *Globe and Mail*'s art critic, Kay Kritzwisser, wrote a review of the exhibition in which she commented on Chambers' facility as a painter, and the "stunning originality and emotional wallop" of the works.<sup>243</sup> Crediting his treatment of light to the years he spent in Spain, Kritzwisser was struck by the "introspective" nature of his painting, and its evocative quality—she wrote, "[H]e appears literally to put the five senses into his work. His painting is audible."<sup>244</sup> Kritzwisser was equally as impressed by his dedication to his craft, observing, "The tall clean-shaven artist who came from London for the opening, admitted he had to stop work on these [his pointillist drawings] because his neck muscles were being damaged by the strain."<sup>245</sup> Two years later Chambers had his first exhibition in Montreal at the Agnes Lefort Gallery. Michael

Ballantyne of the *Montreal Star* was impressed by Chambers' work and commented on the ability of the artist to transform "the most ordinary of subjects [...] into extraordinary objects" through his "virtuoso handling" of materials and techniques.<sup>246</sup> In his review, Ballantyne called the 'painstaking' way that Chambers applied paint "a triumph of patience and technique."<sup>247</sup>

When Chambers began experimenting with the effects of light and movement in his 'silver paintings' of the late 1960s critics were quick to comment (the 'silver paintings' will be discussed in Part III). Some of them felt that the silver paintings lacked the expressiveness and psychological appeal of his earlier works. Barrie Hale of the *Toronto Telegram* did not like the works, which he found annoying, and "pushy."<sup>248</sup> The majority of the coverage was positive, and critics were aided in their interpretation of the works by the publication earlier that year of *Chambers: John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman*, by The Coach House Press (to be discussed later). In the interview, Chambers explained his new technique, discussed the influence that film was having on his painting, and provided his own analysis of what effect the works were meant to achieve. Many critics simply repeated variations of his opinions in their reviews.<sup>249</sup>

Crawford never wrote about Chambers as extensively or enthusiastically as she did about Curnoe. When she did write about Chambers' work, she often relied heavily on descriptions of his technique or simply repeated his own opinions. This created articles that, for the most part, could easily have been written by Chambers himself. Crawford's reviews were also influenced by Woodman's book. One of the ideas she subscribed to was the popular view that art is the medium through which one's true self is revealed. She believed an artist must find his proper geographical place in the world. In an article

in late 1967 Crawford commented on how Chambers' sojourn in Spain helped form his personality—she claimed his academic training, financial deprivations, and the landscape of the country helped him 'find himself.' While an artist's creativeness is obviously influenced by his environment, Crawford pointed out that the influential environment does not necessarily have to be his native one: "every human being is the product of centuries of changed environments and his birthplace may not be his real 'home.'"<sup>250</sup> Because Chambers claimed to have been so profoundly influenced by the landscape of Castille, she asked whether Spain might prove to be his real home, rather than Canada.<sup>251</sup>

In the mid-1960s, Chambers' Spanish academic credentials became inflated to a doctorate. Chambers had spent nine years in Spain, working and studying, and he graduated in 1959 from the Real Academia de Belles Artes de San Fernando in Madrid after a five-year programme. In an article in the *London Evening Free Press* in 1965, Crawford claimed that Chambers had graduated from the "Royal Academy of Fine Arts" in Madrid with a "Doctor of Fine Arts."<sup>252</sup> Chambers did not disabuse writers of the notion that he had a doctorate and the idea continued to be circulated. In 1967 Alex Mogelon of the *Montrealer* credited Chambers with graduating from the Academia "with a Doctor of Fine Arts Degree."<sup>253</sup> In 1969 Nancy Poole bestowed a doctorate on Chambers in the exhibition catalogue *London S/W 17: Seventeen Artists from the London Area*,<sup>254</sup> and in 1970 Crawford again referred to his "doctoral degree" in the *London Evening Free Press*.<sup>255</sup> The granting of a doctoral degree to Chambers was not entirely misleading by this time, as he had received an honorary doctorate in 1969 from the University of Western Ontario. Critics and writers, however, continued to attribute his doctorate to his academic training in Spain.<sup>256</sup>

For many writers the arduous artistic path that Chambers took became a large part of his persona. His performance in high school was poor, he was diffident and moody, he had difficulty holding down a job, and he dropped out of university before setting out for Europe. All of these obstacles served a purpose; it was only by finding his own way that Chambers could truly develop as an artist. Chambers' determination and unwillingness to compromise were a fundamental part of his persona; in her unfavourable review of *Artists of Our Region No. 16: John Boyle, John Chambers and Greg Curnoe* at the London Public Art Museum, Lenore Crawford claimed that "in spite of the viewing difficulties, it will be obvious to anyone (...) that John Chambers is an artist of both great talent and integrity."<sup>257</sup>

The artist's persona is not simply a fictional construction: in fact, it can have a strong factual basis. However, traits that are consistent with the myth of the artist, such as an unswerving devotion to their chosen *métier* and a temperamental nature, are emphasized more than others. For example, by all accounts Chambers was an uncompromising and driven man. Irene Dewdney claims that Chambers was probably not an easy person to live with because "he was "first and foremost an artist."<sup>258</sup> Even Curnoe, who was one of his closest friends, claimed that Chambers was "a tough guy" who had little sympathy for semi-professional artists.<sup>259</sup> His stubbornness and dedication conformed to popular conceptions of what a true artist was like, and were produced as evidence of the suitability of his profession.

Another longstanding stereotype of the artist, according to the Wittkowers, links artistic creativity with an unusual need for solitude.<sup>260</sup> The notion that Chambers was a creative outsider became extremely popular and was eagerly adopted by critics across the

country. In 1970, on the occasion of his retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Vancouver Art Gallery, he was described by Richard Simmins of the *Vancouver Province* as “a loner, assertive and forceful ... Rather heroic.” Simmins, who had interviewed the artist, went on to claim that Chambers “was rebellious, tough, anti-social. He learned how to use his wits, to manipulate in an aimless way, for there was no goal.” Furthering the idea of Chambers as alienated, Simmins commented, “There is a reluctance to talk about the past. (...) Family ties are loose and there is not a single friend from the past.”<sup>261</sup> The critic went on to detail how Chambers, through determination, self-discipline, a religious conversion, and a fatal diagnosis would go on to become one of Canada’s most perceptive artists.

Throughout the 1960s Chambers became increasingly recognized as an artist of superior skill and unusual perception, and the two aspects became inextricably linked. Awed by his technical prowess (in a review of *The Heart of London* group exhibition, Gary Michael Dault called Chambers’ drawing “superb” and claimed his “technical virtuosity” prevented his works from being “obvious”<sup>262</sup>) critics were quick to ascribe visionary or mystical powers to his works. Dault was moved to write of *The Hart of London* “the picture’s low-key tinting and its strange opacity seem to hold the action of the picture motionless and to make the experience akin to a looking back to some event long behind us.”<sup>263</sup> The peculiar sense of stillness in Chambers’ work led critics to claim that his work was otherworldly. In an article entitled “The Life of Death in London, Ontario,” Rae Davis proposed that Chambers’ “involvement with birth and death [was] a metaphysical one, rather than a concern with natural processes.” Davis believed that Chambers was interested in more than merely objectively interpreting reality—she

contended that he was attempting to “go deeper into experience...as it involves being, existing. He is interested in mental life, the contents of the subconscious. This intellectual effort to discover and control archetypal life, combined with a dazzling technique and subtle colour sense, produces paintings of great spirituality.”<sup>264</sup>

While Curnoe was admired for casting off his academic shackles, Chambers’ rigorous art training was seen as an integral part of his persona. To the growing discontent of many Canadian artists, the standards by which Canadian art was judged in the late ’50s and early ’60s continued to be international (European) or American, and it was still seen as a compliment for an artist to be compared to the Old Masters. Largely as a result of his Spanish academic training, early critics often compared Chambers’ work to that of great European artists and movements of the past. They frequently proposed artistic influences that ranged from the Romanesque, Spanish and Italian Gothic, Renaissance painters, to famous moderns like Miro and Picasso.<sup>265</sup>

Writers like Crawford also posited a moral element in Chambers’ choice of a career. In a review in 1969, she called Chambers “A Man for all Seasons,” borrowing the title from Roger Bolt’s famous play, *A Man For All Seasons*. Her analogy insinuated that Chambers, like the title character of the play, was a man of steadfast conscience and unwavering commitment to what he believed was the correct moral path in life.<sup>266</sup>

Despite comparison to European masters, Crawford believed that Chambers was an artist whose great talent went beyond merely emulating the canon to setting precedents of his own. This may have been an idea that was suggested by Chambers himself. In 1970, in a discussion of the painting *Sunday Morning, No. 2*, Crawford recorded Chambers’ contention that “it is the first time in *the history of art anywhere in the world*

that two complete scenes and temperatures have been depicted.”<sup>267</sup> The artist, Crawford believed, was so “imbued” with the traditions of European art that “he has been able to take it further, as no other artists in North America has done, and yet give it an American ‘feel’ or relationship with the industrial world of this continent.”<sup>268</sup>

Chambers was not above making comparisons between his work and that of past European greats, although it was their independence and not their style that he identified with. When discussing his films he compared contemporary Canadian private (he called them personal) filmmakers to the French impressionists who revolted against the academy: “The guys who didn’t fit into the Academy were the guys that were interested in art...Hollywood and the NFB are the Academy. So is Film Canada. Judy LaMarsh is not interested in films made in the basement.”<sup>269</sup>

Chambers was aware, at least to some degree, of the mythic conceptions of the artist. In an address to the students at the Banff School of Arts (in which he was advocating that artists organize), he commented on several myths, among them the idea that “artists don’t care for money” and that they “shun organization.” He warned students that they avoid the “eccentric-in-a-garrat [sic]” cliché, as myths such as these would only pose difficulties. Chambers also criticized what he called “the tradition-of-the-new” myth, cautioning students that they needed not always try to do something new to be considered successful (rather they should make what they truly felt worthwhile).<sup>270</sup> In an interview with Joan Murray in 1974, Chambers stated:

The prevailing myths that do most injustice to the artist are those which extol his genius and in the same breath underscore his inability to agree with his fellow artists, his incapacity to organize for his own good, his carelessness and unconcern for others. These myths, which by definition are fictitious, provide the unthinking public and the unthinking artist as well, with a ready-made image that flatters while keeping him vulnerable to predators. It is in the interest of the

middle-man, the non-artist, the commercial dealer and institutional administrator for whom the artist is a meal ticket that these myths originate and circulate.<sup>271</sup>

## Chapter 5: Legitimizing Forces: Academics, Curators, Dealers, and Patrons

Although newspaper reporters (and the artists themselves) were at the front of the line in shaping the personae of Curnoe and Chambers, and bringing these personae to the public's attention, it was through the efforts of academics, curators, dealers, and patrons that the artists' reputations were given the stamp of approval. Books, articles in scholarly journals and exhibition catalogues gave intellectual credence to the artists' own beliefs and permanently conditioned the way in which they were seen. The promotional efforts of art dealers and the financial support of patrons further enhanced the status of the artist.

The two artists received different amounts of attention from academics and curators during the 1960s. For a variety of reasons, Chambers was championed much more by academics than curators, while Curnoe received greater attention from curators. This had ramifications for their retrospective careers; academics, at least during the 1960s, reached a much smaller audience than curators did (through large-scale exhibitions), and this resulted in a higher public profile for Curnoe than Chambers. This situation would change somewhat when Chambers' work started selling for record-breaking prices in 1970.

Academics played a substantial role in promoting Chambers' persona, particularly Ross Woodman. Woodman was one of Chambers' most ardent supporters and his writings helped promote the idea of Chambers as a visionary genius. The two men had met at Western in 1952 when Chambers took Woodman's first-year English class, and they resumed their friendship when Chambers moved back to London from Madrid. Woodman wrote a number of articles on Chambers that portrayed him as a spiritual man

of intense energy and focused talent who had a deep interest in complex philosophical issues.

*John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman* proved to be pivotal in disseminating Chambers' ideas about his art and in establishing a particular persona shaped primarily by the artist himself. This pamphlet, more than any other, set forth the parameters from which he was henceforth seen. It reinforced the idea of Chambers as a rebellious and restless man who felt compelled to journey in search of fulfilment (the journey was seen as a heroic quest).<sup>272</sup> At first, Chambers believed that he would find what he sought in Europe and an academic training. Unsatisfied with his life in Canada, Chambers told Woodman why he left: "Indifference. The part of Canada I knew was utilitarian, puritanical, indifferent to anything that was not a 'safe job' and a 'proper living'. It was a question of survival."<sup>273</sup> He went on to state: "I left Canada with no very clear idea of what I was after or where I was going, but with a determination not to have forced on me what I didn't want."<sup>274</sup> Chambers believed that he gained more than just technical training in Spain; he claimed that in addition to mastering drawing and painting methods through rigorous discipline, his taste and sensibility shifted and he "underwent a series of births."<sup>275</sup> One of these rebirths was his religious awakening and conversion to Roman Catholicism (a fact cited by critics and writers to indicate a spiritual undercurrent to his work).

Also evident in the interview was Chambers' growing preoccupation with perception. He claimed it was only in Spain, in Castille in particular, that he began to see things around him more clearly. Perhaps this is because one takes for granted what is most familiar—it was only through an abrupt shift that he could appreciate what was

different about Spain. No matter how hard he tried though, he could never fully penetrate the Spanish landscape; for him it always remained “a beautiful mystery.”<sup>276</sup> When he returned to Canada he realized that the reason for his dislocation was because his memories were embedded in the landscape of his childhood. His memories, he claimed, were more than mere recollections of past events—he believed they “had a dimension beyond the incidents themselves.”<sup>277</sup> He soon understood his boyhood memories formed the periphery of his core being.

Chambers’ preoccupation with perception continued over the years, and in October 1969, shortly after his diagnosis with leukaemia, Chambers published his article “Perceptual Realism” in *artscanada*. In it, he detailed his ideas on perception, philosophy and his method of painting. Not many Canadian artists of the time were producing theoretical texts, and writers and critics who had been searching for ways to discuss his frequently cryptic art immediately adopted his ideas. Kathryn Elder refers to the article as his “artistic credo” or “manifesto,” and it certainly acted as such.<sup>278</sup> By nature a rather taciturn man who did not talk about his art much and granted few interviews (unlike Curnoe), Chambers’ theory of “perceptual realism” provided Canadian critics and writers with a theoretical framework to discuss his highly realistic art. The article allowed critics to see Chambers’ art as something other than Magic or Photo Realism (both international art styles), and as distinctly Canadian (to be discussed in more depth in Part III).

The same year Ross Woodman called Chambers “one of the few truly great artists in Canada,” an opinion from which he never deviated.<sup>279</sup> Throughout the next decade Woodman was Chambers’ greatest supporter and the principal interpreter of his work. His writings, which continued to rely heavily on Chambers’ own philosophical ideas and

the 1967 interview, helped to reinforce the belief that Chambers possessed visionary qualities expressed in his art. In 1972 Woodman published several articles on London artists in *The Business Quarterly*, a journal published by the School of Business Administration at the University of Western Ontario. In the spring issue he published "Two Artists: One Environment," an essay that compared Chambers' and Curnoe's responses to their birthplace.<sup>280</sup> Woodman's article reiterated the popular stereotypes of the two men: he called Curnoe "one of Canada's best known and most controversial artists," and "Canada's foremost 'Enfant terrible',"<sup>281</sup> and claimed that Chambers' desire to make art was "a process of self-creation."<sup>282</sup>

In the early 1970s Chambers started painting in a highly realistic style using photographs as his source material (he claimed that he was working from photographs in an effort "to paint as 'stylelessly' as possible"<sup>283</sup>). Curiously, the more "realistic" his paintings became, the more they were interpreted as metaphysical and otherworldly. In Woodman's opinion, so-called 'styleless' works such as *Lake Huron, No. 1* (1970-71) (Fig. 5) had a religious dimension that was explained by Chambers' recently renewed commitment to the Catholic Church. Perpetuating the myth of the divinely inspired artist, Woodman claimed, "[p]ainting as an act of faith, as a response to Grace, demands 'stylelessness', a letting-be that calls contemplative attention to the real artist behind and informing the human one. The realistic artist affirms God by drawing quiet attention to His work of creation."<sup>284</sup>

In the summer of 1972 Woodman published "Making the Real Appear," an essay on Chambers and the London artist Ron Martin. In it, Woodman elaborated on Chambers' work in the context of New Realism, a movement that he claimed had been

garnering attention in “responsible art circles” in the previous two years.<sup>285</sup> The term ‘New realists’ was not new, nor was it exclusively Canadian. Linda Nochlin had used the label in 1968 to describe a group of American artists who were turning away from Abstract Expressionism and hard-edge art toward representational art. (New Realism will be discussed in more depth in Part III). Eager to prove the originality of Chambers’ work (and by extension, its Canadian-ness) Woodman focused on what he believed was its unique quality. He wrote that Chambers’ work had “an authenticity separating and distinguishing it from the highly contrived plastic world of the new realism (itself mainly a version or extension of Pop)...<sup>286</sup> In accordance with Chambers’ own ideas, Woodman claimed that Chambers’ works were not purely photographic realism, but perceptual realism. Woodman discussed the ‘visionary power’ of Chambers’ work, which he claimed was “a power fed by a profound awareness of a Creator at work within Nature and within the artist’s mind.”<sup>287</sup>

Woodman published a second article on Chambers in the winter of the same year. In “Canada’s Finest Painter,” Woodman sought to correct the opinion some critics held that the artist’s work showed a preoccupation with death.<sup>288</sup> Instead, Woodman continued to put forth his view that Chambers’ work represented themes of creation and redemption that were rooted in his everyday existence. Woodman claimed that “[t]he stillness of a Chambers’ painting is an intense visionary celebration of the minute particulars of ordinary life from which modern art, along with modern technology, has been running away at an ever-accelerating rate.”<sup>289</sup> Despite the ordinariness of Chambers’ day-to-day existence, Woodman believed that the way in which the artist interpreted his life experiences was extraordinary, and that his art embodied a visionary experience.

Throughout the article Woodman repeatedly referred to the transcendental aspects of the artist's work. These transcendental moments were always grounded in reality though, since "Chambers [...] is not a mystic but a Catholic visionary. The world of his art has little or nothing to do with Platonic forms; his interest is in the minute particulars that constitute the Incarnation."<sup>290</sup>

Few individuals, and by no means all artists, are able to 'see' things as clearly as Chambers is believed to have, and the label of genius is generally reserved for those who are able to somehow envision, capture, and transmit their enhanced perception of the world to those around them. It was not Chambers' exceptional technical ability that garnered him Woodman's highest accolades, but his visionary powers. Woodman claimed that perceptual realism was "a revelation of life or energy in its bodily manifestations."<sup>291</sup> Therefore Chambers' realism revealed "the distinctive character of this artist's commanding genius."<sup>292</sup>

By 1972, a mere three years after the appearance of "Perceptual Realism," Chambers was being referred to as "a perceptual realist."<sup>293</sup> He successfully defined how he thought his art should be viewed and the phenomenon that he named became an actual category of art (like earlier movements such as Impressionism or Surrealism). This was partly due to the tireless efforts of Woodman, who situated Chambers and his style firmly in the realm of canonical art history citing Velasquez and Vermeer as peers: "The perceptual realist (Velasquez, Vermeer, Chambers) is in love with the object of his experience and seeks to protect the object as it is lovingly perceived."<sup>294</sup>

Woodman also wrote about Curnoe's art, but he portrayed him in a very different manner than Chambers. For Woodman, Curnoe was not a divinely inspired artist, but one

who celebrated the profane aspects of life.<sup>295</sup> In 1967 Woodman put forth the notion that Curnoe's work (like that of other London 'regionalists') was so grounded in his reality that it reached "beyond art into life."<sup>296</sup> Woodman, who went on to call Curnoe a "visionary who has shaped an authentic myth out of the stuff of his region," noted that "[t]he further Curnoe can get away from 'fine art' the happier and more satisfied he is with his work."<sup>297</sup> In an article in the *Globe and Mail* in 1969 Woodman called Curnoe's word paintings "extremely straightforward, [and] matter-of-fact," and likened his interest in the mundane to "a town crier bringing news of the wilderness to ears long unattuned to the message."<sup>298</sup>

If academics played a significant role in officially sanctioning Chambers' work, then it would be curators who were responsible for doing the same for Curnoe. In the 1950s and early 1960s public galleries and museums continued to exhibit works by well-established artists (who were often long dead), and a good number of their exhibitions featured European or American artists. Things were gradually changing in the 1960s in Canada, though, as a new generation of young curators entered public institutions like the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Curators such as Pierre Théberge, Dennis Reid, and Brydon Smith were anxious to build their own reputations by demonstrating their familiarity with the latest developments in Canadian art. These curators played a pivotal role in developing the personae of the two artists, although to different degrees. Again, Chambers was promoted primarily as a mystic, while Curnoe was presented as an everyman.

Although the museum community respected Chambers, he had an aloof personality that discouraged close relationships, and he never formed as strong a

professional or personal association with curators as Curnoe did. In addition to this, Chambers was not particularly interested in gaining institutional approval; instead he preferred to sell most of his work to private patrons—a more lucrative market. This was particularly so after his diagnosis, when he became acutely aware of his family's financially dependent position. Curnoe, on the other hand, was fortunate to be in the right place at exactly the right time artistically, and became friendly with several influential curators early in his career. An outgoing and sociable man, he benefited from his close association with Reid and Théberge, exploiting his contact with them to the fullest.

During the mid-1960s the National Gallery of Canada was undergoing massive changes in its governance and in its acquisition and exhibition policies. As young curators were hired, the formerly staid institution began to collect and exhibit contemporary Canadian art in ways that it had not done before. In June 1966 Jean Sutherland Boggs succeeded Charles Comfort as the director of the gallery and under her directorship the gallery became proactive in its policies and practices.<sup>299</sup> As Peter Trepanier observes, “With Miss Boggs’s arrival [...] any vestiges of a colonial mentality were soon discarded.”<sup>300</sup> Curnoe was strategically positioned to take advantage of these changes—he was young and interesting enough to attract the attention of ambitious young curators and his art reflected the changing social and political attitudes of the decade. He was also adept at self-promotion. As a result, his career rose in tandem with those of the curators. Rivalries developed among curators over who would be Curnoe’s discoverer, main supporter and closest friend, and for several years during the 1960s the curators at the National Gallery of Canada vied to be his advocate.

In the fall of 1966 Curnoe approached the National Gallery of Canada about the possibility of the gallery acquiring his work.<sup>301</sup> Jean-René Ostiguy, the curator of Canadian art at the time, delegated the request to his assistant, Pierre Théberge. Théberge, a young francophone who had recently graduated from the Université de Montréal, had been hired as the assistant curator of Canadian art in May 1966. He had barely had time to acquaint himself with the gallery's permanent collection of Canadian art when he was dispatched to London to check out Curnoe's work.<sup>302</sup> Although Théberge had never heard of Curnoe before the solicitation, and his knowledge of London was negligible, he found himself favourably impressed by the city's art scene and bewitched by the artist.<sup>303</sup> He recalled his first visit to Curnoe's studio: "I walked to 202 King Street and climbed the stairs to his studio. I was immediately bewildered by the total disorder. Magazines, collages, assemblages, drawings and all sorts of papers littered the tables, while two or three paintings Curnoe had just finished [...] leaned against the wall."<sup>304</sup> Théberge's exposure to contemporary Canadian art at the time was scant and although he had seen some examples of contemporary art in Montreal's commercial and public galleries, he had only visited one artist's studio before.<sup>305</sup>

Théberge recalled the somnolent 1960s affluence of London, a city that "had an air of Victorian coquetry lulled to sleep in the comfort of its own prosperity. The large yellow brick houses and the two- and three-storey stores downtown made it seem as if it had been forgotten by time."<sup>306</sup> This view of the city suspended in time situated the curator in a privileged position. An outsider with specialized knowledge and the ability to bestow institutional favour, Théberge ventured into London like an anthropologist entering uncharted territory. He emerged victorious, having found an artist relatively

unknown outside his local community and whom he could present to the powers in Ottawa and promote as his “discovery” to the world.<sup>307</sup>

As Théberge and Curnoe became acquainted that day in 1966 the young curator realized that Curnoe was knowledgeable and curious and that they shared many of the same ideas. Théberge experienced some initial hesitation about Curnoe’s works; nevertheless he recalls that “what [he] saw aroused [his] keen interest.”<sup>308</sup> When Curnoe led him into a “second room” to see one of his recent paintings, *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* (1966), Théberge was captivated by it, and set it aside provisionally for the National Gallery.<sup>309</sup> The gallery subsequently bought the work that year. This marked the start of a lengthy and fruitful association between Curnoe and curators at the National Gallery.

One of the salient aspects of Curnoe’s work was the supposedly unique “Canadian-ness” of his style. In the political and cultural climate of Canada in the 1960s, in order for it to be “Canadian,” it was necessary to downplay or ignore any external artistic influences, particularly those trends developing in the United States and to a lesser extent, Britain. Théberge claimed that “[a]t the time, I wasn’t struck by its formal relationship to American and British Pop Art.”<sup>310</sup> (Théberge may have been merely repeating Curnoe’s own opinions as Curnoe himself decried any Pop Art influences in his work.) Instead, Théberge was “struck by an analogy with Henri Rousseau,” believing that Curnoe shared with the naïve and visionary nineteenth century French artist an “unshakeable faith in the reality of what it represented.”<sup>311</sup> The idea of Curnoe as a naïve artist is one to which Théberge remained committed.

The same year Théberge first visited London, Brydon Smith of the Art Gallery of Toronto guest-curated a solo exhibition for the Vancouver Art Gallery. *Paintings by Greg Curnoe* was part of a series of one-man shows of Canadian artists that the Vancouver Art Gallery mounted, which included such eminent artists as Harold Town, Arthur McKay, Guido Molinari, Jean-Paul Riopelle and Arthur Erickson.<sup>312</sup> The pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition featured text written by Curnoe, in which the artist stressed the connection between his life and his art. The technique of allowing Curnoe to speak for himself was one that was extremely effective and would be used three years later by Dennis Reid. Curnoe's contact with Smith was providential, as Smith would subsequently move to Ottawa in 1968 to work at the National Gallery of Canada as the curator of contemporary art.

During the 1960s Curnoe also became professionally and personally involved with Dennis Reid, who first noticed the work of both Curnoe and Chambers in the mid 1960s while still a student at the University of Toronto.<sup>313</sup> When Reid began working at the National Gallery in 1967 he actively promoted the work of both men, although he would ultimately form the strongest alliance with Curnoe.

In early 1968 Reid curated Curnoe's work in *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui*, a travelling exhibition that toured Europe.<sup>314</sup> In the biographical text for the exhibition catalogue Reid began to develop the idea of Curnoe as an artist whose daily life was indistinguishable from his art. Claiming that Curnoe was neither a primitive artist nor even a regionalist (in the "strictest sense"), Reid contended that Curnoe "lives a rich imaginative and intellectual life that spills over into his everyday existence and fills it with a sophistication and worldly awareness that one would expect only in large urban

centres.”<sup>315</sup> Reid highlighted the authenticity of Curnoe’s work, which in his view derived from its personal and experiential nature: “He is a radical painter, who feels that art must be direct and accessible, and about the things that count; the things that really happen.”<sup>316</sup> The idea of work that was not allegorical, mythical, or otherwise removed from daily life was presented as evidence of a new, relevant style of art.

Despite the forthright appearance of his work, Reid believed that Curnoe, as an artist, possessed insight that enabled him to “transcend the mundane.”<sup>317</sup> Curnoe had the ability to intuit the meaning of life in ways beyond that of non-artists. The meaning of life that he had unearthed was not monumental, but instead was found in the nuances of existence. Reid’s valorization of Curnoe was not only consistent with the popular belief that artists possess visionary insight into life, but was also typical of the view of the younger generation of the 1960s which believed that the most important aspects of life were those which were seen to be unpretentious or ‘real.’ He wrote:

Greg Curnoe’s life is led as a creative experience. He writes, is active in politics, and plays in a band, as well as paints. This richness is expressed in his work. But at the same time, there is no weighty ‘cultured’ air to this. His writing is ‘popular’ in style, his politics are nihilistic, and his musicianship is part of both. Curnoe’s mind is amazingly flexible and particularly attuned to the slightly weird or questionable aspects of most experience. All his pursuits are, like his painting, fresh, direct and yet, in their ability to catch the slight contradictions of life, completely disarming.<sup>318</sup>

Exhibition catalogues are the ideal fora for disseminating a particular view of an artist. In addition to promoting an artist’s persona, they may also provide the social, historical and intellectual context for the visitor or reader. By the late 1960s Chambers’ and Curnoe’s catalogues relied more and more on input from the artists (either through personal interaction with the curators or through artist’s statements or other information provided to curators or galleries). In some instances it is hard to distinguish the curatorial

input from that of the artist. For example, the profile on Curnoe in the exhibition catalogue for the controversial Scottish exhibition, *Canada 101*, began with the artist's own mantra: "I am a Regionalist and an anti-American."<sup>319</sup> The profile elaborated on selected aspects of Curnoe's life: his "single large commitment" to London, Ontario, his art training in Toronto, his interest in Dada, his role in organizing Canada's first 'happening,' and the fact that he "abhors fine art."<sup>320</sup> Curnoe frequently claimed that there was no division between his life and his art, and in the catalogue readers were informed that Curnoe's art "is, indeed, his very life style."<sup>321</sup> Despite stressing Curnoe's unpretentious nature, the catalogue continued to support the idea that as an artist, he had visionary powers. His works were described as "the debris left behind as this energetic mystic passes through time."<sup>322</sup>

Curatorship of Curnoe alternated between Reid and Théberge for a period of time.<sup>323</sup> In September 1968 Théberge was able to demonstrate his knowledge of London's cultural scene when he organized *The Heart of London*, a group exhibition that included works by Curnoe and Chambers and nine other young London artists (to be discussed in more depth in Part II). The exhibition garnered critical praise, and raised significantly the profile of London's artists. It also helped to solidify Théberge's position as a curator who could spot new and exciting areas of talent.

The following year Curnoe was chosen by Reid to be one of three artists representing Canada at the 1969 São Paulo *X Biennial* exhibition in Brazil.<sup>324</sup> Each of the featured artists was the subject of an individual exhibition catalogue. Billed as a collaborative effort between the artist and the curator, Curnoe's catalogue was remarkable. It was deceptively simple, with relatively little text and numerous

photographs, and promoted an image of Curnoe that would remain unchallenged for decades. As he had in the *Canada: Art d'aujourd'hui* catalogue, Reid presented Curnoe as an artist whose life was indistinguishable from his art. Indeed, the majority of the photographs that accompanied the Biennial text focused on his immediate surroundings, his studio, his family and friends. Captions for the photographs identified very precisely the most ordinary details (for example, one photograph identified Joanna Woods Marsden's left arm, another identified two cars as "Jim Daunt's Chevrolet and Don Vincent's Austin" in the driveway of Curnoe's home<sup>325</sup>). The artwork exhibited at the Biennial was not reproduced, although there were photographs of Curnoe creating the work. Within the context of his studio at 38 Weston Street, Curnoe's art was presented as a natural outgrowth of his life.

One of the ideas that Curnoe was most vocal about was that "high art" no longer had a relevant message for a new social order (if indeed, it had ever had one). In fact, he nihilistically claimed that what he made was not "high art," or even art for that matter. This view was one that presented a problem for Reid, especially since he worked for the National Gallery of Canada, an institution that, despite its broadened collecting and exhibiting policies in the sixties, still firmly believed in the concept of art. The public could also be judgemental; the content of several of Curnoe's previous art works had incensed viewers who declaimed that it was not art either. Reid's catalogue emphasized the struggle that Curnoe faced in creating art that was relevant to what was going on in his world: "Curnoe seems to be faced with the paradox that for something to be accepted as Art, and that once it has been accepted as Art it immediately becomes something which is removed from any direct relevance to life." Despite these enormous challenges,

Reid contended that Curnoe managed to create work that was at once meaningful and artistic by surrounding himself with an environment that provided him with a “viable world” from which he could gain perspective and create his work with a clear conscience.<sup>326</sup>

In a shrewd move, Reid allowed space for Curnoe’s own voice. At the end of the catalogue, the artist posed six questions for the reader. The questions ranged from the political (the state of Canada as a nation), to the municipal (the neglect of London’s historic heritage), the personal (his own consciousness), the metaphysical (was the world developing a “Cosmic Consciousness?”), the mundane (why Jack Chambers rented a particular studio), and finally the cultural (what was Canadian culture and could it survive?) (See Appendix B).<sup>327</sup> Although he made no attempt to answer these questions, they effectively demonstrated the wide variety of issues that concerned the artist, and reinforced his persona as a man of many interests who was passionately involved with his country and his local community. Fittingly, the catalogue is entirely free of art historical jargon or any attempts at theoretical analysis.

As Curnoe became more successful the rivalry between curators over him also became more apparent. For example, Curnoe was scheduled to attend the opening of the São Paulo Biennial but, at the last minute, he changed his mind when Théberge chose the Nihilist Spasm Band as Canada’s musical entry in the Paris *Biennale des Jeunes* (to be discussed in Part II). However, soon after the São Paulo Biennial, Reid became curator of historical Canadian art at the National Gallery and his professional contact with Curnoe diminished. In 1979 Reid became curator of Canadian art at the Art Gallery of Ontario. It

would be more than three decades before he curated another exhibition solely devoted to Curnoe.

In the meantime, Théberge's friendship and working relationship with Curnoe had strengthened, and with Reid's new role at the gallery Théberge began to work more closely with the artist. In 1972 Théberge and Curnoe founded the Society for Neglected Aspects of Canadian Culture (to be discussed in Part II), and in 1974 Théberge curated *The Great Canadian Sonnet*, an exhibition that featured sixty of Curnoe's drawings. These drawings were designed to accompany a text by David McFadden that was published by Coach House Press in 1970. Théberge contributed only a short introduction to the catalogue. He chose to defer to Curnoe and McFadden, allowing them to write the catalogue essays for each other (McFadden chose to include excerpts of a "typical" [idiosyncratic] conversation with Curnoe).

In 1976 Théberge had the opportunity to laud Curnoe when he selected him to represent Canada at the *Venice Biennale*. The accompanying exhibition catalogue was very different than Reid's São Paulo catalogue had been, but no less effective. Théberge presented Curnoe as a naïve and impulsive artist, whose "painting is spontaneous, without a system, and presents whatever holds his passing attention for one reason or another. Greg Curnoe considers himself an artisan, a *bricoleur*, a completely subjective observer of reality." (The vision of Curnoe as an artist who created in inspired fits of genius was an appealing one; however, this description was misleading, for many of his works were the result of lengthy and thoughtful preparation and took long periods of time to complete.) Théberge described the particulars of the works in the exhibition in dispassionate detail—objects were identified and their relevance to the artist were noted

without comment. The overall impression was again of an anthropologist reporting his data.

In 1978 Théberge began organizing a large travelling exhibition of Curnoe's work. *Greg Curnoe: Retrospective* opened at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1981. It subsequently travelled to Ottawa, Calgary, London, Fredericton, and Toronto.<sup>328</sup> The exhibition was comprised of 169 works in a variety of media: watercolours, paintings, drawings, constructions, collages, journals, videotapes, and film, although, for various practical reasons (space and the fragility of some pieces) not all the works were shown at every venue. The pieces were assembled from a large number of sources including commercial galleries, public galleries, corporations, and collectors. The majority of the works, however, came from Curnoe's own collection, although a number were borrowed from friends and relatives. The works provided a comprehensive view of Curnoe's entire career, from grade school to the time of the exhibition.

The exhibition catalogue that accompanied the retrospective was the most extensive publication on Curnoe to that point and it provided Théberge with the opportunity to discuss Curnoe in more philosophical terms than he had previously done. Théberge elaborated on the popular idea that for Curnoe, life was art, while presenting the artist in a more 'academic' light than Reid had done in his deceptively simple catalogues. The catalogue simultaneously gave an institutional seal of approval. In his lengthy three-part essay, Théberge looked at three aspects: "The Studio," Ideology," and "The Critics." In the first section, "The Studio," Théberge set forth a powerful picture of Curnoe as a man situated concretely at the centre of his artistic production. According to the curator, the vital role of immediate experience is always present in Curnoe's art:

“Everything is there, existing and coexisting as in life.”<sup>329</sup> The essay presented Curnoe as an artist to whom art came as naturally as breathing; Théberge claimed that the artist “has no method, no discipline. He day-dreams, ponders, reflects, ruminates, observes carefully and at great length.”<sup>330</sup> Théberge returned to the idea that Curnoe’s works sprang spontaneously from his life, and that he began “with a general intuition, a total vision... a conception of the works as a whole,” and filled in the details later.<sup>331</sup> This reinforced the mythic idea of the artist as a seer, a mere vehicle through which art was expressed. It also reinforced the idea that art is a vocation or calling, rather than a profession (an interesting idea considering that Curnoe himself stressed the professional aspect of his work).

Théberge highlighted another important aspect of Curnoe’s persona—his propensity for ‘the true, the genuine, the authentic.’<sup>332</sup> By this time the popular conception of Curnoe as a plain-speaking, no-nonsense, regular guy had become part of his persona. Théberge emphasized this conception when he presented Curnoe as “opposed to psychology or ‘psychologism,’ against metaphor (*more trivia, no allegory again!!*), against myth. He is for the ‘specific,’ the concrete, the present or the past, the obvious.”<sup>333</sup>

The curator’s choice of works for the exhibition was unconventional. In addition to a number of large-scale major paintings, some of Curnoe’s earliest works were featured. School scribbler pages with cartoon drawings of his friends, family, and folk heroes were framed and mounted in Canada’s most prestigious art institution. The presentation of this ephemeral material reinforced the idea that there was an innate artistic genius evident even when Curnoe was a child (the idea of the artist as a child prodigy is another of the tropes or leitmotifs of the myth of the artist that Kris and Kurz

discuss<sup>334</sup>). Paradoxically, while Théberge was trying to give academic credence to something commonplace, Curnoe had been trying to popularize his art by removing it from academic analysis.

From the outset the exhibition was beset with problems. Not only was it delayed several years at Pierre Théberge's request, but, in 1979, Théberge resigned as curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery and left for the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>335</sup> He continued to be involved with the exhibition after his move to Montreal and the exhibition opened in 1981.

Curnoe felt that the retrospective gave the false impression that he had reached the pinnacle of his creative powers, and that any work that followed would be seen as anticlimactic. He believed that a retrospective was the 'kiss of death' to an artist's career. He later told John Boyle, "Never let them call it a retrospective. Afterward, they'll treat you like you're dead."<sup>336</sup> After the exhibition closed in November 1983 he experienced a period of severe depression. In his diary he wrote: "I wouldn't care if I died right now."<sup>337</sup> He later recalled, "I couldn't paint. It's that simple [...] I was going through a letdown. I think it's called, or it should be called, the retro-blues."<sup>338</sup> He may have been justified in worrying, as the retrospective proved to be the last major exhibition of Curnoe's work during his lifetime.

Unlike Curnoe, Chambers did not actively cultivate close relationships with curators. He did, however, have his own retrospective exhibition in 1970. *Jack Chambers: A Retrospective* was jointly organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Vancouver Art Gallery. The show was co-curated by Dennis Young, curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario and Doris Shadbolt, curator at the

Vancouver Art Gallery.<sup>339</sup> The exhibition was part of a new initiative by the AGO to feature “an overview of a Canadian artist in mid-career.”<sup>340</sup> In addition to featuring paintings from 1948 until 1970, the exhibition also included all of his films to date. The catalogue for the exhibition did not have a curatorial essay. Instead, the curators relied almost exclusively on quotations from the artist, which accompanied reproductions of his work (at the back of the catalogue there was a one-page biography of the artist, a brief bibliography, and a list of exhibitions). These quotations were taken from three sources: Ross Woodman’s 1967 interview with Chambers, the article “Perceptual Realism,” and a recorded conversation that the artist had with Dennis Young on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1970. The selected quotations helped to perpetuate the mythic view of Chambers as a driven and disciplined artist with extraordinary visionary powers.

Despite the AGO’s intention to feature an artist in “mid-career,” the artist’s recent and grim diagnosis added poignancy to the retrospective. There was a general expectation in the art world that Chambers would not live much longer and the retrospective was tinged with a morbid sense of fatalism. Therefore, it was seen at the time as a fitting final tribute to his life and work.

Professional art dealers also played an important role in the establishment of the careers of both Chambers and Curnoe. As Charles R. Simpson points out, art dealers “accelerate the developments they observe in the artist community and persuade critics, patrons and museums to reinforce these developments by adding their institutional certification.”<sup>341</sup> The relationship between artists and their dealers is mutually beneficial. Simpson claims that commercial galleries help to define and promote new art movements, and “[a]s they affiliate themselves with its major figures, they

simultaneously help to determine who those figures are to be.”<sup>342</sup> Simpson contends that independent gallery owners perform a vital service in the art world; they provide coherence within a rapidly growing, increasingly diverse world of artistic production because “[a]s both collectors and traders, dealers focus the attention of the market and its participants—magazine critics, museum curators, buyers, and even the artists—on a limited number of art developments.”<sup>343</sup> While dealers were not solely responsible for ‘discovering’ either Chambers or Curnoe, they nevertheless played a vital part in promoting their art.

In addition to discovering artists, exhibiting and selling works, and nurturing collectors, dealers frequently end up doing myriad other tasks for the artists they represent. These chores enable the artist to survive, particularly when the artist adopts a helpless ‘artistic’ persona. Simpson points out that dealers often act as bankers, financial advisors, counsellors, and more for the artists they represent. This was certainly how the Toronto art dealer Avrom (Av) Isaacs viewed himself.

Av Isaacs represented both Curnoe and Chambers during the 1960s and part of the 1970s. His gallery, the Isaacs Gallery, was one of the most important art galleries in Toronto for a number of decades, due in no small part to his forceful personality and shrewd business sense. Judy Stoffman calls him “the most iconoclastic and influential Canadian art dealer of his generation.”<sup>344</sup> Isaacs’ gallery provided a much-needed venue for contemporary art in Toronto during the 1960s and 1970s. Dennis Reid points out that Isaacs was the only dealer in the city who was interested solely in contemporary art. As Reid noted, “Isaacs was committed to selling only the art of his time.”<sup>345</sup> Isaacs credits some of his success to the spirit of the times: “[T]he ‘60s and ‘70s were an amazing

creative period [...] Starting with Expo 67, it was an era of dynamic vitality in art, music, poetry, everything was feeding off each other. There was some special element of atmosphere.”<sup>346</sup>

Isaacs did not come from an artistic background; in fact, his decision to become an art dealer evolved from practical need. The Winnipeg-born son of Russian immigrants, he studied economics and business at the University of Toronto.<sup>347</sup> During his final year at university, Isaacs and his friend Al Latner opened a framing business and found it lucrative. When the two men graduated in 1950 they rented premises at 77 Hayter Street in Toronto’s bohemian art district.<sup>348</sup> Isaacs soon bought Latner out and became the sole proprietor of the Greenwich Art Shop.<sup>349</sup> As well as providing framing services the Greenwich Art Shop sold art supplies and reproductions, and the shop soon attracted a crowd of young art students from the Ontario College of Art. Isaacs rapidly became friends with a number of up-and-coming artists like William Ronald, Graham Coughtry, William Kurelek, Dennis Burton, Robert Markle, Joyce Wieland, and Michael Snow, who formed the basis of his ‘stable’ of artists when he opened the Greenwich Gallery at 736 Bay Street in 1955.<sup>350</sup> Although Isaacs had informally sold works by some of his friends in the Greenwich Art Shop, the Greenwich Gallery was a much more serious venture.<sup>351</sup> Isaacs recounts his naïve knowledge of art trends in his early days: “The artists in my first show were a very diverse group. They had nothing in common except the fact that I chose them; they were people I was sensitive to. I picked them out of instinct.”<sup>352</sup> While he admits that he was “totally insecure” for a number of years, Isaacs’ instincts served him well and his gallery became the hub of a variety of artistic activities. Poetry readings were held at the gallery, Isaacs began exhibiting European and Japanese

prints, and the gallery published limited edition, artist-illustrated books of poetry by local poets. In 1959 Isaacs renamed the Greenwich Gallery the Isaacs Gallery, and in 1961 he moved to newly built premises at 832 Yonge Street.<sup>353</sup>

By the 1960s The Isaacs Gallery represented the vanguard of Canadian contemporary art (at least from the vantage point of Toronto), and would continue to be one of the most important galleries in the city for the next two decades. The 1960s and 1970s were the heyday of the gallery, where a mood of optimism, creativity, and spontaneity ruled. Isaacs recalled in 2005, “I was the star of the 70s and the 60s [...] Anything was possible in those days.”<sup>354</sup>

Isaacs was always on the lookout for new artists, and was quick to recognize talent when he saw it. In 1962 Chambers was included in a group exhibition at The Isaacs Gallery. The following autumn he was featured in a solo exhibition at the gallery—this was Chambers’ first solo exhibition in Canada.<sup>355</sup> In 1965 he was included in a second group exhibition; the same year and two years later in 1967 he was the subject of two more solo exhibitions. Isaacs remained Chambers’ main dealer until 1969 when they parted ways acrimoniously after Chambers began selling works through the London art dealer Nancy Poole.

For many people Chambers’ status as one of Canada’s top contemporary artists was determined by financial success. In 1969 in the wake of his diagnosis with leukaemia, Chambers reassessed his financial situation and, worried for the security of his family, concluded that he was charging far less for his works than they were worth. He re-priced his works accordingly and in 1970 he sold *Sunday Morning, No. 2* (1968-70) (Fig. 6) through Poole for \$25,000. In an interview Chambers expressed his

satisfaction in finally being paid what he considered he was worth: "I know the value of my work. And I don't believe in the tradition that an artist can't be recognized until after he is dead. I don't want to be dead and buried, and have somebody else reap the cream."<sup>356</sup> The sale solidified his reputation and his accomplishment was covered in newspapers all over the country.<sup>357</sup> Here was firm evidence that Canada had finally produced an artist who could be considered 'world class.'

Five months later Poole sold a second painting by Chambers, *Victoria Hospital* (1970) (Fig. 7), for \$35,000. As a result of these sales, and the increased public profile that he had gained, Chambers also re-evaluated his association with Isaacs. In late 1969 or early 1970 Chambers sent Isaacs a letter outlining a proposed new working agreement between them. Citing his greater earning potential in the art market, and his rising profile with London collectors, Chambers informed Isaacs that he believed that he now needed both Isaacs and Poole as his dealers. In the new agreement Chambers proposed that he would decide which works each dealer would sell, but he assured Isaacs that they could each sell his works anywhere they wished. In addition to this Chambers stated that the selling dealer would receive 20% commission on any works priced at \$5,000 and under, and 15% commission on works over \$5,000.<sup>358</sup>

Isaacs was not pleased with Chambers' new terms, particularly the artist's demand that his works be divided equally between Isaacs and Poole. Isaacs' response to Chambers' request provides insight into the complex relationship between the artist and the dealer who had "been representing you for almost nine years now. During that time I feel I have given a solid commitment and have tried to be fair in our relationship."<sup>359</sup>

Isaacs pointed out that his association with Chambers had not been merely a business

relationship, having been “constantly [...] on call.” While he conceded that he had done these things willingly, Isaacs appeared slighted that he had not shared in the commission from the record-breaking sale of Chambers’ two recent paintings.<sup>360</sup> Despite Stoffman’s claim that “Isaacs didn’t care about making a sale—he just wanted you to love the art,”<sup>361</sup> Isaacs was a firm businessman. Although he acknowledged to Chambers that he was aware of the pressures that the artist was under, he was unwilling to renegotiate their terms to the extent that Chambers demanded. Isaacs wished to retain exclusivity over Chambers’ works, and to take 5% of any sales that Poole made in London; he also wanted to retain first call on Chambers’ new works.<sup>362</sup> He concluded his letter to Chambers with, “I do not feel that after all this time and effort and the support you have had continually in a major gallery in an important city, that I can acquiesce [to your demands]. I hope you find yourself in agreement with these points, as I feel quite strongly about them.”<sup>363</sup> Chambers remained inflexible in his demands, and the business relationship between artist and dealer ceased.

Poole was eager and willing to step into the breach. She soon took over where Isaacs left off, and by 1971 had become Chambers’ exclusive dealer. Poole opened her first gallery, Nancy Poole’s Studio, in 1969 at 554 Waterloo Street in London, where she exhibited the work of local artists such as Chambers, Herb and Margot Ariss, Larry Russell, Tony Urquhart and Kim Ondaatje. (Poole never represented Curnoe; in fact, the two did not get along.) Chambers did not have to worry about not being represented in Toronto as Poole opened a second gallery at 16 Hazelton Avenue on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1971.

Chambers’ decision to raise his prices was met with disfavour from a number of groups. Fellow artists were critical of his success; Poole writes that there was

“tremendous jealousy” aroused by his commercial and artistic success among his comrades. According to Poole, Chambers “also recognized that since he was a dying man, they dared not attack him, but chose instead to hold his dealer [Poole herself] responsible for the ‘outrageous prices’ that he was now asking.”<sup>364</sup> Curators in public galleries were also uneasy with his elevated prices, fearing that Chambers would set a precedent for other artists. These concerns did not trouble Chambers, though; shortly before his death he made his position clear: “The majority of my work [...] is sold in the public sector to private collectors. I am happy it is so because one need never seek favour or tremble at the possible changes in the personnel of our public galleries or purchasing institutions.”<sup>365</sup>

In the long term this was not the boon it appeared. When works enter private collections instead of public institutions they can languish in obscurity. Owners are not obligated to lend their works to exhibitions, and as a result, an artist’s work may only be seen by a few people. Likewise, when the work of an artist ends up mainly in one institution, unless the curators make a concerted effort to tour works, the audience is also limited to those with access to that particular gallery.<sup>366</sup>

Poole benefited financially from her association with Chambers; by 1972 he was one of her best-selling artists. In April of that year she sold ten works by Chambers for a total of \$1,488.07, in May she sold twenty works to assorted clients for a total of \$4,703.07, and in June she sold eleven works for a total of \$2,404.38. On these sales she took a 20% commission.<sup>367</sup> Although the two record-breaking works were ‘sold’ in 1970 the actual money did not change hands for two years. Records of payment for the two works did not appear in Nancy Poole’s financial files until 1972.

Poole claimed that her close association with Chambers had been “a singular experience” for her. Despite their “many battles” Poole believed that their good relationship was due to their mutual respect. When *Jack Chambers* was published in 1978 Poole wrote: “Our association over the years and publishing of this book has been based upon my firm belief that Jack Chambers is the finest painter that Canada has produced. I am convinced that in the future his work will hang in the great museums of the world.”<sup>368</sup> Despite her conviction, this was not to be the case, and little of Chambers’ work ended up in ‘great museums.’ In fact, the National Gallery of Canada only has nine works by Chambers to date (two paintings, six drawings, and one film).

Curnoe and Isaacs had a longer and friendlier relationship than Isaacs had with Chambers, although initially Isaacs was cautious about representing Curnoe. Despite the fact that Curnoe had lived in Toronto for three years in the late 1950s he did not come to the attention of Isaacs until after his return to London in 1960. In late 1961 Curnoe was included in his first group exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery. The untitled exhibition was organized by another artist, Richard Gorman, and included an assortment of works by Gorman, Michael Snow, Dennis Burton, Curnoe, Joyce Wieland, Gordon Rayner and Arthur Coughtry (Graham Coughtry’s brother).<sup>369</sup> (Figs. 8 & 9) Recognizing the homage that the artists were paying to the early twentieth century European Dada movement, Robert Fulford of the *Toronto Daily Star* christened the Isaacs exhibition ‘neo-Dadaist.’ Fulford’s review of the exhibition positioned the artists firmly in the vanguard of Canadian creativity, particularly in Toronto’s rather staid art scene. Fulford called the exhibition “an exercise in the art of anarchy,” a phrase guaranteed to attract a young and hip viewing public.<sup>370</sup> Fulford predicted that the show would be a winner on all fronts: “If

the wild, anti-everything attitude of the old-time 1920s Dadaists has appealed to you in the past [...] then you'll enjoy seeing its 1961 version in a Toronto setting. If, on the other hand, you suspect that current art is essentially insane, then you'll be smugly confirmed in your belief."<sup>371</sup> The Isaacs exhibition received added publicity when Michel Sanouillet reviewed the exhibition for *Canadian Art*. Sanouillet's review gave academic sanction to the exhibition, and his enthusiasm for the works' originality was evident when he expressed his hope "that this exhibition will be taken on tour throughout Canada. Started by talented young men, it indicates a healthy reaction against a lethal form of stuffy conservatism which has pervaded most of this country's artistic circles."<sup>372</sup>

A year and a half after the neo-Dadaist exhibition, Isaacs became more interested in Curnoe's work. In the autumn of 1962 Isaacs sent a note to Curnoe: "Dear Greg: Many thanks for letting me see your recent work. I realize that I went away without any direct comment to you. I can assure you that it was not due to a lack of reaction. I am very interested in the area you are exploring and find your work valid. Don't be too impatient."<sup>373</sup> Isaacs was right to warn Curnoe not to get his hopes up; it was not until four years later, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1966, that Isaacs formally agreed to represent Curnoe. Although Isaacs had a reputation of taking chances on relatively unknown artists, he was more cautious with Curnoe. By the time the Isaacs Gallery began representing Curnoe, he had already established himself as a serious artist with works in several public institutions. The Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina had bought *Tall Girl When I Am Sad on Dundas Street* (1961) in May 1962; the McIntosh Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Western Ontario purchased *On the Bed* (1962) in December of the same year. In 1964 the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts bought *Sunday Lacrosse at Talbot*

*School* (1963) and the Vancouver Art Gallery bought *Myself Walking North in the Tweed Coat* (1963). The following year the Art Gallery of Toronto purchased *Spring on the Ridgeway* (1964).

Curnoe had branched out artistically since the 1961 neo-Dada exhibition. In addition to producing paintings and drawings he became actively involved in other creative practices. In 1962 Curnoe organized *Celebration*, London's first 'happening'; in 1963 he founded the Nihilist Party of Canada; in 1965 he co-founded the Nihilist Spasm Band and made his first film, *No Movie* (these activities will be discussed in Part II). In the intervening years Curnoe had also begun his association with London businessman Jake Moore, which would prove to be one of the most important professional and personal relationships of his life.

The same month that Curnoe joined the Isaacs stable of artists (February 1966) the Isaacs Gallery screened his film *No Movie* as part of the *Mixed Media Concerts* exhibition. In November 1966 Curnoe had his first solo show at the Isaacs Gallery. *Greg Curnoe: New Work from Souwesto* firmly placed the artist in a regional context.

Curnoe's professional association with Isaacs continued until the late 1970s when, due partly to a slump in sales and partly to his growing dissatisfaction with the dealer system in general, he reconsidered his need for a Toronto dealer. In a letter to Isaacs in 1978 he expressed regret about severing their working relationship, claiming that he considered Isaacs, after all, one of his closest friends: "I know of no-one who would have advanced me what have amounted to interest free loans over the past 12 years that we have worked together."<sup>374</sup> Curnoe suggested that the two have a 'trial separation' but by December 1978 Curnoe and Isaacs officially ended their business relationship.

A year later, in 1979, Curnoe revealed more complex feelings about the often fraught relationship between artists and dealers. He believed that artists were often in “abject relationships” with their dealers; however, he claimed that one could not entirely blame a dealer for taking advantage of an artist who was not “prepared to argue certain points” since “the artist regards the dealer as his friend and the dealer while being friendly has no illusions about the fact that the relationship is a business arrangement.”<sup>375</sup>

Almost a decade later Curnoe and Isaacs contemplated renewing their association, but this time it was apparent that the relationship was predominantly ‘business’. In 1987 Isaacs sent a letter to Curnoe outlining his position. The dealer’s conditions were firm: he would receive a commission of 40% (unless an art consultant was involved, in which case he would take 35%), the Isaacs Gallery would be Curnoe’s exclusive dealer in Ontario, and Curnoe would incur the cost of framing and shipping his works to the gallery. In exchange the Isaacs Gallery would give Curnoe a one-man show every one and a half to two years and pay for all advertising and the cost of shipping works from the gallery when they were bought or consigned elsewhere.<sup>376</sup> The two men tried to negotiate an acceptable working arrangement for a number of months but were unable to agree on suitable terms; by November they decided against a reunion.<sup>377</sup>

Public patronage also played an important role in both artists’ careers. Chambers and Curnoe were fortunate to begin their careers as full-time artists shortly after the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957. For a number of years both men enjoyed a successful relationship with the Council, receiving bursaries, scholarships, awards and travel grants. The Canada Council Art Bank purchased works by both artists, and they benefited from funding provided to the London Public Library and Art Gallery

(and other public galleries), the artist-run 20/20 Gallery, Canadian Artists' Representation, filmmakers and publishing companies (see Appendix A).

Both Curnoe and Chambers benefited from private patronage, although to different degrees; Curnoe had a life-long financial and personal relationship with his patron Jake Moore. Chambers, on the other hand, never enjoyed the same large-scale patronage as Curnoe. Despite the fact that he produced far fewer works (partly because his works sometimes took years to complete), the large sums of money that Chambers charged for his works meant that he was not as dependent on consistent patronage as Curnoe.

Charles R. Simpson notes that investors buying contemporary art do so because it fulfils certain needs. In addition to aesthetic reasons, investing in contemporary art demonstrates that the buyer has a superior awareness of art (superior to those who are "immersed in mass culture") and that they have economic advantages that allow them to purchase luxury items. Purchasing avant-garde art also demonstrates that they have a forward-looking philosophy, and by acquiring contemporary art the buyer can also participate in social events related to the art.<sup>378</sup> Patronage in Canada was often couched in more nationalistic terms than this, however, particularly with Curnoe's main benefactor.

Curnoe was fortunate to meet John H (Jake) Moore in the early 1960s. Moore was a wealthy London businessman who joined the London-based brewery, Labatt's, in 1953. In 1958 Moore won the distinction of being appointed as the first president of the firm from outside the Labatt family. Under his stewardship the company flourished and in the ten years that he was president he was responsible for the nationwide expansion of the brewery.<sup>379</sup> In addition to being an astute businessman Moore was an enthusiastic

collector of contemporary Canadian art, visiting artists' studios and buying art in each of the cities in which Labatt's had offices.<sup>380</sup>

Curnoe recalled that Moore was one of the few people in London who visited artists' studios on a regular basis. The two men met in 1963, possibly in Jack Chambers' studio, and Moore became very interested in Curnoe's work. Moore bought his first work from Curnoe in November 1964 and continued to buy from him for three decades.<sup>381</sup> Moore was Curnoe's major private patron, and in addition to purchasing art from the artist he helped the Curnoes buy their house at 38 Weston Street in 1965. Aware of their precarious financial situation, Moore lent them the down payment and arranged to become the mortgage-holder on the house. Curnoe paid off his debt with paintings over a number of years.<sup>382</sup>

As Judith Rodger notes, the two men shared a genuine friendship, a devotion to London and a passion for Canada.<sup>383</sup> Moore was a fifth-generation Londoner who believed that local culture, particularly the arts, was an integral and necessary component of the nation. He believed that large corporations such as Labatt's had an obligation to return something to the community that they profited from, to prevent workers from feeling disadvantaged. One of the ways that he did this was through his patronage of local artists in the cities where Labatt's had plants.<sup>384</sup> As well as his involvement on a local level Moore was involved with Canadian culture on a national level, working with Walter Gordon and the Committee for an Independent Canada during the 1970s.<sup>385</sup>

The love of Canada was evinced in Moore's patronage of Curnoe. Among the works he bought from the artist was a series of pen and ink drawings that Curnoe did of legendary Canadians such as the Toronto poet Milton Acorn, the Newfoundland singer-

songwriter Harry Hibbs, 1933 world welterweight boxing champion Jimmy McLarnin, and the singer Stompin' Tom Connors. The drawings were originally intended as illustrations for a book of poems by Acorn. With the exception of Curnoe's portrait of Milton Acorn the drawings were not included in the published version of *More Poems for the People*.<sup>386</sup>

Madeline Lennon has concluded that "a significant aspect of the [Moore's and Curnoe's] relationship, which may at least partly account for its endurance, is the interest and concern they have shared in the situation of cultural expression in London...."<sup>387</sup>

Moore's generosity toward his native city was manifest when in 1992 the London Regional Art and Historical Museum mounted an exhibition of works by Curnoe from Moore's collection. The exhibition featured thirty-three out of a total of fifty-three works Moore had donated to the museum over several years.<sup>388</sup> The works dated from 1961 to 1988, almost three decades of Curnoe's career.

Through the sustained efforts of the various members of the art world, Chambers and Curnoe occupied a privileged position in the Canadian art scene during the 1960s and 1970s. Promoted by arts critics and reporters, included in a number of important exhibitions by curators, and featured in periodical articles written by academics and intellectuals, their work was popularized and validated on a local and a national level. The financial dividends that resulted from their increased public profile and the resultant awards and sales helped to give additional credence to their art. Throughout all of this, the artists themselves played a central role in shaping how the myths would represent them in the public sphere.

Noteworthy as this process of mythologizing was, it was not as significant as the manner in which the two artists vitalized the local cultural scene. During the 1960s and 1970s the two men participated in a number of events and activities that created a strong sense of group identity among their peers. In effect, they formed the nucleus around which London's art scene revolved. The following section will examine the processes and effects that their actions and affiliations had and continue to have on the art world.

- <sup>1</sup> In the early part of the twentieth century the members of Canada's Group of Seven were widely believed to have envisioned and realized an iconography of nationhood.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles R. Simpson uses the idea of an 'art world' to describe the various players involved in making, promoting, and supporting artistic production. Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- <sup>3</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "Perennialism and Modernism," *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, ed. Athena S. Leoussi (New Brunswick, U.S.A.; London, U.K.: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 242.
- <sup>4</sup> Kedourie was a professor of politics at the London School of Economics from 1965-1990. *Nationalism* was a text of lectures that he presented at the London School of Economics from 1955-60. Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4<sup>th</sup> Expanded Edition. (Oxford, U.K.; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).
- <sup>5</sup> John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction," *Nationalism* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47.
- <sup>6</sup> Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 9.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.
- <sup>8</sup> Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 129.
- <sup>9</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1983).
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>13</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 129.
- <sup>14</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>16</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, 116.
- <sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 10.
- <sup>18</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).
- <sup>19</sup> John Hutchinson, "Intellectuals and Nationalism," *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, 154.
- <sup>20</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>23</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 148.
- <sup>24</sup> One of the most interesting and provocative parts of Anderson's theory (and one in which he stands alone) is that nationalism began in the Americas (in the 'creole pioneers' of the colonies) and then spread to Europe. In *Imagined Communities* Anderson described the different 'waves' of nationalism—from its beginnings in the Americas, to its spread throughout Europe and then on to Asia and Africa (in the twentieth century). According to Anderson, nationalism in the both Americas and Europe influenced anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa. The later nationalisms had the advantage of learning from the earlier wave(s) and as a result, nation building in the twentieth century was easier (and faster) than that of earlier eras.
- <sup>25</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 169.
- <sup>26</sup> John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).
- <sup>27</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, 362.
- <sup>28</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 171.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, 9-13.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>32</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 172.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.
- <sup>34</sup> Published in 1986.
- <sup>35</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991)

- <sup>36</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, vii.
- <sup>37</sup> Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 174.  
Smith also wrote his Ph.D. thesis under Gellner in 1966.
- <sup>38</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, vii.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).
- <sup>42</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, 287.
- <sup>43</sup> Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 197.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-142.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.
- <sup>46</sup> Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 151-6.
- <sup>47</sup> *Canada and the Canadian Question* was republished in 1971. Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).
- <sup>48</sup> The Canada First movement was a group that formed in the 1870s that wanted Canada to become more independent from Britain.
- <sup>49</sup> Ronald D. Tallman, "The Progressive Response to Canada's Gilded Age," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 3 (1973): 130.
- <sup>50</sup> Smith, *Canadian Question*, 4-5.
- <sup>51</sup> Carl Berger, "Introduction," in Smith, *Canadian Question*, vi, vii.  
Tom Middlebro, "Goldwin Smith," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1988), 2016.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 212.
- <sup>53</sup> Tallman, "Progressive Response," 130.
- <sup>54</sup> Berger, "Introduction," in Smith, *Canadian Question*, xv.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> John MacCormac, *Canada: America's Problem* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1940), 242.
- <sup>57</sup> MacCormac painted a highly patronizing portrait of the French Canadian as "vivacious but solid, light-hearted but religious, thrifty but not accumulative." MacCormac, *Canada: America's Problem*, 148.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.
- <sup>63</sup> R.O. MacFarland, "Canada: America's Problem," Book Review, *The Canadian Historical Review* 21 (1940): 416.
- <sup>64</sup> MacCormac accounts for this similarity by citing common descent from New England Loyalists. MacCormac, *Canada: America's Problem*, 127.
- <sup>65</sup> Gail Dexter, "Yes, Cultural Imperialism Too!", *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.: The Americanization of Canada*, ed. Ian Lumsden. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 159. For a thorough discussion of the ideology that underlay the Massey Commission see: Litt, Paul, *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
- <sup>66</sup> *The Canadian Identity* was a series of four essays. The first three essays were prepared and presented at the University of Wisconsin. Originally published in 1961, the 1972 second-edition contains a fifth chapter that deals with "Canada under Stress in the Sixties." W.L. Morton, "Preface to the First Edition." *The Canadian Identity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), viii.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, x.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.
- <sup>69</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Nation, Identity, Rights: Reflections on W.L. Morton's *Canadian Identity*," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 5.
- <sup>70</sup> A. B. McKillop, "William Lewis Morton," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, 1393.
- <sup>71</sup> Morton, *Canadian Identity*, 85.  
Morton was a "Red Tory," a left-leaning conservative who believed in a larger role for government, extensive funding for social services and social justice, and continued ties with the monarchy.
- <sup>72</sup> Morton, *Canadian Identity*, 89.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>75</sup> *Lament for a Nation* was republished in 1997. George Grant. *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997.

A work by Curnoe called *Canida* was featured on the cover of the 1965 edition of *Lament for a Nation*.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Taylor, "George Parkin Grant," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, 927.

<sup>77</sup> John Bemrose, "Lament for a Sage," *Maclean's* 101, no. 42 (October 10, 1988): 59.

<sup>78</sup> Robert E. Babe, "Red Toryism: George Grant's Communication Philosophy," *Journal of Communication* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 98, 99.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, "George Parkin Grant," 927.

<sup>80</sup> Babe, "Red Toryism," 100-101.

<sup>81</sup> Art Davis, "Lament for a Mentor: The Grace of George Grant," *This Magazine* 22, no. 7 (Feb. 1989), 28.

Grant's book continues to be analyzed; William Christian considers it to be "a systematic indictment of Diefenbaker's government." William Christian, "George Grant's Lament," *Queen's Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (Spring 1993), 207. Robert E. Babe contends that it is not only a book about the survival of Canada but also an allegory "of the crises all people face in an era of rapid technological change." Babe, "Red Toryism," 97.

<sup>82</sup> Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977). (Originally published in 1971).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., ix-x.

<sup>84</sup> Although his political views were opposed to those of W.L. Morton, Cook believes that Morton's conception of 'political nationality' remains essentially valid. Ramsay Cook, "Nation, Identity, Rights: Reflections on W.L. Morton's *Canadian Identity*." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 29, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 5-18.

<sup>85</sup> D.R. Owram, "George Ramsay Cook," *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, 512.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>90</sup> Donald Smiley, "The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada," Review article, *The Canadian Historical Review* 53 (1972): 76-78.

<sup>91</sup> Ian Lumsden, "Imperialism and Canadian Intellectuals," in *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.: The Americanization of Canada*, ed. Ian Lumsden. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 322.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>93</sup> Philip Resnick, "Canadian Defence Policy," *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> John W. Warnock, "All the News It Pays to Print," *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.*, 133.

<sup>95</sup> Gail Dexter, "Yes, Cultural Imperialism Too!", *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.*, 166.

<sup>96</sup> James Steele and Robin Matthews, "The Universities: Takeover of the Mind," *Close the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel Etc.*, 177.

<sup>97</sup> For a comprehensive study of Gordon see Stephen Azzi, *Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

<sup>98</sup> "Walter Gordon and the Rise of Canadian Nationalism," Book Review, *Beaver* 80, no. 2 (April-May 2000): 46.

<sup>99</sup> Walter Gordon, *What is Happening to Canada?* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

<sup>100</sup> John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State*. (London and Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>102</sup> Hutchinson, *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, 8-9.

<sup>103</sup> For further discussion of the importance of culture in Quebec nationalism see: Richard Handler, "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Quebec's *Patrimoine*." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); and, Jean Gagné. "Art and National Survival: A View from Quebec," *Art and Reality: A Casebook of Concern*, eds. Robin Blaser and Robert Dunham (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1986).

<sup>104</sup> Hutchinson, *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *National Identity*, 164.

<sup>108</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15.

Other scholars take a more concrete view of identity. For example, Will Kymlicka and Alan C. Cairns believe that national identity is premised on citizenship. See Will Kymlicka, "Citizenship and Identity in Canada," *Canadian Politics* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, eds. James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999); Will Kymlicka, "Individual and Community Rights," in *Group Rights*, ed. Judith Baker (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford, U.K.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Alan C. Cairns, "Introduction," in *Citizenship, Diversity, and Pluralism, Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Alan C. Cairns et al. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). Other scholars such as Manuel Castells believe that identity is based on belonging to a cultural, linguistic, or ethnic group. Manuel Castells, "Communal Heavens: Identity and Meaning in the Network Society," *The Power of Identity* Volume II (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1999).

<sup>109</sup> Francis borrows this phrase from William Gibson, the cyberpunk novelist, who used it to describe the phenomenon of cyberspace. Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 10

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

Francis also points out that memory implies forgetfulness. He notes: "what we choose to forget tells as much about us as what we choose to remember." This is particularly true with respect to some of the less savoury episodes in Canadian history (things like the annihilation of First Nations people through disease, and the RCMP's history of repression and illegality). He also states that we pride ourselves on being an "inclusive cultural mosaic" while conveniently forgetting our racist past. This forgetting is not without purpose; Francis believes that "the creation of unity [...] requires some forgetting." Ibid., 11, 12. See also Paul Ricoeur. *Memory, History, Forgetting*, tr. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>120</sup> Francis, *National Dreams*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Francis calls the phenomena of repeating ideas long after the initial stimulus for them has gone, the "perseveration of memory." Ibid., 173.

Francis believes that "[i]f a nation is a group of people who share the same illusions about themselves, then Canadians need some new illusions. It is wrong to think that the old ones have the necessary power to imagine solutions to contemporary problems." Ibid., 176.

<sup>122</sup> Vipond, Mary, "Nationalism in the 20s," in *Interpreting Canada's Past*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 448.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 448.

<sup>124</sup> Dot Tuer and Susan Crean also share this point of view. See: Susan Crean, "Citizenship and the Canada Council," *The Canadian Forum* 58, no. 683 (August 1978): 4-5; and, Dot Tuer, "The Art of Nation Building: Constructing a 'Cultural Identity' for Post-War Canada," *Parallélogramme* 17, no. 4 (1992): 24-36.

<sup>125</sup> Vipond, "Nationalism in the 20s," 460.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, tr. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 176.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>129</sup> Marshall Soules, "Jürgen Habermas and the Public Sphere," [www.mala.bc.ca/~soules/media301/habermas.htm](http://www.mala.bc.ca/~soules/media301/habermas.htm). 16 August 2006.

<sup>130</sup> Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 1992), 34.

<sup>131</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 109-142.

<sup>132</sup> Craig Calhoun, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," Presented to the Ford Foundation, 7 February 2005, [http://www.ssrc.org/programs/Calhoun/publications/Rethinking\\_the\\_Public\\_Sphere\\_05\\_speech.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/programs/Calhoun/publications/Rethinking_the_Public_Sphere_05_speech.pdf). 18 October 2006.

<sup>133</sup> Vipond, "Nationalism in the 20s," 449.

<sup>134</sup> Maria Tippett, "Expressing Identity," *The Beaver* 80, no 1 (February/March 2000): 19.

I believe that Tippett exaggerates the degree to which art produced in reaction to momentous events represented the feelings of the majority of the population. It is clear, however, that the federal government and the National Gallery of Canada would have liked this to be the case when they promoted the Group of Seven as a national art.

<sup>135</sup> Tippett, "Expressing Identity," 19.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Bell. "The Welfare of Art in Canada." *The Kingston Conference Proceedings*. (Kingston, Ont.: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1991), vii.

<sup>137</sup> Bell writes: "there was a general acknowledgement that if artists were to flourish a broader base of support was required in every part of the country." Bell, "The Welfare of Art," ix.

<sup>138</sup> The conference participants included "over 150 artists, museum directors, art historians, and interested laypersons from all regions of Canada"<sup>138</sup> (and some of the United States). Bell, "Welfare of Art," iii.

<sup>139</sup> The Federation of Canadian Artists (FCA) was formed immediately after the Kingston Conference with André Biéler as its first president. The FCA's aim was to promote a sense of unity through a national culture. Bell, who believes that the FCA was ultimately unsuccessful in its goal, asks "[w]hy did the FCA, which held so much promise, not survive as a strong national organization, to promote the interests of art and artists, and to shape a national culture authentic to its place and time?" He believes that due to an overwhelmingly regionalist focus, the FCA failed to achieve a centralist focus, something that was necessary for a successful national organization. Bell, "Welfare of Art," xx.

<sup>140</sup> Eva Mackey "Managing the House of Difference: Official Multiculturalism," *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (London: Routledge, 1999), 54.

<sup>141</sup> Throughout the proceedings tensions between the centre and the region were apparent. Lawren S. Harris, who was teaching in Vancouver at the time, managed to draw the committee's attention to the British Columbia unit. Harris was able to do this because he had direct contact with Vincent Massey. Harris was on the Board of Directors of the National Gallery of Canada with Massey before Massey resigned to become the chair of the commission, and the two families were connected through the Massey-Harris farm machinery firm.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Litt, "The Massey Commission, Americanization, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism," *Queen's Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 375.

<sup>143</sup> Ted Magder, Review Article of *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission*, *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 21, nos. 1-2 (1994): 180.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Litt, *Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission*, 83.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>147</sup> Litt notes that "...only 12 of the report's 146 recommendations were implemented two years after its release." *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>149</sup> *The Canada Council: Fulfillment of a Dream*. (Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1987), 1-7.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>151</sup> The Canada Council, *Seventh Annual Report* (Ottawa, The Canada Council, 1963-64), 2

<sup>152</sup> *Fulfillment of a Dream*, 9. The Canada Council, *Ninth Annual Report* (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1965-66), 4.

<sup>153</sup> *Ninth Annual Report*, 5.

There is conflicting information over this: the *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report* [1967-68] claims that the amount given to the visual arts was \$185,000 in 1964-65, \$436,000 in 1965-66, \$802,000 in 1966-67, and \$1,464,000 in 1967-68, \$1,872,000 in 1968-69 and \$2,032,000 in 1969-70. The Canada Council, *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*.

(Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1967-68), 21. The Canada Council, *13<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*. (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1969-70), 61

In 1972 the Canada Council established the Canada Council Art Bank—a programme that bought art from living Canadian artists.

<sup>154</sup> Stanley Fish, "Is There a Text in This Class?" In *The Stanley Fish Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veeseer (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999).

<sup>155</sup> Kris and Kurz refer to the myth of the artist as "the image of the artist" or "the legend of the artist." Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 2, 7.

<sup>156</sup> Ditto, 13ff, 21ff, 26ff, 30ff, 44ff,

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>158</sup> Pierre Théberge, *Greg Curnoe: Rétrospective/Retrospective* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1982), 26.

<sup>159</sup> Crawford began her career as a proofreader for the London *Echo* before moving to the *Advertiser* as a news reporter. When the *Advertiser* closed, she moved to the *London Free Press* where she proofread and worked as a copy editor. This was followed by a two-year stint at the *Windsor Star's* London bureau where she was given the occasional arts' assignment. Eager to learn more about art she befriended several artists (among them Clare Bice, who eventually ran the London Art Gallery), and wrote letters to many Canadian artists asking them questions about their work. In 1939 she moved to Windsor to work in the *Star's* newsroom. In 1941 she moved back to London and began working as a reporter for the *London Free Press* again, doing the occasional art, music, or film review. In the 1950s she began focusing solely on the arts. Richard Newman, "Lack of Curiosity a Mystery to Critic Lenore Crawford," *The London Free Press* (June 1974), reprinted in *The Artist and the Critic: A Tribute to Lenore Crawford* (London, Ont.: McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, 1974) [exhibition pamphlet].

<sup>160</sup> The exhibition ran from 6 December 1960-30 January 1961. Judith Rodger, "Chronology," in *Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff*, eds. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (Toronto and Vancouver: Art Gallery of Ontario and Douglas and McIntyre, 2001), 144.

<sup>161</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Young Contemporaries Show Boldness, Vitality," *The London Free Press*, 17 December 1960.

<sup>162</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Work of Young Artists Exhibited at Library," *The London Free Press*, 8 February 1961.

<sup>163</sup> One of the items included in the exhibition was an actual ticket booth. When asked to explain why he had chosen to include it in the exhibition he replied guilelessly that he thought that it would be fun. Greg Curnoe. *Souwesto 1947-69* (16 mm, colour, silent, 30 min.) 1969.

<sup>164</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Spoofs Reveal Artist: Odd Objects Exhibit Startles Art Lovers," *The London Free Press*, 4 November 1961.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Lenore Crawford, "G. Curnoe and K.T. Cumming," *Canadian Art* 20, no. 84 (March/April 1963): 87.

<sup>167</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Galleries Like Works of Londoner," *The London Free Press*, 30 September 1964.

<sup>168</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Artist Curnoe More 'Involved' Than Ever," *The London Free Press*, 3 December 1966.

<sup>169</sup> The exhibition was held at the London Public Library and Art Museum from 4-29 January 1966.

<sup>170</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Nail Holes, Bad Layout add to Art Show Flop," *The London Free Press*, 7 January 1966.

<sup>171</sup> Clare Bice excluded two works from the exhibition—one by Curnoe and one by John Boyle. Greg Curnoe, "Not 'Leftover' Art," *London Free Press*, 12 January 1966.

<sup>172</sup> Robert Fulford and Greg Curnoe, "Toronto Art in the Sixties," *Passages*, no. 4, (July 1989): 3.

<sup>173</sup> Greg Curnoe, "The Dilemma of Provincialism: A History of Canadian Painting," *The Canadian Forum* 54, no. 648 (February 1975): 31.

<sup>174</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Young Contemporaries' Jury Discusses Exhibit's Future," *The London Free Press*, 30 December 1965.

<sup>175</sup> Crawford, "G. Curnoe and K.T. Cumming," 87.

<sup>176</sup> Aristotle, *Problemata*, XXX, 1. (English, 1927, VII, 953<sup>2ff.</sup>). Text in Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Durers 'Melancholia' I* (Leipzig-Berlin, Teubner, 1923) 93ff.

- <sup>177</sup> Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1963): 293.
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>179</sup> Letter from Verna I. Jones to Greg Curnoe, 10 May 1960. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 2, Correspondence files, 1968.
- <sup>180</sup> Herman Goodden, "Greg Curnoe and the New Jerusalem," Manuscript of talk given at Eldon House, London, 26 November 1995. London Room Archives, London Public Library, London, Ontario.
- <sup>181</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>182</sup> Sarah Milroy, "Greg Curnoe: Time Machines," *Life and Stuff*, 26.
- <sup>183</sup> Greg Curnoe, Typescript on the history of Region Gallery submitted to the Canada Council, March 1963, Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. *Region Magazine* files.
- <sup>184</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Statement," 7 December 1961, *Region 2* (January 1962): 5.
- <sup>185</sup> Robert Fulford, "Jack Bush: A More Emphatic Joy," *Daily Star*, 19 November 1966.
- <sup>186</sup> J. Bruce, "23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Western Ontario Exhibition," *Canadian Art* 20, no. 80 (November/December 1963): 322.
- <sup>187</sup> Crawford, "G. Curnoe and K.T. Cumming," 84.
- <sup>188</sup> The exhibition of almost four hundred works was curated by two men: R.H. Hubbard, Chief Curator of the National Gallery was responsible for the selection of works until 1950 while Jean-René Ostiguy, Curator of Canadian Art chose those from 1950 onwards.
- <sup>189</sup> Jean Sutherland Boggs, "Foreword," *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1967): ii.
- <sup>190</sup> Boggs, "Foreword," ii.
- <sup>191</sup> Letter from J.W. Borcoman, Director, Exhibitions and Education to Mrs. Vivian Appleton, Paul Arthur & Associates Limited, 23 January 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 4. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>192</sup> Letter from J.W. Borcoman to Lillian Freiman. 23 August 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 8. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>193</sup> Neither artist had been included in the original list of potential participants. Chambers' and Curnoe's names were handwritten additions to the list of "some other artists to be considered" for the exhibition. Memorandum from R.H. Hubbard to Jean-René Ostiguy, 11 August 1966. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 2. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>194</sup> *The Camouflaged Piano, or French Roundels* belonged to the National Gallery; *Antonio and Miguel in the U.S.A.* was borrowed from the Art Gallery of Ontario.
- <sup>195</sup> J. Russell Harper, "Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art." *The Burlington Magazine* (August 1967): 465.
- <sup>196</sup> Letter from W.J. Withrow, Director, Art Gallery of Ontario to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 11 December 1967; Letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs to Mrs. T.C. Darling, 30 November 1967. NGC Box 479, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 10. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>197</sup> Harper, "Three Hundred Years," 465.
- <sup>198</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>199</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>200</sup> Robin Neesham, "Canadian Art Comes of Age?" *Executive* (July 1967): 28.
- <sup>201</sup> Boggs to Darling. 30 November 1967.
- <sup>202</sup> Douglas Ord, *The National Gallery of Canada: Ideas, Art, Architecture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 221-224.
- <sup>203</sup> The AGO exhibition was organized by the Government of Ontario with works selected by Bryan Robertson, director at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, England.
- <sup>204</sup> Unsigned memorandum to Miss Boggs. 14 March 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 5. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>205</sup> Ibid..
- Brydon Smith proposed a light show by "Don Broan and friend" for \$25. Memorandum from Brydon Smith to Barbara [Boutin], 1 May 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 7. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>206</sup> Memorandum from Brydon Smith and Pierre Théberge to Mr. E. Palmer, 25 April 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 6. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>207</sup> Memorandum from B.M. Boutin to Mr. L. James, Public Relations, 3 April 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 6. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

The fifteen youngest artists who were invited to submit competition designs for the cake were: Greg Curnoe, Sorel Etrog, Charles Gagnon, Yves Gaucher, Jacques Hurtubise, Richard Lacroix, Les Levine, Jan Menses, Guido Molinari, Robert Savoie, Henry Saxe, Gord Smith, Richard Turner, Tony Urquhart and Esther Warkov. "'300 Years of Canadian Art' Exhibition: Rules for the National Gallery Cake Decoration Competition." NGC Box 479, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 16. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

Turner declined due to too many other commitments (mostly with respect to a commission for Expo 67). Letter from Richard J. Turner to Pierre Théberge, 13 April 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 6. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>208</sup> "Cake Decoration Competition," NGC Box 479.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> The reporter claimed that James was "poking fun at Les Levine's plastic 'disposables'." "'Fun' Promised at New Gallery Art Show," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 3 May 1967.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Curnoe also asked Théberge to translate the text into French. Letter from Greg Curnoe to Pierre Théberge, Undated. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 6. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>213</sup> "The Arts: The First & Last," *Time Magazine* (19 May 1967): 16.

<sup>214</sup> Robert Ayre, "300 Years of Art," *Montreal Star*, 20 May 1967.

<sup>215</sup> Marilyn Argue, "Hot Art—and Cool Cats," *The Ottawa Citizen*. 12 May 1967.

<sup>216</sup> From the beginning the organizers had lofty aspirations for the exhibition, and the gallery was anxious to secure a high profile person to perform the opening ceremonies. In August 1966 Jean Sutherland Boggs invited the Governor-General of Canada, the Right Honourable Georges Vanier to open the exhibition (although his secretary declined on his behalf due to the anticipation of extremely busy schedule in the Centennial year). Letter from Esmond Butler, Secretary to the Governor-General to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 4 October, 1966. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 2. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

Georges Vanier died in office on 5 March 1967. The Right Honourable Daniel Roland Mitchener was appointed Governor General on 29 March 1967 and sworn in to office on 17 April 1967. [www.gg.ca/gg/fgg/index\\_e.asp](http://www.gg.ca/gg/fgg/index_e.asp). 4 July 2006.

Boggs subsequently asked the Honourable Judy LaMarsh, Secretary of State to open the exhibition. Letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs to Judy LaMarsh (Secretary of State), 24 February, 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 4. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

Judy LaMarsh appointed Boggs Director of the National Gallery of Canada in 1966.

<sup>217</sup> Letter from Jean Sutherland Boggs to Judy LaMarsh, 6 May 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 7. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>218</sup> "First & Last," *Time*, 16.

<sup>219</sup> The photograph appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Toronto Daily Star*, and *The Telegram*.

Robin Neesham claimed that LaMarsh's antics dominated the news reports of the opening and overshadowed the content of the exhibition. Neesham, "Canadian Art," 27-28.

<sup>220</sup> Ayre, "Three Hundred Years."

<sup>221</sup> "Hostesses Wear Paper," *Style*, 8 May 1967.

<sup>222</sup> Ayre, "Three Hundred Years."

<sup>223</sup> *London Free Press*, 13 May 1967.

<sup>224</sup> Argue, "Hot Art." Versions of Argue's article appeared in newspapers across the country under several different titles: "Swinging? Man, it was a Gas!" *The Telegram* AGO., 12 May 1967; "At Canada's Biggest-Ever Art Show Judy and all the Other Cool Cats Were Swinging," *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 May 1967; "Judy LaMarsh Among Swingers At National Gallery Happening," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 May 1967; "Swinging Party Launches Art Show," *St. Catharines Standard*, 12 May 1967; "Judy Swings On Art Bash," *Brockville Recorder and Times*, 12 May 1967.

<sup>225</sup> W.Q. Ketchum, "300 Years of Canadian Art Makes Scene: Honk! Boom! Painting the Mona Lisa Was Never Like This," *The Ottawa Journal*, 12 May 1967.

<sup>226</sup> "First & Last," *Time*, 16.

<sup>227</sup> Ayre, "Three Hundred Years."

<sup>228</sup> Letter from Judy LaMarsh to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 17 May, 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 7. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>229</sup> Letter from Jack Bush to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 22 May 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 7. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>230</sup> McDonald wrote: "The sizes were quite perfect in all cases but one and we simply substituted another girl who was of the right proportions." McDonald also send Burkholder a photograph of the girls in their dresses. Letter from Mary McDonald, Assistant Education Officer to John Burkholder, 14 June 1967. NGC Box 479, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 16. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>231</sup> McDonald, 14 June 1967, NGC Box 479.

<sup>232</sup> Letter from Pierre Théberge to Greg Curnoe, 26 May 1967. NGC Box 478, Exhibitions in Canada. *Three Hundred Years of Canadian Art*, Vol. 7. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>233</sup> "Art Festival Officials Remove 3 Sections of Greg Curnoe's Work," *London Free Press*, 20 August 1968.

The controversy that erupted over Curnoe's use of expletives in his work *Twenty Four Hourly Notes* overshadowed any potential interest in either his stylistic affinities or his political beliefs. After enraging an Edinburgh magistrate and city councillor the work was subsequently censored. In reference to the incident a flurry of articles debating the issue of artistic freedom appeared in the Scottish press. See (in chronological order): Ian Croal, "4 Letter Row," *Scottish Daily Express*, 19 August 1968; "Art Exhibit 'Pruned' After Bailie's Complaint," *The Scotsman*, 20 August 1968; Wilfred Taylor, "Onwards and Upwards With Our Bailies," *The Scotsman*, 21 August, 1968; "Art Protest," *The Scotsman*, 23 August 1968; Tony Underhill et al, "Offensive Decision," *The Scotsman*, 23 August 1968; G.A. Theurer, "Duty to Public," Letter to the Editor, *The Scotsman*, 26 August 1968; Nicholas Fairbairn, "Those Corrupting Painters," Letter to the Editor, *The Scotsman*, 28 August 1968; The Earl Haig, "Moral Red Herring," Letter to the Editor, *The Scotsman*, 28 August 1968; Tom Elsdale, "Denial of Freedom," Letter to the Editor, *The Scotsman*, 29 August 1968; Robert Ponsonby, "Corruption Lurks Everywhere," Letter to the Editor, *The Scotsman*, 30 August 1968; Wilfred Taylor, "Where Angels, Not Bailies, Fear to Tread," *The Scotsman*, 3 September 1968. The controversy was also covered by Canadian newspapers. "Edinburgh Takes Exception to Exhibit of Canadian Art," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 20 August 1968.

<sup>234</sup> The *London Free Press* and the *Saskatoon Star* both reported on the incident.

<sup>235</sup> Judith Rodger, "Chronology," *Life & Stuff*, 159.

<sup>236</sup> John Chandler, "More Words on Curnoe's Worldly World," *artscanada* 26, nos. 130/131 (April 1969): 3.

<sup>237</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Curnoe on London," *London Free Press*, 17 October 1970.

<sup>238</sup> The introduction also erroneously claimed that he was "under commission by the National Museum of Man to survey folk-culture in Ontario." Editor's introduction in Curnoe, "Curnoe on London."

<sup>239</sup> Lenore Crawford, "London Artist Shows Work at Toronto," *London Evening Free Press*, 18 January 1962.

<sup>240</sup> "City Artist Represented in Show," *The London Free Press*, 10 June 1964; "Londoner Sells Painting," *London Evening Free Press*, 6 November 1964.

<sup>241</sup> Lenore Crawford, "London's Art Museum Pays \$1,700 for Chambers' Work," *London Evening Free Press*, 26 June 1965.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Kay Kritzwiser, (untitled review of *John Chambers—New Paintings* at the Isaacs Gallery), *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 30 October 1965.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Michael Ballantyne, "Paintings of John Chambers 'Recognizable but Unfamiliar'," *Montreal Star*. 20 March 1967.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

The artist's obsession with work and his willingness to suffer physical pain or "tribulations of the body" in the pursuit of art are consistent with the myth of the artist as noted by the Wittkowers. For a further description of the artist and an obsession with work see Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, 53; for tribulations of the body see Ibid., 78-82.

- <sup>248</sup> Barrie Hale, "Chambers: Loss of Wonder." *Toronto Telegram*, 7 October 1967.
- <sup>249</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*. 6 October 1967; "Isaacs Gallery," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 7 October 1967; Paul Russell, "John Chambers Isaacs Gallery," *artscanada* 24 (November 1967).
- <sup>250</sup> Lenore Crawford, "London-Born Artist Must Decide if Canada or Spain is His Real Home," *The London Free Press*, 25 November 1967.
- <sup>251</sup> Chambers' foreign training impressed many people, and although he had been in Canada for a number of years he retained an aura of exoticism from his years in Spain. Crawford pointed out that after eight years in Spain Chambers was so fluent in Spanish that he sometimes had a hard time expressing himself in English. Crawford, "London-Born Artist."
- <sup>252</sup> Crawford, "London's Art Museum Pays \$1,700."
- <sup>253</sup> Alex Mogelon, "Art Profile," *Montrealer* (February 1967).
- <sup>254</sup> Nancy Poole, *London S/W 17: Seventeen Artists from the London Area* (Stratford: Rothmans Art Gallery, 1969), n.p.
- <sup>255</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Chambers Painting Bought for \$25,000 by Londoner," *London Evening Free Press*, 26 June 1970.
- <sup>256</sup> Chambers did not attend the ceremony due to illness. The convocation ceremony at Western was marred by strife when Curnoe, Chambers' closest friend, refused to go to it. Curnoe boycotted the occasion because he nursed a long-time antipathy towards the university and its policies. Curnoe's dislike of academe tended to be somewhat arbitrary—in 1969 he began collaborating with the university's Computer Science department at the University of Western Ontario with his 'radio journals.' Curnoe came into the computer labs where he typed stream-of-consciousness journal entries into a computer. The computer was designed with a special programme that allowed the frequency and duration of the artist's pauses to be replicated in the printout. And, ironically, in the 1970s Curnoe becomes first Londoner to hold the position of artist-in-residence at the University.
- <sup>257</sup> Crawford's more formal address of Jack Chambers as "John Chambers" is interesting and indicates the more remote relationship of the artist to critics. Crawford, "Nail Holes," *The London Free Press*, 7 January 1966.
- <sup>258</sup> Irene Dewdney quoted in *Chambers: Tracks and Gestures*, Directed by John Walker; Produced by Chris Lowry (Toronto, Ont.: Atlantis Films Limited; distributed by Lowry Productions, Ltd., c. 1982.)
- <sup>259</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in *Chambers: Tracks and Gestures*.
- <sup>260</sup> Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn*, 63, 64.
- <sup>261</sup> Richard Simmins, "A Life-Death Vision," *The Vancouver Province*, 31 July, 1970.
- <sup>262</sup> Gary Michael Dault, "Heart of London," *artscanada* 25, no. 122/123 (October/November 1968): 44.
- <sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>264</sup> Rae Davis, "Chambers—Curnoe—Urquhart: The Life of Death in London, Ontario," *Canadian Art* 23, no. 3 (July 1966): 20-25, 50, 51.
- <sup>265</sup> Crawford, "London-Born Artist."
- <sup>266</sup> *A Man for All Seasons* was written in 1960, hit the stage in 1961 and was made into an Oscar award winning film in 1966. Bolt's play is about Sir Thomas More, the man who was beheaded for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy in 1534.
- <sup>267</sup> Emphasis my own. Crawford misnames this painting *Sunday Morning in Front of the TV*. Crawford, "Chambers Painting Bought for \$25,000 by Londoner."
- <sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>269</sup> Jack Chambers quoted in Ross Woodman, "Artists as filmmakers," *artscanada* 25, no. 2, issue nos. 118/119 (June 1968): 35.
- <sup>270</sup> Jack Chambers, "Banff Adress [sic]," Undated presentation. Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 21-6, Interviews, Exhibitions, etc.
- <sup>271</sup> Jack Chambers. "Canadian Artists Representation," *The Canadian Forum* 54, no. 642 (July 1974), 19.
- <sup>272</sup> Ross Woodman's wife, Marion Woodman, is a Jungian psychologist.
- <sup>273</sup> Ross Woodman. *Chambers: John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1967), 3.
- <sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>278</sup> Kathryn Elder, "Introduction," *The Films of Jack Chambers*, ed. Kathryn Elder (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 4.

<sup>279</sup> Ross Woodman, "London: Regional Liberation Front," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 13 December 1969.

<sup>280</sup> In 1972 *The Business Quarterly* introduced an educational feature on artists called "Art and the Businessman."

<sup>281</sup> Ross Woodman, "Two Artists: One Environment," *The Business Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 1.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ross Woodman, "Making the Real Appear," *The Business Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 5.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>288</sup> This article was reprinted after Chambers' death in 1978 in the same magazine. *The Business Quarterly* (Autumn 1978).

<sup>289</sup> Ross Woodman, "Canada's Finest Painter," *The Business Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 3.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>295</sup> As the well-known scholar of mythology Joseph Campbell pointed out "[t]he real artist is the one who has learned to recognize and to render what Joyce has called the 'radiance' of all things, as an epiphany or showing forth of their truth." Joseph Campbell, with Bill Moyers, ed. Betty Sue Flowers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 205.

<sup>296</sup> Ross Woodman, "London (Ont.): A New Regionalism," *artscanada* 24, no. 8/9, issue nos. 111/112 (August/September 1967): n.p.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Woodman, "Regional Liberation Front," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 December 1969.

<sup>299</sup> Previous to Boggs appointment and her hiring of new curators, the National Gallery was criticized for not engaging with Canadian contemporary artists. National buying exhibitions were the only vehicle the National Gallery of Canada had to buy contemporary works, and they were mostly selected by critics and artists from Britain or the United States. For a good analysis of the National Gallery's collecting and exhibition policies before Boggs became the director see Nathalie Limbos-Bomberg's Master's thesis, "The Ideal and the Pragmatic: The National Gallery of Canada's Biennial Exhibitions of Canadian Art, 1953-68." (Ottawa: Carleton University, 2000).

<sup>300</sup> Peter Trepanier, "The Sixties at the National Gallery of Canada," (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, 5 January-29 April 2005), unpaginated.

<sup>301</sup> In 1965 Chambers and Curnoe exhibited works in a show organized by the National Gallery of Canada—6<sup>th</sup> *Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting 1965*. The travelling exhibition featured works selected by William Townsend from the Slade School in London, England. *Sixth Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Painting 1965* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1965).

Curnoe's work had been seen by the National Gallery's curator of Canadian art, Jean-René Ostiguy, at this exhibition. Théberge believes that Ostiguy may have seen Curnoe's work a year earlier at the Mirvish Gallery in Toronto. Pierre Théberge, "London Recaptured: For Greg Curnoe (1936-1992)," *Canadian Literature* 152/153 (Spring/Summer 1997): 161.

<sup>302</sup> Théberge, "London Recaptured," 161.

<sup>303</sup> Théberge wrote: "I had no idea who Greg Curnoe was or even exactly where to find London on the map. I had never heard it spoken of as a centre of creativity and knew only that it was the birthplace of Paul Peel..." Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 162-163.

<sup>305</sup> Théberge had visited Guido Molinari's studio for a university assignment. Ibid., 162.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> In "London Recaptured," Théberge refers to "the discoveries" he made during his first trip to London. I believe that the very title of the article implies a hunting expedition into uncharted primitive territory. Ibid. 161.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>309</sup> Again the metaphor of Théberge as an anthropologist gaining the confidence of his subject springs to mind.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

Although Rousseau had no formal training as an artist, he was aware of what artists in France were doing at the time.

<sup>312</sup> *Paintings by Greg Curnoe* was shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery from February 8-27, 1966. It subsequently toured to Edmonton.

<sup>313</sup> Reid attended university with Stan Bevington, who quit after his first year at the University of Toronto to found Coach House Press. Reid was the editor for the Woodman publication on Chambers.

<sup>314</sup> Théberge and Smith co-organized the exhibition, with Reid contributing the text for Curnoe. Chambers was also included in the exhibition. *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui* was shown in Paris, Rome, Lausanne and Brussels from January to October, 1968.

<sup>315</sup> Dennis Reid, «Greg Curnoe», *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui* (Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1968), unpaginated.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> *Canada 101*, Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh College of Art (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1968), unpaginated

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Dennis Reid was responsible for historical Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada, and Curnoe's work fell outside his bureaucratic portfolio. His involvement with Curnoe occurred because of his previous connection with the artist.

<sup>324</sup> The other two artists representing Canada at the São Paulo X Bienal were Iain and Ingrid Baxter (N.E. Thing Co.) (organized by Pierre Théberge) and Robert Murray (organized by Brydon Smith).

<sup>325</sup> Dennis Reid, *Greg Curnoe Canada, X Bienal São Paulo* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), 41. Joanna Woods Marsden was the coordinator of international exhibitions for the National Gallery of Canada. Jim Daunt and Don Vincent were friends of Curnoe from London.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 31.

Reid justified the artistic component of Curnoe's contribution to the São Paulo exhibition by claiming that it was art because Curnoe stamped his text on "the immediate Fine Art context of stretched artist's canvas." He also claimed that hand stamping text on the canvas was somehow a more direct expression of Curnoe's beliefs than painting with a brush would be. Ibid., 11, 53.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>328</sup> The exhibition was shown in Montreal (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 17 April-31 May 1981), Ottawa (National Gallery of Canada, 27 June-6 September 1981), Calgary (Glenbow Museum, 25 September-1 November 1981), London (London Regional Art Gallery, 20 November-30 December 1981), Fredericton (20 January-5 March 1982), and Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario, 19 March-2 May 1982).

<sup>329</sup> Théberge, *Rétrospective/Retrospective*, 1.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>333</sup> The italics refer to a quote by Curnoe from Dennis Reid's *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui* catalogue. Ibid., 3.

<sup>334</sup> Kris and Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic*, 8.

<sup>335</sup> In 1979 Théberge, Dennis Reid, Jean Trudel and Mayo Graham all resigned within the space of a few months following J.S. Boggs resignation and the appointment of Hsio-Yen Shih. Ord, *National Gallery of Canada*, 269.

Shih reorganized the Gallery into three areas: Collections and Research, Public Programs, and Administration. Brydon Smith was appointed assistant director of Collections and Research, Michael Bell was hired in 1980 to lead Public Programs, and Michael Carroll headed the Administration division. Shih's changes meant that the curators no longer had direct access to the Director. Correspondence with Michael Bell, 21 February 2007. Boggs provided the curatorial leadership throughout her tenure and the curators established close intellectual relationships with her. Her departure left them somewhat "motherless".

There were other changes at the National Gallery during the period of the exhibition. Hsio-Yen Shih resigned in January 1981 and Michael Bell was appointed acting director. When Bell resigned in September 1981 (to become director and CEO of the McMichael Canadian Collection) Joseph Martin took over as acting director. Willard Holmes, curatorial coordinator was appointed in November 1980 and Richard Graburn, the head of exhibitions left the gallery in January 1981.

<sup>336</sup> Milroy, "Time Machines," *Life and Stuff*, 93.

<sup>337</sup> Greg Curnoe, Journal entry, Sundridge, 17 March 1983. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO.

<sup>338</sup> Judith Fitzgerald, "Curnoe Memory Paintings: Hospitals, Bicycles, Politics," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 30 July 1983.

<sup>339</sup> Dennis Young replaced Brydon Smith as the Art Gallery of Ontario's curator of contemporary art when Smith went to the National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>340</sup> William J. Withrow (director, Art Gallery of Ontario). "Preface." *Jack Chambers: A Retrospective*. (Toronto and Vancouver: Art Gallery of Ontario and Vancouver Art Gallery, 1970), unpaginated.

<sup>341</sup> Simpson. *SoHo*, 40.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>344</sup> Judy Stoffman, "Champion of the Art of his Time; Four Shows Honour Dealer Av Isaacs Toronto Art Driving Force in 1960s, 70s," *The Toronto Star*, 19 May 2005.

<sup>345</sup> Dennis Reid quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> Av Isaacs quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> Isaacs is a shortened form of Isaacovitch. Stoffman, "Champion."

<sup>348</sup> Isaacs and Al Latner initially went into business as University Framers. The majority of their business was framing graduation diplomas. Dennis Reid, "The Meeting Place," in *Isaacs Seen*, ed. Donnalu Wigmore (Toronto: Hart House, University of Toronto: 2005), 7.

<sup>349</sup> Toronto's 'Greenwich Village' was located around Gerrard Street, just west of Yonge Street. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>350</sup> Isaacs shared an apartment with Graham Coughtry for two years. He referred to this period as "his postgraduate degree in the arts." *Ibid.*

Isaacs became aware of Kurelek's artistic talent in 1968 when Kurelek came to work for the gallery as a framer. *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>351</sup> Isaacs decided to open the Greenwich Art Gallery after spending several months in Europe in 1955. He continued to provide framing services, but the gallery space occupied the front of the building. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>354</sup> Isaacs said that Carmen Lamanna, who ran a neighbouring gallery that dealt with minimalism was the star of the 80s. Linda Corbett. Interview with Av Isaacs.

<http://www.ccca.ca/videoportrait/english/isaacs.html?languagePref=en&>. 25 July 2005.

<sup>355</sup> Jack Chambers, *Jack Chambers, 1931-1978* (London, Ont.: Nancy Poole's Studio, 1978), 7.

<sup>356</sup> Alan Walker. "What Makes Jack Chambers Canada's Top-Priced Painter?" *Canadian Magazine* [Toronto Star] (6 February 1971): 21.

<sup>357</sup> Articles on Chambers' record-breaking sale appeared from the Maritimes to British Columbia. Crawford, "Chambers Painting Bought for \$25,000," 26 June 1970; *Daily Star* AGO., 26 June 1970; "Good Market for Real Art," *West Lorne Sun*, 27 August 1970; Kay Kritzwiser, "Record \$25,000 for Painting," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 27 June 1970; *Evening Times Globe*, St. John, New Brunswick, 27 June, 1970; "Solid Tribute Paid to London Painter," *London Evening Free Press*, 27 June 1970; "Un dimanche matin, un jour d'hiver...." *La Presse* (Montreal), 29 June 1970; *Le Soleil* (Quebec), 30 June, 1970; Richard Simmins, "A Life-Death Vision," *Vancouver Province*, 31 July 1970.

<sup>358</sup> Jack Chambers, Undated draft of a letter to Av Isaacs regarding a new working agreement. Nancy Poole Fonds. D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. Box B2104, Folder 27.

<sup>359</sup> Isaacs gave Chambers some examples of his fairness. He had “co-ordinated the Godard exhibition for no commission; allowed you more than a fair number of private sales in the London area; and more recently, due to your circumstances, decided to drop my commission to 20%.” Avrom Isaacs, Undated letter from Av Isaacs to Jack Chambers. Nancy Poole Fonds. D.B. Weldon Library Archives, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. Box B2104, Folder 27.

<sup>360</sup> Isaacs wrote: “Recently two major sales have taken place, neither of which I shared in. These sales were not solely a result of the events of the last six months.” Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Stoffman, “Champion.”

<sup>362</sup> Isaacs, Undated letter from Av Isaacs to Jack Chambers, Box B2104, Folder 27.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Nancy Geddes Poole, *The Art of London, 1830-1980* (London: Blackpool Press, 1984), 144.

<sup>365</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 127-128.

<sup>366</sup> Nancy Poole was the executor of Chamber’s will and, as such, arranged for the sale of most of his works to the London Regional Art and Historical Museum.

<sup>367</sup> Nancy Poole’s Studio, Artists’ accounts book #17, April 30/72 to June 30, 72. Nancy Poole Fonds. D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. Box 2110.

<sup>368</sup> Poole, *Jack Chambers*, 11.

Poole’s championing of Chambers was due, at least partly, to the fact that he sold two works for record amounts of money through her studio. As she received a commission of 15% on Chambers’ works over \$5,000 and 20% on those under \$5,000, her association with him was extremely lucrative.<sup>368</sup> Her commission from the sale of these two works amounted to \$9,000.

<sup>369</sup> The exhibition ran from 21 December 1961 to 9 January 1962. Wigmore, *Isaacs Seen*, 158.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Despite Sanouillet’s choice of gender, Joyce Wieland was also part of the exhibition. Michel Sanouillet, “The Sign of Dada,” Toronto,” *Canadian Art* 19, no. 2, issue no. 78 (March/April 1962): 111.

<sup>373</sup> Letter from Av Isaacs to Greg Curnoe, 5 October 1962. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Business and Professional Activities, Dealers, Isaacs Gallery File.

<sup>374</sup> Greg Curnoe, Draft of letter to Av Isaacs regarding the possible termination of their working relationship, Undated. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Business and Professional Activities, Dealers, Isaacs Gallery File 1978.

<sup>375</sup> Greg Curnoe, “This is a Mixture, Not a Solution,” (1979), 14. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. 1979 Writing.

<sup>376</sup> Av Isaacs, Letter to Greg Curnoe regarding a possible re-association, 29 May 1987. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Dealers, Isaacs Gallery File.

<sup>377</sup> Rodger, “Chronology,” *Life & Stuff*, 181.

<sup>378</sup> Simpson, *SoHo*, 30.

<sup>379</sup> Museum London: Historical Artifacts: John Kinder Labatt,

<http://www.londonmuseum.on.ca/Artifacts/FrontierTown/weblabatt.html>, 21 July 2005.

<sup>380</sup> Madeline Lennon, *Research and Development: Greg Curnoe, Jake Moore & Canadian Culture* (London: London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1992) [Pamphlet], unpaginated.

<sup>381</sup> The first work that Moore bought from Curnoe was sold for \$50. Letter from J.H. Moore to Greg Curnoe, 24 November 1964. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Correspondence files, 1964.

<sup>382</sup> Milroy, “Time Machines,” *Life & Stuff*, 60.

<sup>383</sup> Judith Rodger, “Jake Moore: A Memorial Tribute,” Talk given at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1 May 1997. Quoted in Rodger, “Chronology,” *Life & Stuff*, 150.

<sup>384</sup> Lennon, *Research and Development*.

<sup>385</sup> The Committee for an Independent Canada (CIC) was a citizen’s group that was concerned with Canada’s economic and cultural independence. Walter Gordon, Peter Newman and Abraham Rotstein were the masterminds of the group which was formally launched on 17 September 1970 with Jack McClelland and Claude Ryan as co-chairmen. The group was responsible for successfully lobbying for limits on foreign investment and ownership, demanding tougher standards on Canadian content on radio and television, and

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the elimination of tax privileges for *Times* and *Reader's Digest* in Canada.

<http://tceplus.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=J1ARTJ0001792>. 22 July 2005.

<sup>386</sup> Pierre Théberge believes that Curnoe's illustrations were rejected by the publisher of the book because they were not sufficiently populist. Théberge claims that the New Canadian Press had 'Maoist leanings.' Théberge, *Rétrospective/Retrospective*, 102.

<sup>387</sup> Lennon, *Research and Development*.

<sup>388</sup> Moore donated over six hundred works to the London Regional Art and Historical Museum since 1978. The donation is known as the Moore Gift. *Ibid*.

## Part II: “*The Swingingest City in Canada*”

*The secret has been so well kept that most of its sober citizens don't know about it yet, but a stuffy old city that's been around for years has now left Toronto, Vancouver—and everywhere else—behind. It's Swinging London (Ontario).*

—Barry Lord, “Swinging London”

During the 1960s and early 1970s, a number of significant episodes, events, and activities contributed to a strong sense of collective identity in the artistic community in London and more broadly across Canada. Several of these activities occurred in reaction to external forces while others were the result of local or regional stimuli. The magnitude of the events varied; in some cases (for example, the organizing of artists) they were serious attempts to alter the way in which the Canadian art world functioned, and had far-reaching consequences that still resonate today. However, not all of these occurrences were serious, long-lived, or particularly momentous; in fact, some of them were light-hearted, facetious, or even downright silly. Despite the varied nature and degree of importance of these events they all played a vital part in defining and sustaining a sense of community at a particular time in a particular place.

In this section I will explore some of the pivotal moments, activities, and organizations that helped define London's artistic identity, chiefly, the ‘changing of the guard’ of the London Art Museum, the professionalization of artists in London, the development of artist-run centres and co-ops, “Celebration,” several pivotal art exhibitions, the activities of the Nihilist Party, and the foundation of Canadian Artists' Representation group. I will examine the differing, though often complementary, roles

that Chambers and Curnoe played in the aforementioned proceedings. Despite the wide variety of events and occurrences they all played important parts in creating a sense of collective identity in London.

The opinions and values of the London group of artists in the 1960s and early 1970s were not those of the mainstream population. In fact, their behaviour and beliefs often ran counter to established norms. Bearing this in mind, an important concept that should be considered in this chapter is Stanley Fish's notion of "interpretive communities." Fish, a controversial academic, contends that people interpret literary texts in the context of their group, and that how a particular text is interpreted depends on the interests, common assumptions, practices, and goals of the group.<sup>1</sup> This notion provides a useful way to understand the ability and willingness of the group of London artists (centred on Chambers and Curnoe) to coalesce around particular issues and concerns that sometimes appeared strange or foreign to outsiders.

It is also worth considering Habermas' idea of the public sphere and Nancy Fraser's theories of subaltern counterpublics when considering the varied activities that occurred in London in the 1960s. I propose that the London group of artists constituted a subaltern counterpublic whose arenas of debate constituted such venues as Curnoe's studio, artist-run spaces, underground publications, Nihilist Party events and the local and national Canadian Artists' Representation meetings.

Before examining the activities and affiliations of the London artists I will provide a brief outline of several relevant theories of collective memory and identity.

## Chapter 6: The New 'Establishment'

It is widely agreed that one of the fundamental components of a collective identity is shared memory of significant events in the past. It is not enough that members of a society or group experience the same events; there must also be some degree of general consensus or shared understanding among the members of that group on the meaning of these events. How they are interpreted is important and is contingent on a number of factors, both personal and communal. Not every individual within a group has a memory of the events identical to those of others, but there must be sufficient overlap in their personal versions of events to ensure continuity. This idea is fundamental to the theory of the late sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who explored the idea of collective memory in the early twentieth century. Halbwachs was born in France in 1877 of Alsatian ancestry, and grew up in Paris in a circle of intellectuals. Initially influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson, who believed in the importance of the individual and of the supremacy of reality, experience and intuition over logic and intellect, Halbwachs was later influenced by the sociologist Emile Durkheim and his ideas of collective psychology (although he never totally rejected the idea of the individual). Halbwachs eventually rejected philosophy for sociology.<sup>2</sup>

Halbwachs believed individual memories are socially mediated and must be considered within the context of the groups that people belong to. He wrote: "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections."<sup>3</sup> He went on to claim:

We can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group. We cannot properly

understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member.<sup>4</sup>

For Halbwachs, the perpetuation of collective memory was an active process fostered by interaction with others. It was also a phenomenon that could not be interpreted through anything but the framework of the present moment. As Roxanne Rimstead states, Halbwach believed “mental images of the present are used to reconstruct the past, and both are generated and understood through frames of social interaction.” Rimstead points out that “[m]emory needs continuous feeding from collective sources and is sustained by social and moral props.”<sup>5</sup>

Jan Assman has written extensively on Halbwachs’ theory of collective identity and what constitutes a group. He writes:

Every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. These ‘others,’ however, are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past. Halbwachs thinks of families, neighborhood and professional groups, political parties, associations, etc., up to and including nations. Every individual belongs to numerous such groups and therefore entertains numerous collective self-images and memories.<sup>6</sup>

Halbwachs’ basic tenet that memory is socially mediated and relates to a group is applicable to the context of Chambers and Curnoe and the city of London in the 1960s and 1970s. The two artists each belonged to various groups: national, regional, and personal, and the memories fostered within these groups helped them form not only their own identities, but in turn, created a strong collective identity in London (at least in the cultural community).

However, as Assman points out, Halbwachs only looked at living communication; he stopped short of analyzing forms of objectivized culture (“texts, images, rites,

buildings, monuments, cities or even landscapes”) because for him, once it stopped being a form of living communication it passed from being a collective memory and became history.<sup>7</sup> Therefore his theory does not explain adequately the role of artworks, archival writings and past history in collective memory.

Assman disagrees with Halbwachs’ belief that collective memory only pertains to living communication. He writes:

... in the context of objectivized culture and of organized or ceremonial communication, a close connection to groups and their identity exists which is similar to that found in the case of everyday memory. We can refer to the structure of knowledge in this case as the ‘concretion of identity’. With this we mean that a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity. In this sense, objectivized culture has the structure of memory.<sup>8</sup>

While I agree with Assman that objectivized culture plays a vital part in sustaining collective memory, I disagree with his contention that cultural memory develops out of events from a distant past. He claims: “Just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday.”<sup>9</sup> I believe that by transforming the everyday into ‘art’ Curnoe and Chambers moved events from communicative memory to cultural memory in an accelerated manner. This allowed almost contemporaneous events to enter into the collective memories of the region and the nation.

Not every moment of the past necessarily contributes to a community’s cultural memory; occurrences must be important in some way to a segment of the population in order for them to be remembered by that group. Assman claims that cultural memory has fixed points in time that centre on significant events of the past; he calls these fixed points ‘figures of memory’. He writes: “These fixed points are fateful events of the past,

whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).”<sup>10</sup>

In order to try to explain the role of objectivized culture in forming collective identity Assman introduces the ideas of the cultural historian Aby Warburg, who “ascribed a type of ‘mnemonic energy’ to the objectivization of culture, pointing not only to works of high art, but to posters, postage stamps, costumes, customs, etc.”<sup>11</sup> Assman claims that Halbwachs looks at the nexus between memory and group, and Warburg looks at the nexus between memory and the language of cultural forms. Assman tries to tie the “three poles—memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society)—to each other.”<sup>12</sup> Warburg is best remembered for creating his *Mnemosyne Atlas*—an ‘atlas of the memory’. The aim of this project (which remained unfinished at his death) was to create an atlas that formed a pictorial memory of Europe. In forty canvases that contained over a thousand images Warburg incorporated a vast variety of disparate material that made no distinction between high art and low art; his atlas included popular art and ephemera, reproducible media (things like postcards), and high art images. His intention was not to provide a comprehensive history of European art; instead, he was interested in what art meant and how it functioned for different societies.<sup>13</sup>

While Assman’s notion of fixed points of the past is useful in discussing particularly memorable moments of the past such as World War II, it fails to encompass those sites of memory that are not contingent upon single moments or occurrences. I contend that sites of memory are not necessarily formed by moments or discrete events, but may be the accretion of layers of memories that build up and develop and whose

meanings may shift over time. Likewise, fateful moments may assume varying degrees of importance to different people at different times, depending on a myriad of circumstances. Nor are these 'figures of memory' necessarily material or concrete. For this reason, I choose to use Pierre Nora's idea of realms of memory or *lieux de mémoire*.

Nora, a theoretician of historical memory, introduced the idea of *lieux de mémoire* in his book *Realms of Memory*. Developing his theory to propose a new way of looking at French history, Nora defines a *lieu de mémoire* as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element in the memorial heritage of any community."<sup>14</sup> Although his initial approach dealt with the narrower concept of *site*, his approach eventually broadened to examine the "latent or hidden aspects of national memory and its whole spectrum of sources, regardless of their nature," and what he ultimately created was "a history of France through memory."<sup>15</sup>

In *Realms of Memory* Nora attempts to deconstruct common beliefs in order to "restore the original strangeness of the subject, to show how each element reflects the whole and is involved in the entire national identity."<sup>16</sup> He claims that his goal was "to pass French identity through a prism, to relate the symbolic whole to its symbolic fragments."<sup>17</sup> I will use the basic concept of *lieux de mémoire* to discuss the formation of a community in London during the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing on the lives and work of Chambers and Curnoe, I will examine a number of important episodes and aspects of their lives in order to provide a more holistic analysis of their work and role in developing a sense of collective identity in London.

As I stated previously, it is not just moments in the past that help form a community's sense of identity. The cultural theorist Mieke Bal examines this when she introduces the concept of cultural memory. Bal claims that cultural memory has displaced "the discourses of individual (psychological) memory and of social memory." She writes: "the term *cultural memory* signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one." Cultural memory is neither passive nor passé; it is "an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future." In short, "cultural memory...links the past to the present and future."<sup>18</sup> It is also something that we constantly perform, even if unconsciously.

Bal believes there are several forms that memory can take: routine or habitual memories, narrative memories, and traumatic recall. Routine memories are those that we are seldom conscious of having that govern how we function on an everyday level. Narrative memories are memories of events that possess an affective dimension—they have an "emotional aura" that makes them memorable. Because they are often comprised of a narrative, they can, in turn, be narrated. Bal characterizes traumatic recall as "the painful resurfacing of events of a traumatic nature."<sup>19</sup>

Like Halbwachs, Bal believes narrative memories are socially constructed—they develop within "a cultural context whose frame evokes and enables the memory."<sup>20</sup> In addition to being socially constructed, narrative memory has a social function: "It is a context in which, precisely, the past makes sense in the present, to others who can understand it, sympathize with it, or respond with astonishment, surprise, even horror; narrative memory offers some form of feedback that ratifies the memory."<sup>21</sup> Narrative

memory helps groups make sense of the past in the present and thus helps to define and articulate identity.

Traumatic memory, in contrast to narrative memory, is inflexible and invariable. Bal writes: “traumatic (non)memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary event, not even an activity.” The sufferer of traumatic memories cannot reconcile the events of the past on their own; in order to integrate painful memories into the present, there must be a second person to “act as a confirming witness to a painfully elusive past.”<sup>22</sup>

What then, is the role of the artist in society? For Bal, the artist plays a vital role beyond interpreting identity and reflecting it back at the nation—he or she is the figure that “bears witness or facilitates self-witnessing.” She writes: “Art—and other cultural artefacts such as photographs or published texts of all kinds—can mediate between the parties to the traumatizing scene and between these and the reader or viewer.”<sup>23</sup> Because artists help to put traumatic events into a narrative that make sense of them for viewers, they enable the healing process to begin. Hence, Bal believes narrative memories are the “standard, however problematic, to measure what it means to speak of cultural memory.”<sup>24</sup>

Halbwachs, Assman, Nora and Bal all agree that shared memories are the fundamental components of collective identity formation, although they disagree as to what sort of material may provide the basis for these memories. For Halbwachs, collective identity is fostered through living communication in a group context and is primarily linguistic, while for Warburg and Assman memory also incorporates objectivized culture. Assman contends that memories crystallize around “fixed moments”

in the past that are commemorated through objects and celebrations, and he infers that the farther back in time events occurred, the more powerfully they provided material for collective memory. Nora on the other hand has a much more flexible notion of sites of memory that provides space for contemporary events and disparate elements. For Bal cultural memory is a present, performative process that provides important links between past, present and future.

What events or moments in time will become *lieux de mémoire* is not necessarily evident at the moment of occurrence, nor is there a pre-determined length of time that must pass before an event becomes fixed in a collective memory. I believe that with the acceleration of modes of communication and the compression of time and space in the twentieth century, events had the potential to enter into a collective memory almost at the moment of occurrence. I also believe that Chambers and Curnoe and their contemporaries were aware of the significance of some of their activities and events at the time, although the importance of other things only became apparent much later.

The nature of figures of memory or *lieux de mémoire* is also highly variable; some are one-time occurrences with a clear beginning and ending, others are less clearly defined. Events that begin in one manner may change or mutate into something quite different over their duration. Likewise, as time passes, people's perceptions change as myriad factors come into play. There is also a consensual nature to *lieux de mémoire* and collective memory: there must be a willingness on the part of group members or associates to agree on at least a rudimentary degree of common interpretation of events.

Sometimes collective memory forms over distance among people who have not necessarily ever met. As Benedict Anderson points out in *Imagined Communities*, it is

not necessary for members of a nation to know each other personally in order for them to imagine themselves as a community. In the case of the Canadian art world, artists could be united by profession or in opposition to common obstacles. Likewise, individuals could be united by the impact of world events and circumstances. For Curnoe and Chambers and many of their generation there were a number of common events that occurred on a national or international level that influenced their outlook on life: for example, they came of age in the decades after World War II, and this coincided with the coming of age of Canada during the centennial year. The sixties were a decade of protest and change, and the artists' generation was profoundly influenced by the civil rights movement, feminism, and the Vietnam War (which helped foster nascent feelings of anti-Americanism). While world-wide events forged a broad sense of identity across an entire generation of young people during the 1960s, group identity was strengthened among the young artists in London through a number of local events and circumstances.

By the beginning of the 1960s many changes were taking place in London, Ontario, both socially and politically, and these changes affected the city's arts community throughout the decade and after. Curnoe and Chambers returned from studies outside the city, and set up studios in London. Their initiative was inspirational for a group of slightly younger artists like Ron Martin and Murray Favro, who also aspired to make a living at art.<sup>25</sup> The visual arts department at Beal Tech expanded, the University of Western Ontario formed a new art department and Fanshawe College's London campus was founded in 1967 (the college taught visual art). With the expansion of art education opportunities in London, an influx of new artists and their ideas began to permeate the community. The artist-in-residence program at the University of Western

Ontario attracted artists from outside London, among them Tony Urquhart, Gino Lorcini and Claude Breeze. American artists such as Don Bonham also came to teach at the new art departments in London. All of this activity by younger artists stimulated the cultural production of the city. Herb Ariss referred to the new group of artists as the new “Establishment,” which he claimed was reflecting the anti-establishment philosophy of the sixties when it rebelled “against the status quo.”<sup>26</sup> If Curnoe and Chambers formed the nucleus of the new “Establishment,” what was the old establishment that they were rebelling against?

London had a long history of art exhibitions; in fact, artists had shown their work in London since the mid-nineteenth century. The Mechanics Institute and Museum provided exhibition space from 1842 to 1895, and in 1869 the Western Fair was incorporated and held annual art exhibitions. The Western Art League rented rooms in a building in London for a few months in 1889. In 1895 the library at Queen and Wellington Streets began holding occasional exhibitions and in 1913 the Western Art League opened a small art gallery at the Western Fair grounds in Queen’s Park (which operated during the summer months).<sup>27</sup> Regular exhibitions took place at the London Public Library starting in 1925 and in the autumn of 1940 the new London Public Library and Art Museum opened with the artist Clare Bice as its first curator.<sup>28</sup>

Despite periodic exhibitions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the gradual organization of exhibiting space in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the art scene in London was unremarkable until the 1940s. There were no private galleries in London and there were still only two venues for artists to exhibit work—the London Art Gallery and the Western Art League.<sup>29</sup> These two venues were closely allied; Herb Ariss recalled: “The Western

Art League co-sponsored with the Art Gallery the Ontario show and provided the community with art lectures, demonstrations from visiting artists, etc.”<sup>30</sup> Artistic activity in London revolved exclusively around the London Art Gallery, which served as a social gathering place for the city’s privileged upper class (in the same way as Canadian arts organizations of the 1920s and 1930s had). As Ariss noted, “most of the people involved in the arts picture in London were friends and socially involved.”<sup>31</sup>

Well into the 1960s the exhibition policy of the London Public Library and Art Museum remained extremely traditional, due in part to the personal tastes of its curator, Clare Bice. An artist himself, Bice was the part-time curator of the London Art Gallery from 1940 until 1972. The son of an Anglican archdeacon, Bice was born in Durham, Ontario in 1908, and moved to London when he was one year old. Graduating from the University of Western Ontario with a degree in general arts, Bice worked for a time as an illustrator for an advertising firm before setting up as a freelance commercial artist in London.<sup>32</sup> He joined the Western Art League in 1932 and achieved some success as a painter of portraits and landscapes.<sup>33</sup> In 1939 Bice was elected to the Ontario Society of Artists; the following year he became an associate of the Royal Canadian Academy and was selected to be the first curator of the new London Art Gallery.<sup>34</sup> After serving with the Canadian forces during the Second World War, Bice returned to the London Art Gallery in 1946 as part-time curator.

Under Bice’s direction the majority of the art exhibitions organized in London into the 1960s were very conservative. (This was not unusual: most of the public galleries in Ontario, and even Toronto, continued to exhibit traditional art well into the 1960s.) In addition to the juried exhibitions, annual solo shows were featured at the Western Fair. In

1960 Paul Peel (London's most famous artist to date) was featured. In the next few years William 'St. Thomas' Smith (1961), George Reid (1962), Frederic Bell-Smith (1963) and Homer Watson (1964) were the subjects of solo exhibitions at the fair. The art gallery's exhibitions in the late 1950s and early 1960s were similarly traditional and heavily biased toward painting: in 1959 the gallery hosted an exhibition of French painting; the following year it hosted an exhibition of British painting. During the 1960s Bice continued to curate conservative exhibitions; *Milestones of Canadian Painting* (which was heavily biased towards the Group of Seven's work) was held in 1960, and *Canadian Impressionists* in 1965. In 1966 Bice curated *Canadian Painting 1850-1950*, and in 1967, as the gallery's centennial contribution, he curated *The Artist in Early Canada*. There were efforts made by some to update the gallery's exhibition programming; in the 1960s Bice's young assistant Paddy O'Brien curated some more adventurous exhibitions: *Surrealism in Canadian Painting* (1964), and *Magic Realism* (1966).

Tensions between the conservative and old-school administration of the London art establishment and the younger generation of London artists were apparent as early as the 1950s. In 1952 a significant incident occurred between the Western Art League, the society that "brought visiting artists to London and supervised the annual Western Ontario Exhibitions at the gallery,"<sup>35</sup> and the London Art Gallery that helped solidify a stronger group identity in London's emergent arts community. Selwyn Dewdney and Jim Kemp, members of The Western Art League, offered assistance to some of London's younger artists who requested access to studio space and a nude model in the London Art Gallery.<sup>36</sup> Clare Bice, who believed that Londoners would be scandalized by such a use of public funds, summarily denied their request and the artists subsequently rented an

independent studio space.<sup>37</sup> Curnoe claims that this incident marked the beginnings of a rift between Bice (and the London Art Gallery) and London's younger artists, a rift that resulted in the organization of the artists into a more formal and cohesive group.<sup>38</sup>

Arguments also occurred over the promotion of national talent over regional artists. Local artists believed the gallery had an obligation to give them precedence over those from outside the region. In 1954 Selwyn Dewdney (by this time the president of the Western Art League) and Bice argued again, this time about who should be allowed to exhibit at the annual Western Ontario Exhibition. Bice thought that anyone in Canada should be allowed to enter, whereas Dewdney, believing that the nationwide scope might limit the participation of regional talent, held that only southwestern Ontario painters should be allowed. Dewdney claimed that the purpose of the League was to support the people of the region, and as the League sponsored the Western Ontario Exhibition it should abide by this policy.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the 1950s the London Art Gallery was the city's sole cultural centre. By the 1960s this would change, as the cultural scene began to centre on newly established artists' studios and artist-run centres. Communities often form or are strengthened in reaction to common stresses (which may be actual or perceived), and in the case of the younger generation of artists working in London during the 1960s and 1970s a common bond was forged in opposition to not only the societal strictures of the past several decades but to what they considered were the constricting mandate and old-fashioned curatorial practices of the city's only cultural institution. The antipathy that young Londoners felt towards the London Art Gallery, an institution that was more

comfortable exhibiting historical or traditional art, helped foster a strong sense of community among them.

The relationship between art galleries and living artists is often an uneasy one. Vera L. Zolberg contends that “although museums of modern art have many occasions to deal with artists, they have rarely viewed living artists as forming a *community* toward which they have particular obligations. By the same token, except under certain conditions, artists tend not to form durable communities.”<sup>40</sup> I believe there was a particular set of conditions in London during the 1960s (and to a certain extent in the two previous decades) that caused the artists in London to crystallize into a strong local community that became known nationally.

It is worthwhile considering what constitutes a community, particularly as it pertains to artists. Zolberg points out that while the concept of community has multiple meanings, broadly speaking it “refers to a social group whose members reside in a specific locality; they may share some aspects of governance, and often they claim a common cultural and historical heritage.”<sup>41</sup> While Zolberg’s definition aptly describes the majority of the citizens of London, Ontario during the 1950s and 1960s, it does not necessarily pertain to the much smaller artistic community of the city. Groups like artists can form communities based on similar interests without living in the same geographical region, and their attachment may be symbolic rather than actual (for example, artists who work in similar styles or from similar philosophical standpoints may form a sense of communion with other artists from different regions or from different cultural and class backgrounds). Likewise, several different communities of artists may exist within the same geographical area, depending on their areas of interest (or indeed, age). Curnoe

noted that during the 1950s there were three separate groups of artists and intellectuals working in London—the first group was centred at the Guild House on Kent Street, the second group congregated at 321 Queens Avenue, and the third group met in the basement of St. Paul’s Cathedral.<sup>42</sup> While the members of these groups knew each other, and often interacted, they had “different interests and preoccupations.”<sup>43</sup>

A major factor that set London artists in the 1960s apart from those of the previous generations was their choice of fine art as a profession (as opposed to working as illustrators or graphic artists or painting as a hobby). Zolberg believes the essential element of a community of artists is “their commitment to working, preferably full time, as professional artists.”<sup>44</sup> It was certainly the desire of both Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe, who pursued the ambition of being self-supporting as artists with dedication.

Curnoe and Chambers both returned to London in the early 1960s, under quite different circumstances: Curnoe came home after four unhappy (and ultimately unsuccessful) years at the Ontario College of Art; Chambers, who had graduated from the Real Academia de Bellas Artes in Madrid and was working in Spain, had initially thought that his return to London would only be temporary. As it happened, both men decided to stay in London permanently and set about establishing themselves as full-time artists, something that was almost unheard of in London at the time. Their determination to be self-supporting as artists was inspirational to other aspiring artists in the region and helped form the nucleus of a new cultural community in the city.

During the years when Curnoe was a student in Toronto he had been inspired by the example of the artist and part-time OCA instructor Graham Coughtry, who supported himself mainly as a working artist: “seeing this artist Graham Caughtry [sic] working in

his studio strengthened my resolve not to get into commercial art, but to get a studio and be a painter.”<sup>45</sup> Despite these intentions, Curnoe was not initially able to support himself solely as an artist. Upon his return he moved back in with his parents and worked for periods of time for the City of London’s Surveys Department, the post office, and on the assembly line at the Westinghouse factory.<sup>46</sup>

Although he was not yet self-supporting as an artist, Curnoe was determined to start living like one. He rented his first studio on the third floor of a building at 432 Richmond Street in downtown London in July 1960. The studio was one large loft space over the old Eaton’s order office<sup>47</sup> and it looked out over Carling Street and the London Printing and Lithography Company. He recounted that it was very large: “the room was about 45 feet long and 18 feet wide with big skylights, it was a beautiful studio.”<sup>48</sup> John Boyle recalls that the studio quickly “became a centre of intellectual activity where ideas were discussed and plots were hatched.”<sup>49</sup> Curnoe continued to live with his parents, though, using the studio for art and the occasional overnight stay. After the building at 432 Richmond was demolished in 1962 Curnoe moved briefly into a studio at 521 Richmond Street (in what was to become the Region Gallery).<sup>50</sup>

Curnoe quickly assumed a leading role in London’s artistic circle, promoting and supporting younger local artists. Boyle recalls:

I first met Greg in 1960 when I was an untrained neophyte with half a dozen paintings under my belt. He was welcoming and encouraging to me in every way, treating me as an equal, heaping praise on those of my paintings he liked while saying little about the others. He introduced his impressive friends to me, helped arrange exhibitions of my work, invited me to show with Jack Chambers and himself.<sup>51</sup>

Curnoe’s rapidly growing circle of artist friends was not confined just to Londoners. In the summer of 1960 he met the Toronto artist Michael Snow, who was

visiting London. The two became friends and on a visit to Snow's studio in Toronto Curnoe met and became friends with Snow's wife, the artist Joyce Wieland.<sup>52</sup>

During this period Curnoe continued to support himself by teaching adult education art classes. He taught at the Artists' Workshop on Dundas Street, an organization that was co-founded and directed by his old high school art teacher, Selwyn Dewdney, and financed largely by John Labatt Ltd.<sup>53</sup> He also taught adult art classes at the Public Utilities Commission.

When Chambers returned to London in 1961 he quickly forged professional contacts in London with the help of some of his old friends. He also reconnected with Selwyn Dewdney, who gave Chambers free use of the studio facilities at the Artist's Workshop and gave him a job teaching drawing in the evenings.

When Chambers had left London in the 1950s there was nobody working full-time as an artist (Selwyn Dewdney worked at a number of related occupations, but did not manage to support himself solely by his art). Eight years later, Curnoe was still the only individual in London to be self-supporting as an artist.<sup>54</sup> Although Chambers and Curnoe had both grown up in London, they lived in different areas of the city. In addition, their five-year age difference meant that they had not encountered each other in high school. In fact, they did not meet until Chambers moved back to London in 1961.<sup>55</sup> The two soon became very good friends; Curnoe wrote: "Jack Chambers was one of my best friends for a period of about fifteen years. He was a very complex person, perhaps the most complex person I have ever known."<sup>56</sup>

Despite their working-class backgrounds, Chambers and Curnoe had each developed the belief that art could be a viable full-time occupation and not just a pastime.

Neither artist's family greeted their son's career choice with unbridled enthusiasm, though; indeed, the idea of making a living from art instead of working for a company in a secure job was viewed as a risky undertaking by both their families. Years later, in a letter to his son Galen, Curnoe recounted his parents' misgivings about his career:

My mother worried quietly and would pass along my dad's concerns about me, which were also hers to some extent. She objected to a lot of my attitudes and work. My father put me down a lot. He was a really good athlete and I was a wimp (really) and he knew it. He told me I liked the equipment more than I liked the sport and he was probably right. He insisted that I should get a job in commercial art. He thought I was crazy to go to art college. He told me that I would last three weeks in my studio downtown (this was when I was twenty-four years old) because I wouldn't be able to pay the rent, etc., etc.<sup>57</sup>

Chambers was more taciturn about his family's reaction to his choice of career. In fact, in his memoirs he barely mentions his relationship with his father past his childhood. It is probably safe to assume that his father, a welder by trade, was frequently out of work during the Depression, must have been unsettled when his son chose the uncertain profession of an artist.

In the face of parental opposition and uncertain financial rewards, both men persisted with their desire to be full-time artists, and they became an inspiration to many other individuals in London. Within a few years other artists followed suit, and London's artistic community would never be the same. There are benefits for artists forming alliances based on geographical locale. Zolberg notes that "when artists also are located in close proximity to one another they are more visible and sometimes more effective in gaining their professional ends than they would be acting as individuals."<sup>58</sup> What were the professional ends that the London artists sought through their fellowship? Despite disparities in personal artistic styles and in personality, many of London's young

generation of artists were united in their belief that the gallery had an obligation to exhibit contemporary art, particularly that by artists in the community.

One of the ways that arts groups have historically asserted a new cultural identity is by breaking with tradition or severing ties with established institutions. There was a clear desire on the part of London's young artists during the 1960s to demonstrate that they had achieved success without assistance from the establishment. In a retrospective article on London's cultural scene, written in 1982, Curnoe claimed that the artistic activities of the 1940s and 1950s that paved the way for the "extensive activities" in the city during the 1960s occurred "independently of London's high-profile cultural institutions."<sup>59</sup>

One event took place in London in the early 1960s that changed the way in which the city's inhabitants and the rest of Canada viewed London. It also deepened the rift between the London Art Gallery and the younger generation. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1962 Curnoe organized Canada's first 'happening' at the London Public Library and Art Museum. Demonstrating his growing interest in his local surroundings, Curnoe organized *The Celebration* around a long-forgotten incident in London's history. After deciding on the date for the happening, Curnoe set out to search through the archives at the *London Free Press* for an interesting event that had occurred on that day in the past. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1922, the newspaper reported that a man named Laurence Lee, the Chinese proprietor of the Royal Café on Richmond Street, was fined \$2 for sprinkling salt on the ice in front of his restaurant.<sup>60</sup> (This seemingly unimportant incident resonated with Curnoe because of his interest in Dada and his friendship with Michel Sanouillet. In 1959 Sanouillet published a book of the writings of Marcel Duchamp. Sanouillet's book was entitled

*Marchand du sellier*, or *The Salt Seller*, a play on words that Duchamp adopted as his nickname). This incident served as the inspiration for the event, which was well attended by members of London's art community and from farther afield.

Michel Sanouillet travelled from Toronto with the photographer Michel Lambeth and the up-and-coming Toronto artists Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland.<sup>61</sup> They arrived in London by train, and were greeted at the station with considerable fanfare by a delegation of kazoo-playing, flag-waving revellers who led them to the gallery. Herman Goodden relates: "From all accounts, the party became spectacularly rowdy and messy—wood was nailed to the floor, enormous, instant sculptures were created and destroyed, one witness smelled smoke—and gallery curator Clare Bice was furious about the whole thing"<sup>62</sup> (Fig. 10). Sanouillet recalled how, much to Bice's disgust, a large installation made from bits of recycled lumber was assembled by the participants inside the gallery (Fig. 11). The gathering culminated with a parade down London's main street with a number of participants dressed in "dadaistic attire" (which consisted of German WWI uniforms complete with pointed helmets) carrying a huge white plywood panel.<sup>63</sup> Tony Urquhart, programme chairman of the Western Art League and artist-in-residence at the University of Western Ontario at the time, also remembers Bice's anger at the activity: "Clare came up to me shaking with rage and said 'it's your responsibility, Tony. I'm going home.'"<sup>64</sup> At the end of the evening, Urquhart recalls, an inebriated Wieland thanked Curnoe for "inviting us to wreck the gallery."<sup>65</sup> Bice was so upset over the proceedings that he applied for a Canada Council grant and went abroad on leave from the art gallery, leaving Paddy O'Brien in charge in his absence.<sup>66</sup>

Although *Celebration* was the first ‘happening’ in Canada it was not the first in North America; by the early 1960s happenings were occurring with increasing frequency in the United States (particularly in New York’s artist community of Greenwich Village). However, despite its clear affinity with American prototypes (for example, happenings organized by Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine) Curnoe claimed that London’s *Celebration* was different. He wrote:

What I had in mind for that happening or celebration or whatever it was, was the context, to change the context. To have someone in a big public art gallery do a washing, to have someone in a big public art gallery watch the hockey game, to play baseball and catch in that art gallery room. That was what that was about. That’s very different from what happenings were about, I think.<sup>67</sup>

Curnoe believed that the greatest effect of *Celebration* was that it altered the way in which Londoners responded to the traditional gallery space: “The thing we did that people still talk about is that we changed the way they perceived the art gallery. [...] They used to go in there and whisper, but after that people didn’t whisper any more.”<sup>68</sup>

Herb Ariss contends that if a major difference existed between the London art establishment of the 1950s and the 1960s it was that artists in the 1960s effected change through political action rather than through social action as the previous decades’ establishment had.<sup>69</sup> By rebelling against entrenched and conservative art practices at the London Art Gallery, younger artists in the 1960s exposed a growing rift between their practice and the ideology of the gallery. It became apparent that the gallery was no longer meeting the needs of one of its most important communities, and artists began to demand a say in how it was run. This is not surprising; as Zolberg points out, “once tensions between museums and artists have become public, strategies similar to those adopted in other conflicts are likely: forced or voluntary resignations, administrative restructuring,

and/or mutual recognition of grievances.”<sup>70</sup> The London Art Gallery changed slowly, however, and only after a couple of painfully public episodes.

In 1966 Curnoe and several other artists again came into conflict with the London Art Gallery and its curator when Bice censored one of the paintings provided for the exhibition *Artists of Our Region No. 16: John Boyle, John Chambers and Greg Curnoe*.<sup>71</sup> Bice deemed that John Boyle’s painting *Seated Nude* was “unsuitable for a public gallery,”<sup>72</sup> and refused to hang it, against the wishes of a jury (see Part I, p. 102). Bice’s decision to flout the jury’s judgment discredited him in the artistic community, and he became the subject of much criticism. Curnoe, the main instigator of the incident, increased in stature in the eyes of the London artistic community and in the eyes of national institutions like the Canada Council and the National Gallery. “The mantle of power,” Nancy Poole chronicled, “had slipped from Clare Bice to Greg Curnoe, and this was quickly perceived by other artists. According to [Tony] Urquhart, the young artists flocked to the new ‘Mr. Art London,’ hoping to gain his favour.”<sup>73</sup>

The uneasy relationship Chambers and Curnoe had with the London Art Gallery existed because they thought it had outdated curatorial and exhibition practices that did not benefit young, local artists. Beginning in 1962 Curnoe sold several paintings to public institutions in Canada, including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Vancouver Art Gallery. After several years of hard work and little monetary reward Curnoe was gratified by these sales; in the local newspaper he was quoted as saying that “[t]hings are beginning to perk.”<sup>74</sup> The next December (as noted in an earlier chapter), he sold another painting, *Spring on the Ridgeway* (1964), to the Art Gallery of Ontario. In the fall of 1966 he sold *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* (1966) to the National Gallery of

Canada. Shortly after this the London Public Library and Art Museum bought its first Curnoe work, *Feeding Percy* (1965). Although he was certainly glad to have the London Museum buy his work, Curnoe was bitter that it had not done so sooner: "It's very nice the London gallery is taking one of my paintings. It would have been nicer, though, if it hadn't waited until the National Gallery bought one and thought it was 'safe' to get one. It would have been a real help three years ago, I really needed it then."<sup>75</sup>

A virtually identical thing happened with Chambers. As noted above, in 1964 he sold his first work to a major Canadian gallery when the Vancouver Art Gallery bought his painting *Olga Visiting Graham*. The same year the National Gallery of Canada purchased *Olga along the Thames* (1963). In 1965 the London Art Gallery purchased *Olga Visiting Mary* (1965). Chambers was resentful that the first gallery to buy his work was in Vancouver, and was not the London Art Gallery. Like Curnoe, he was aware of hesitancy on the part of the London Art Gallery, which he contended only purchased his work after it had been given the stamp of approval by the sale to the Vancouver Art Gallery. He was also resentful that Bice (who in 1957 had given him an unfavourable letter of reference for a Canada Council Grant) recommended against the London Art Gallery purchasing *Olga Visiting Mary*.<sup>76</sup>

Not only did Chambers and Curnoe believe their work was considered second rate by certain public Canadian galleries during the 1960s, they also believed their choice of profession was similarly undervalued. Chambers claimed that galleries and museums under-recognized the role of the artist, to whom they owed their very existence: "All the persons connected with an exhibition of an artists [sic] work, from the gas station attendant who filled the truck that transported the works, to the museum janitor, the office

staff and curator, are paid a fee or salary. The artist is the reason why the others have a position and a wage; yet the artist is the only one who receives nothing.”<sup>77</sup> Whether or not the museums’ attitude was due to the myth that artists are willing to starve for their art, or whether they just considered Canadian art to be inferior to European or American art, is uncertain.

During the 1960s, as more artists began to work in London, they began to lobby to achieve more prominence within their local cultural milieu. In particular the London Art Gallery found itself faced with a dilemma: as the London arts scene changed, was the museum obligated to change its mandate and exhibition practices? The London Art Gallery was never conceived of as a museum of modern art; indeed, it had previously relied on exhibitions of older art by European and European-trained or influenced artists such as Paul Peel. The museum’s reluctance to embrace works by living artists may be indicative of the ambivalent relationship between the museum and contemporary artists. Zolberg characterizes the relationship between artists and art museums as “one of fretful symbiosis.”<sup>78</sup> Zolberg observes that “[a]lthough [...] art museums are much admired throughout the world for their accomplishments in disseminating culture to a broad public, they tend to exclude artists themselves from authoritative positions in aesthetic decisionmaking.”<sup>79</sup> This was also the case in Canada, both generally and specifically at the London Art Gallery. Despite the fact that Bice was an artist, Curnoe believed the gallery needed to increase its inclusion of artists in its administration, and he actively lobbied to change the situation.

The uneasy relationship between London’s artists and the art gallery continued for the next two decades. In the 1970s the London Art Gallery decided to expand and move

to a new building. The site and form that the new art gallery should take became a hotly contested subject. Nancy Poole recalls that local artists were concerned that too much money was being spent on the building, a situation that would be detrimental to local artists (it was believed that there would be less money to purchase works by local artists).<sup>80</sup> There was a vigorous debate over a suitable location for an art museum. Curnoe, an advocate of urban renewal and historical preservation through the use of existing facilities, voiced the opinion that it should be situated in a refurbished London Armoury building. He was ultimately unsuccessful in his bid.

Up until the early 1970s London's art gallery had been part of the London Public Library, a municipal department. Curnoe observed that "ironically the existing art gallery was part of a system which also included an extensive film, record, art periodical and art book collection as well as an auditorium and meeting rooms. The existing library-art gallery complex was the creation of Richard Crouch, who saw culture and cultural institutions as interdependent with and complementary to each other."<sup>81</sup> Curnoe feared that the rift between art and the community would only be widened by moving the art gallery to a separate building.

From 1974 the art gallery had a member of CAR on its board. In 1978 Curnoe was the CAR representative, a position he was not entirely comfortable with, remarking upon the apparent absurdity of "being in this multi-million dollar building on a committee that was trying to decide whether or not it could afford to buy a \$100 picture."<sup>82</sup> While Curnoe sat on the board as a CAR representative, it was not until January 1980 that he became the first artist to be appointed to the executive committee of the board of the gallery.

The tension between London's younger generation of artists and the administration of the publicly funded gallery can be contextualized if we return to Habermas' idea of the public sphere. Habermas categorizes the public sphere as a space of rational debate and dialogue among the bourgeoisie in which the needs of society was articulated and subsequently presented to the state. The arts and intellectual organizations of the 1920s and the Kingston Conference in 1941 created just such a space, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts. The Canada Council, in turn, provided funding to assist public art galleries. Due to the increased involvement of the state in the public sphere, this can be seen as evidence of the 'refeudalization' of the public sphere. In a later work, Habermas differentiated between the lifeworld (which has relevance to daily life) and the system (state-run institutions which did not). The idea of lifeworld and system provides a helpful framework to explain the polarized relationship between young artists and the bureaucratized public art gallery system in the 1960s.<sup>83</sup> During the 1960s, young artists in London did not believe that their needs were being met by the public system, which they saw as having little relevance to their lives. In opposition to this Curnoe and his male cronies formed what Nancy Fraser calls a "subaltern counterpublic."<sup>84</sup> Their arenas of debate were varied and mutable, and intended to destabilize existing social conventions. These oppositional counterpublics centred around artist-run cooperative spaces, local underground publications, the organization of artists into CAR and the activities of the Dadaistic Nihilist Party of London.

## **Chapter 7: New Directions: Artist-Run Spaces and Alternatives to the Mainstream**

In Canada most public gallery directors and curators (especially for small and medium-size institutions) during the 1950s and 1960s were also artists; for example, galleries in London, Windsor, Kingston, and St. Catharines were all directed by practising artists. However, the growing professionalization of gallery staff and higher critical expectations moved many public art galleries to 'upgrade' their programmes, often breaking long-term relationships with established art societies.<sup>85</sup> This was due, in no small part, to the level of performance Canada Council funding required. The result, however, left local artists out in the cold.

Reluctant to be dependent on what they considered to be outdated curatorial and exhibition practices, and disenchanted with the narrow scope of traditional galleries, young artists in the 1960s sought different ways to reach their publics. Artists wanted to be able to make and exhibit their art in a way that they saw as a logical extension of their lives. Over the years both Greg Curnoe and Jack Chambers were connected with several artist-run cooperative spaces, although, for a number of reasons (Chambers' illness among them), Curnoe was more actively involved than Chambers. Curnoe's association with artist-run spaces dated to his years as a student at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto in the late 1950s.

Curnoe became involved in artist-run galleries during his first term at OCA. In the autumn of 1957 the Garret Gallery opened in Toronto. Occupying the second floor of a building at the corner of John and Stephanie Streets, the gallery was founded and run by a

number of drawing and painting students in their third year at OCA.<sup>86</sup> Although Curnoe was only in his second year (he had received advanced standing upon admission to the college) he was included in the gallery because he was friends with one of the other members.<sup>87</sup> In addition to functioning as an exhibition space, the gallery also served as a studio and living quarters for several of the students (who were responsible for the rent).<sup>88</sup>

Curnoe was among the nine founders of the Garret Gallery.<sup>89</sup> All painters, the members were a lively and culturally diverse group of young men, whose styles and philosophies varied. One of the founding members, Herb Watson, recalled the bohemian environment: “At 218 John we created on a shoestring a gallery in which each object is a piece of creativity and conversation.”<sup>90</sup> Assembling furniture and decorations by inventive and often nefarious means, the gallery “took shape as it grew from nothingness.”<sup>91</sup> Among the gallery’s members, Curnoe stood out: Watson described him as an artist “willing to discuss (?) any subject with enthusiasm well into the night.” Curnoe, he claimed, was “perhaps the most radical in his approach to painting.”<sup>92</sup>

The artists who were involved with the Garret Art Gallery strove to transcend traditional barriers between venues that exhibited and sold art, and the artists who created the work. Watson wrote:

Here people interested in the artist and art can meet, talk and philosophize in an atmosphere that has not been artificially created—it is the result of the combining of nine personalities. Here two of us live and paint; here separation between painter and his painting has disappeared. Unfortunately today there is a great chasm between the world of the public and that of the artist.

In an effort to bridge the chasm between artist and public the artists nostalgically believed that their gallery was a “step back in time.” They fervently believed that the

Garret Art Gallery could function “not just as a place of exhibition” but as “an invitation of understanding.” Sincerity was their catchphrase, and they saw the gallery as “a vital living organism with something to say.”<sup>93</sup>

The Garret Art Gallery provided its members with a ready-made exhibition space. The artists occasionally sold works on which (happily) the gallery did not take commission.<sup>94</sup> In December 1957 Curnoe participated with the other co-operative members in his first group exhibition at the gallery. The show was entitled *Nine Young Painters*. He continued to exhibit there regularly. In January he participated in a second group show—*An Invitation to a Graphic Show*. The following month he participated in *An Exhibition of Paintings*. In the spring of 1959 he participated in a four-man show with George Nalywajko, Don Thompson and Viktor Tinkl, which received mediocre reviews from the *Globe and Mail*. Curnoe exhibited an expressionistic, mocking self-portrait called *Selfchildfool* (c. 1959) (Fig. 12), a work that was described as “an almost-good portrayal of what is now called ‘a badly mixed up kid’.”<sup>95</sup>

In 1958 the Garret Art Gallery moved to a new, larger location on Gerrard Street.<sup>96</sup> This time it occupied an entire two-storey building and featured a storefront. Again several members of the group rented accommodations and studio space on the premises. Idealistic though it was, the gallery was beset with petty problems of a practical nature; it was difficult to find members willing to man the shows, and it had a number of “large phone bills for which no one would assume responsibility.”<sup>97</sup> The gallery closed in the spring of 1959 when the drawing and painting class that started it graduated from OCA. In May 1960 Curnoe left Toronto and returned to live in London.

In 1962 the Region Gallery, London's first artist-run gallery, opened.<sup>98</sup> Region Gallery was the second artist-run co-operative space that Curnoe was involved with. Jack Chambers, who had recently returned to London, was one of its founding members. Located in a small storefront at 352 Richmond Street, the gallery fronted a picture-framing shop. Curnoe claimed that the gallery remained operational largely because the clients of the framing shop (which had regular hours and thus provided a measure of staffing) had to enter through the gallery.<sup>99</sup> The founding members of the Region Gallery were Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe, Brian Dibb, Art Pratten, Larry Russell, Tony Urquhart, and Bernice and Don Vincent (a writer and photographer).

As with the Garret Art Gallery artists, the Region Gallery artists were a diverse group. "They all have something in common," Curnoe noted, "but only the fact that they live in or around London, and are all in their twenties or early thirties."<sup>100</sup> The artists all contributed to the rent for the space, which hosted poetry readings and various improvised events in addition to organizing exhibitions (it did not have studio or living space).

Although Region Gallery was a cooperative gallery, Curnoe's influence was paramount. John Boyle recalls his first visit:

It was full of small painted constructions or assemblages of found and collaged wazzu objects using old photographs, bus transfers coupons, package labels. Everything was painted in bright enamel colours straight from the can, or in daglo orange and blue, incongruously covered in a layer of dust and cobwebs, as though hauled up from some wine cellar. There were works by Greg and by the legendary person of Brian Dibb, who loved everything American, thought Canada should join the United States, moved there soon after, and was never seen again.<sup>101</sup>

The Region Gallery was not the first time that London artists had organized and rented communal studio space in opposition to the art establishment. In 1952 a number of

young local artists became frustrated with the London Art Gallery's refusal to provide studio space for them in the gallery or access to nude models. They banded together and rented a studio in the old Guild House on Kent Street, where they proceeded to hire models.<sup>102</sup> The Guild House, which relocated to Queens Avenue in the mid 1950s, was owned by an industrial designer named Eric Warrington and his wife, Shirley, who worked at the London Art Gallery.<sup>103</sup> The Guild House quickly became one of London's vibrant cultural centres, and artists and intellectuals like Jim Kemp, Herb and Margo Ariss, Selwyn Dewdney, John O'Henley and Paddy O'Brien gathered and participated in workshops there.<sup>104</sup>

Curnoe pointed out that there was a good deal of stimulating communal cultural activity in London in the 1940s and 1950s—activity that laid the framework for the artist-run spaces of the 1960s. In addition to the artists based at the Guild House, another group of individuals congregated at a house at 321 Queens Avenue in the 1950s. This group consisted of a more diverse set of characters: doctors, a poet, a psychologist, several artists, and a couple of philosophy students met at the house where it was rumoured that they experimented with LSD in the early 1950s.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to exhibiting visual art, and hosting performances, artist-run spaces often produced publications. Thurlow points out that the artist-run spaces often counted “those publications not as simply a calendar of events but as a visual presentation unto themselves.”<sup>106</sup>

Although most of the artists involved with the Region Gallery aspired to make a living through their art, the gallery's primary focus was not financial. Curnoe notes that, while the members of the gallery agreed to pay the gallery a small commission, nothing

was ever sold; indeed, he wrote: “no one ever really expected to sell anything from the gallery.”<sup>107</sup>

Curnoe pointed out that the artist-run spaces that began in the 1950s and 1960s operated at a time of conservative (and Conservative) fiscal policies. Neither the Garret Art Gallery nor the Region Gallery received any government funding—they operated solely under their own aegis. Curnoe wrote:

The Garret Art Gallery and Region Gallery were started to meet a need, grants were not a possibility, and so artists started them as cheaply as possible and ran them for as long as they could. Neither of these galleries ever had any kind of public funding and both basically provided member artists with uncurated space to show their work. No policy determined what kind of work members could show in them.<sup>108</sup>

The exhibition of local artists is an important feature of artist-run spaces.

Spaces like the Region Gallery provided a forum for local artists who had grown weary of the tendency of older regional galleries to exhibit non-local artists (usually long-dead ones). Public regional galleries usually hosted touring shows from the Extension Services of large metropolitan galleries like the Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Gallery of Canada, and local, living artists were rarely considered worthy of promotion.<sup>109</sup>

All of the exhibitions at the Region Gallery featured local artists. In a letter to the editor of *The University of Western Ontario Gazette*, Curnoe highlighted this fact: “In the London area there are no commercial galleries aside from a couple of jewellery stores that sell pot boilers. There was no place (until Region) for painters to exhibit their recent work that was not a public institution. London’s ‘official’ art circles, such as they are, are completely smothered by out-of-date sophistication.”<sup>110</sup> Not only was the Region Gallery a venue for local artists to (try to) sell their work, and a social gathering place, it also

provided a space to showcase more avant-garde work than London was used to. For example, in 1962 an exhibition called *Vacuum Cleaner* featured “collective improvised writing on the gallery walls.”<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately the Region Gallery was short-lived: due to several factors it closed in 1963. Curnoe recounted that the framing store’s irregular hours interfered with the gallery’s operation and that “the members of Region didn’t or couldn’t mind the gallery.”<sup>112</sup>

Three years later, in 1966, another artist-run centre opened in downtown London. The 20/20 Gallery was located on the second floor of a building on King Street (just east of Ridout Street). Both Chambers and Curnoe were among the founding members. This time the artist-run centre had a higher level of organization than either the Garret Art Gallery or the Region Gallery. Its board of directors consisted of a number of artists, several professors at the University of Western Ontario, and a writer, all of whom were sympathetic to the plight of young local artists.<sup>113</sup>

20/20 Gallery operated differently than previous artist-run co-operatives in several ways—it did not include studio space or living quarters for the members, and the rent on the gallery space was paid for by an anonymous donor (a London businessman) rather than through shared rent from its members. From its second year of operation, the gallery received funding from the Canada Council for the Arts through a series of grants.<sup>114</sup> As were the Garret Art Gallery and the Region Gallery, the 20/20 Gallery was “set up as an alternative to the local public art gallery.” Curnoe wrote: “20/20 gallery existed in opposition to it and consciously exhibited work that would never have appeared there or in the local commercial galleries.”<sup>115</sup>

The exhibition mandate of the 20/20 Gallery was also broader than those of previous artist-run centres. While its primary purpose was “to provide a showcase for the exuberant and growing community of artists in London” (gallery members claimed that “nothing like that existed in 1966 and the existence of the artists provided the sense of a necessary function”), it was also intended “to bring London the work of major Canadian artists—and exhibits from further afield—in comprehensive one-man shows.”<sup>116</sup> The organizers of the gallery believed that this kind of ambitious exhibition programme was not available in London at the time either.

Curnoe notes that there was a difference of opinion between 20/20 board members on the application of international standards over local ones. Several board members supported international standards and they became embroiled in a public debate with the poet and playwright James Reaney, who adamantly supported local ones.

Reaney, born and raised on a farm near Stratford in southwestern Ontario, was as staunchly committed to the idea of region as Curnoe was. After working for several years at the University of Manitoba, in 1960 he moved to London to teach at the University of Western Ontario.<sup>117</sup> Upon his arrival in London he immediately began publishing *Alphabet: A Semi-annual Devoted to the Iconography of the Imagination*.<sup>118</sup> *Alphabet* was published nineteen times between 1960 until 1970. In 1967 Reaney opened the Alphacentre, an arts community centre. Curnoe describes the Alphacentre as “a non-profit, multi-media centre that was an early advocate of improvised theatre using found, local materials.”<sup>119</sup> (On Saturdays at the Alphacentre Reaney held his “Listener’s Workshop”—a drama workshop “in which children and adults took part in acting out sections of the Bible.”<sup>120</sup>)

The 20/20 Gallery aimed to provide a multidisciplinary program of events. It would “initiate and play host to special events [...] stress the experimental in the arts,” and actively involve artists “in the organization, policy and programme of the gallery.”<sup>121</sup> It also hoped to “become a focus for the active and professional arts community of the town, and to provide a place where their existence would be visible.”<sup>122</sup> The statement insinuated that the London Art Gallery was not playing an active or relevant role in the artistic life of London, because it did not acknowledge the role of and participation of local, living artists.

As had previous artist-run spaces, the 20/20 Gallery began with a flurry of optimism and activity, although the initial enthusiasm would ultimately prove impossible to sustain. During its first year (1966-1967) the gallery was staffed by volunteers on a daily basis, and had a range of exhibitions and events. The gallery held one-man exhibitions of local artists Chambers, Curnoe, John Boyle, and Royden Rabinowitch, and solo shows of several artists from Toronto.<sup>123</sup> A group exhibition, *Young London*, showcased a number of young local artists;<sup>124</sup> there was a graphic design show from Montreal, and an exhibition of quilts from Ontario and Quebec. The gallery also hosted a number of special events: it held a benefit screening of the film *A Man for All Seasons*, hosted a number of readings, and provided a venue for performances by the Nihilist Spasm Band.

The next year the 20/20 Gallery’s programme was equally ambitious, and it broadened both the range of artists who were exhibited and its special events. London artists were again featured: Beverley Lambert-Kelly, Ron Martin, and Don Vincent each had their first solo show at the gallery in the 1967-1968 season, and a group exhibition of

local pottery and weaving was held.<sup>125</sup> There were also a number of Canadian artists from farther afield: the Montreal artist Guido Molinari, Roy Kiyooka from Saskatchewan, and Jack Shadbolt from British Columbia all had one-man shows at the 20/20 Gallery. In addition to this, the gallery hosted the *Ontario Centennial Art Exhibition* and a show of British prints.<sup>126</sup> Among the special events was a new offering: the gallery instituted the *Conversations with Artists Series*, which featured talks with the British painter Harold Cohen and Guido Molinari. That year the gallery also offered poetry readings, two plays, selections from Plato's *Dialogues*, several bus trips, a speech on Marshall McLuhan by Geoffrey Rans, and two fora: "A New Public Art Gallery for London," and "Subsidy in the Arts Today."<sup>127</sup> The gallery also screened three films by Jack Chambers: *Mosaic*, *Hybrid* and *R34*.

In addition to the major exhibitions held at the 20/20 Gallery, Goldie Rans organized a series of shows called *The Little Gallery Exhibitions*.<sup>128</sup> She also organized art classes for children and adults, and children's classes were held in the backyard of the gallery during the summer.<sup>129</sup> During the second season, it continued to be staffed by volunteers.<sup>130</sup> The gallery's programming gained even more momentum in the third season. In 1968-1969 it continued to promote local artists and exhibit up-and-coming Canadians from outside London. The *Conversations with Artists Series* expanded to include eight artists' talks, and art classes expanded to include a special Saturday afternoon teen class.<sup>131</sup> Tony Urquhart organized an ambitious exhibition of twenty-four London artists, *Swinging London*, which toured throughout Ontario.<sup>132</sup>

The last year the 20/20 Gallery operated was 1969-1970. In addition to an ambitious exhibition and activity schedule, the season featured a series of films by

and about Jack Chambers. The series, called *Toward London*, was organized by Archie Young, and included *R34*, *Circle 4*, and *Chambers*, a biographical film by Fraser Boa.<sup>133</sup> That year, Goldie Rans also organized the *Michael Snow Film Project*, in collaboration with Fanshawe College.<sup>134</sup> The final art exhibition held at the gallery, *Inventions and Perceptual Motion Machines*, featured an eclectic group of inventors who made a number of unusual constructions and drawings.<sup>135</sup>

There were lasting effects from the broad exhibition policy of the 20/20 Gallery. Curnoe claims that since the 1960s “the London cultural community has [...] maintained links with Halifax, Québec, Montréal, Toronto, Regina, Vancouver, New York and increasingly Windsor.” The links with Montréal were the strongest: Curnoe notes that Serge Lemoine, Guido Molinari and Paterson Ewen all exhibited in London for the first time at the 20/20 Gallery.<sup>136</sup>

Curnoe and Chambers were very involved with the gallery during its four years of operation. In 1966-1967 and 1967-1968, both were on the steering and exhibition committees. In 1968-1969 both were on the steering committee, although only Chambers was on the exhibition committee. In 1969-70 Curnoe was again on both committees—Chambers, probably due to his recent diagnosis with leukaemia, did not sit on either committee.<sup>137</sup>

In April 1970 the 20/20 Gallery closed amid tensions. Curnoe claimed that part of the reason it closed was that it was difficult finding people to work on a voluntary basis. Additionally, the gallery was in danger of running a deficit, which, he believed, worried some of the board members. He recalled:

There was always tension at 20/20 between the artists and the other board members. The assumption that artists were financially irresponsible was at the

bottom of a lot of conflict. The assumption was partially true because artists did not run the gallery. Financial policy and control was held by academics who were supporters of the arts. They had a fear of deficits. The artists used the finances raised and organized by others without the responsibility of replacement or repayment.<sup>138</sup>

The official gallery press release claims, however, that it was not closing because of lack of money, but simply because “the energy and ambition that initiated the gallery [were] no longer available.” Regretfully the press release noted that there was still a need for a co-operative artist-run space in London, but it stated bitterly: “We recognize the dwindling of our support in the community, and are aware of a positive hostility in certain quarters which has never diminished. And we seem not to have the energy left to overcome it, or to allay it.”<sup>139</sup>

Throughout the story of these artist-run spaces runs a current of dissatisfaction. Curnoe, in particular, often seemed bitter at the short-lived nature of the artists’ co-ops he was involved with. There is, however, another way of interpreting them, one that sees them as having a natural cycle and evolutionary nature. Instead of viewing them as organizations that failed, they can be seen as organizations that helped foster a sense of community during their existence. Manuel Castells believes that in a network society (a new form of society that resulted from the “information technology revolution and the restructuring of capitalism”<sup>140</sup>) the construction of identity is based on the concept of communal resistance. As he puts it, “people resist the process of individualization and social atomization, and tend to cluster in community organizations that, over time, generate a feeling of belonging, and ultimately, in many cases, a communal, cultural identity”<sup>141</sup> Castells takes this idea further to claim that in order for this to happen, “a process of social mobilization is necessary.”<sup>142</sup> In other words, “people must engage in

urban movements (not quite revolutionary), through which common interests are discovered, and defended, life is shared somehow, and new meaning may be produced.”<sup>143</sup> The outcome of these social movements is not necessarily as important as the mere existence of the movement, which produces meaning “[n]ot only for the movement’s participants, but for the community at large.”<sup>144</sup>

In early 1968 Chambers founded the London Film Co-op because “[t]here were a few local experimental film makers who found themselves in the same position as I did: we had neither a place to see experimental films from other countries, nor had we a distributing outlet for our own films in Canada. ... Getting or sending films to or from the States was a real headache.”<sup>145</sup> The London Film Co-op was operational by March 1968 and it catalogued “a modest two dozen or so films from film makers in an around London and Toronto.” Chambers notes that while the London Film Co-op was “never understaffed or overworked,” for the eight years that it existed it provided a much needed distribution outlet for London filmmakers.<sup>146</sup>

Although there was no venue in London for the distribution and screening of experimental films from other countries until 1968, there was a community of people who were interested in seeing such films before this. A decade before, in the mid 1950s, the London Film Society was formed, and the society arranged screenings of “important European films.”<sup>147</sup> The London Film Society acted as a bridging organization as it was the “one place where members of the university community and people mixed and worked together.”<sup>148</sup>

Artist-run spaces really came to the fore during the 1970s, when they became known as parallel galleries. Victor Coleman, one-time director of *A Space*, a cooperative

artist-run centre in Toronto, refers to these artist-run spaces or parallel galleries as “the third network.”<sup>149</sup> Although Ann Thurlow claimed in 1977 that the parallel gallery movement was “barely five years old,” parallel galleries had obviously existed as co-operative galleries a good while before the 1970s.<sup>150</sup> Not until the 1970s, however, did the Canada Council devise a specific programme that provided consistent funding to foster a network of artist-run centres.

After the closure of the 20/20 Gallery in 1970, three years would pass before another artist-run cooperative gallery opened in London. Again, it sprang into existence in reaction to less satisfactory alternatives. The short-lived Polyglot Gallery was established in 1973 by Jamelie Hassan and Dave Gordon and was initially based in the front room of the Polyglot Bookstore.<sup>151</sup> Shortly after its opening, and following a contretemps with the bookstore owner over the direction that the exhibitions should take, Hassan and Gordon rented a space on Richmond Street with several other artists. Thus, the Forest City Gallery was born. Three of the founding members had also been on the board of directors of the 20/20 Gallery, among them Greg Curnoe, who claimed that they “remembered the lessons of that experiment.”<sup>152</sup>

The Forest City Gallery offered a varied programme of events, ranging from art exhibitions by local, national and international artists and poetry and literary readings by such luminaries as Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro, to performance art and punk rock concerts.<sup>153</sup> Efforts were also made to integrate work by aboriginal artists, and Hassan’s work brought a refreshingly multicultural dimension to the London art scene.<sup>154</sup>

The gallery occupied a number of locations after Richmond Street, among them a storefront on King Street. In 1982 it relocated a third time to a second floor space on

Dundas Street, where it stayed until 2004. In the summer of 2004 it moved into its present premises at 352 Talbot Street.

Although its programming was similar to that of the 20/20 Gallery, the operation of the Forest City Gallery was fundamentally different. Instead of the mix of artists and intellectuals that were involved with the 20/20 Gallery, all of the original members of the Forest City Gallery were professional artists. Policies were established to try to circumvent some of the problems that had plagued the 20/20 Gallery; for instance, in order to make sure that the office manager was accountable to the membership, a decision was made to appoint only a member of the gallery to the manager's position. This also ensured that the manager's salary "went directly into the artistic community."<sup>155</sup> The membership at large put forth grant applications, and the gallery was financed solely through the efforts of the membership.<sup>156</sup>

Funding began to be handled differently in the 1970s, both for artists and for the gallery. When CAR formally proposed its exhibition fee schedule in 1968 the Forest City Gallery was one of the first galleries in Canada to adhere to the organization's demand.<sup>157</sup> Curnoe wrote: "The board always emphasized at that time the necessity for artists to be paid for services and for all artists' exhibition expenses."<sup>158</sup> The gallery, in turn, also began to receive funding from the federal and provincial governments in the form of grants. Shortly after its inception the Forest City Gallery received Canada Council grants, and it was the first co-operative gallery to receive an Ontario Arts Council grant. Curnoe contended that the Forest City Gallery, like the 20/20 Gallery "became a model for artist run centres when O.A.C. grant policy was set" (although it could be argued that A Space in Toronto was the model).<sup>159</sup> From its inception the Forest City Gallery enjoyed

substantial government financial support, particularly during the 1970s. Curnoe writes that when the Forest City Gallery was formed the Canada Council for the Arts was “actively supporting the policies of artist run centres and exhibition fees.”<sup>160</sup> The Forest City Gallery also began to receive funds from the municipal government of London. As a result, “it was a period of easy and seemingly endless public funding” for the Forest City Gallery. Additionally, because the granting system was in its infancy, there was a great degree of autonomy as to how the galleries decided to spend the grant monies they received.<sup>161</sup>

In 1983 a number of artists who were involved with the Forest City Gallery became unhappy and broke away to form the Embassy Cultural House, an artist-run centre located in the Embassy Hotel in east London.<sup>162</sup> The Embassy Cultural House was not funded by government grants. It was offered funding by the Ontario Arts Council, but a decision was made by its members to decline government funding because they believed that it came with certain expectations that would compromise their artistic integrity and freedom. As was the pattern with most of the artist-run centres in London, the Embassy Cultural House eventually fell prey to inner tensions and the founders abandoned it.<sup>163</sup> The Forest City Gallery, however, proved the exception to the transitory nature of previous artist-run centres, and continued to operate, although it did not remain strictly an artist-run centre. Instead it developed into a more traditional gallery and membership was no longer limited to professional artists.<sup>164</sup>

Despite individual differences the co-operative gallery movement provided members of the London artistic scene with a communal identity. As Dave Gordon comments,

The cooperative movement has always been strong in London, and when you see Greg Curnoe's early film of a Region Gallery opening and see how young people who are still in the scene look, or when you realize that there are twelve-year olds in London who have always gone to the Annual Nihilist Party NO PICNIC then you realize just how long the whole thing has been going on.<sup>165</sup>

The artists who formed London's co-operative galleries were stylistically and ideologically diverse, and, despite claims to the contrary, their work cannot be said to have constituted a 'London School'. Perhaps the strongest reason for the cohesion of London artists was pragmatic; Gordon claims that the diversity that is

a characteristic of parallel galleries, [...] is probably due to the original impetus behind most of them: artists get together to show their work because they have more impact on the public, and they are able to survive as artists better with the support of their peers, and not because they paint the same or even think the same.<sup>166</sup>

Despite not being a 'school' there were several important group exhibitions in the late 1960s that presented London's young artists as dynamic and hip.

The first of these was *The Heart of London*, which was organized and circulated by The National Gallery of Canada. Pierre Théberge curated the exhibition. Fittingly, *The Heart of London* opened first at the London Public Library and Art Museum on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1968;<sup>167</sup> it subsequently travelled to Hamilton, Calgary, Stratford, Kingston, Victoria, Edmonton, Ottawa, and Charlottetown. Interestingly, it was not shown in either Toronto or Montreal, Canada's two major art centres during the period. The eleven artists from London and its environs received welcome exposure with the exhibition.<sup>168</sup>

The exhibition generated a good deal of press, much of it heavily influenced by the tone of the National Gallery's own press release. The press release portrayed the London artists as "a group of eccentric young swingers" whose "art reflects their

personalities—light-hearted and not given to considering themselves too dramatically.”<sup>169</sup>

The press release emphasized the youth of the participants, pointing out that while the three oldest members of the exhibition were in their thirties, the rest of the group were still in their twenties. The gallery claimed: “Out of all this emerges an art that is notable for its freshness and youthful vigor.”<sup>170</sup>

Curnoe was generally acknowledged as the core of the exhibition, a role he owed partly to his association with Théberge. Théberge’s initial meeting with Curnoe in 1966 led to an ongoing interest in the artistic production of the city, and provided the germ of his idea for *The Heart of London* exhibition. Théberge originally intended to curate a two-man show of Chambers’ and Curnoe’s work, but was persuaded by Curnoe to include a larger group of local artists. This proved advantageous for the entire group, as it brought much greater attention to their work and London’s cultural scene. In August 1968 the National Gallery of Canada, on the recommendation of Théberge, purchased his painting *The Heart of London*, after which the exhibition was named.<sup>171</sup>

Partly because of his powerful personality, Curnoe overshadowed other artists in group exhibitions (Chambers included), and although *The Heart of London* included eleven very different artists, the sixteen page catalogue was ‘Curnoe-esque’. It is interesting for several reasons: firstly, in appearance it mimicked a comic book, one of the most pedestrian forms of popular children’s entertainment in the 1960s, and as Curnoe often claimed, one of his earliest artistic influences. Printed in bright colours on cheap stock, it boldly rejected any ideas of “high art.” Secondly, instead of just reproducing images from the exhibition like a standard catalogue, it consisted of comic-strip profiles of the participants, each of whom contributed the material for their own

profile. The content of the individual profiles varied; Curnoe's contribution emphasized his anti-establishment personality and his antipathy towards formal art. Chambers', on the other hand, was much more esoteric, and evidence can be seen of his interest in death and perception.

The catalogue was the idea of William Bragg, assistant to the director of the gallery's extension services. Bragg claimed that "[t]he idea was to make a kind of scrapbook, to talk as a group, not individuals. Their work is kind of echoed by the comics—it's really their bag [...] Everyone likes to read comics once in a while, anyway."<sup>172</sup> The gallery liked Bragg's idea and believed that the catalogue "caught something of this youthful spirit" of the exhibition.<sup>173</sup> Because it was unlike anything ever produced by the National Gallery the catalogue generated significant publicity for the exhibition.<sup>174</sup> Barry Lord called it "the most irreverent art exhibition catalogue ever published...."<sup>175</sup> For some reviewers, the catalogue was even more noteworthy than the exhibition; a critic in the *Montreal Star* wrote: "What's probably most off-beat about it [the exhibition], though, is its catalogue...."<sup>176</sup>

The promotion of the participants in *The Heart of London* as a loose group of highly interesting young individuals can be traced back to an article written by Don Vincent in *artscanada* in 1967. Vincent, the husband of London artist Bernice Vincent, was a personal friend of many members of London's avant-garde. He held a position at the London Life Insurance Company, but was also a photographer and at night he documented much of the London art scene in the 1960s. In his article Vincent presented a portrait of London's cultural community as a diverse group of young artists creating a variety of types of art: "Not a big scene. Nor formal movement. But a lot of people work.

Some steadily, some sporadically. And in many styles. There's about one style for each artist."<sup>177</sup>

Vincent managed to put his finger on the pulse of London's artistic scene, and his pronouncement on the artists' autonomy provided subsequent reviewers with a way to link their work. Vincent declared:

...all those painters and sculptors working away so separately. There's no real focus, no formal grouping of any kind. They have no regular contacts among themselves. It's so very healthy. With no organization it's almost impossible for them to be affected by some high-blown critic or self-appointed guru plotting a course for art in London. That blight that has eaten away so many centers of art in Canada seems unlikely to occur here.<sup>178</sup>

The grouping of the eleven artists in a single show nevertheless bound them together, and whether they formed a 'London school' or not, reviewers continued to look for a commonality among them. This is a phenomenon that continues to the present; in her catalogue essay for the 2001 exhibition *Greg Curnoe: Life & Stuff*, Sarah Milroy concluded that "[w]hat these artists shared was not any stylistic similarity but rather an attitude of stubborn indifference to the fashions of the national and international art scenes and a rootedness in place."<sup>179</sup>

The idea that London artists were young and hip really took root in January 1968 when Barry Lord wrote an article entitled "Swinging London (Ontario)" for the *Star Weekly Magazine*, the Saturday supplement to *The Toronto Star*. Lord echoed Vincent's opinion that there was no single London 'style.' He believed that the artists were creating works of individuality within a common environment. Lord's portrait of London's culture in 1968 focused on the newest aspects of the community rather than the staid establishment. His article mentioned such things as the York Hotel, the Nihilist Spasm Band, the 20/20 Gallery, the Alphacentre, the underground film industry and so on.

Lord tried to determine what factors accounted for London's cultural vitality. He claimed that "the spirit of friendly co-operation" was what distinguished "the London scene."<sup>180</sup> Lord singled out Chambers and Curnoe as "most of the essential center around which London's art scene has grown."<sup>181</sup> He mentioned the fact that both artists had chosen to return to their city of birth after studying elsewhere, which, he believed proved their loyalty to London, making them "in fact two important reasons for the high quality and peculiar character of London's art."<sup>182</sup>

Lord believed that the interest of Chambers and Curnoe and their contemporaries in real life was fundamental in making London "the swingiest city in Canada."<sup>183</sup> "The people who make London swing," Lord believed, "have discovered that art is not in museums or monuments; they've learned that art only matters if we make it ourselves, from the things we know around us."<sup>184</sup> Lord contended that the populist appeal of their art was evident in the amount of activity happening in new artist-run centres in London like the 20/20 Gallery and the Alphacentre, where even children were being exposed to "some of the zany genius in town" at weekly art classes.<sup>185</sup>

The close connection between art and everyday life in the works of Chambers and Curnoe was not lost on Lord. When discussing Chambers' film *Circle* (in which Chambers filmed his backyard over the space of a year), he wrote that the film "makes us see the importance of everyday taken-for-granted conditions of life."<sup>186</sup> "Chambers' preoccupation with the wonder of the commonplace, and his ability to convey its magic in his art," Lord continued, "is somehow not surprising in a city with experimental theatre in its Legion Hall, a Spasm Band in its tavern, and a jukebox in its art gallery [the 20/20 Gallery]."<sup>187</sup> He went on to state that "[t]his identification of life and art

is even closer in the colourful, cluttered studio of the flamboyant, gregarious, be-moustached Curnoe.”<sup>188</sup> The two artists were the magnetic force at the centre of London’s artistic renaissance.

Lord believed that the larger community of London was enlightened and enlivened by the artists’ local inspiration. He exuberantly declared, “[T]he whole city is just perceptibly quivering with this new understanding that art comes from our immediate environment, and what we do to it.”<sup>189</sup> Lord contended that the excitement over what London artists were doing was so great, in fact, that it spilled over into other “satellite centers of action.”<sup>190</sup> He even went so far as to claim that because London had such a surfeit of talent it was now exporting this talent as local artists relocated to other cities.<sup>191</sup> “The secret of swinging London” was, for Lord, due to “people who’ve learned that the arts may be profound and eternal, but must first be handy,” and he strongly believed that London’s artistic blossoming could provide a model for a “new kind of Canadian art.”<sup>192</sup>

Both Vincent’s and Lord’s articles were enormously important in the subsequent perception and portrayal of London artists, and many critics and newspaper columnists repeated the key ideas in their exhibition reviews of *The Heart of London*. For example, Gary Michael Dault, in *artsCanada*, focused on the individuality of the artists, writing that “[n]ot the least of the remarkable things about it is the feeling one gets of the extent to which each of the artists in the show is his own man....”<sup>193</sup> Dault emphasized this further:

While it is doubtless true that they enjoy each other as personalities and sources of energy, and that they come together, some of them, to attend a Nihilist picnic or to hear (or play in) the Nihilist Spasm Band, or to read (or write in) *20 Cents Magazine*, their work, as it is presented in *The Heart of London*, is deeply

personal and aesthetically individual. So much so, in fact, that I should think the show will do much towards ending that tiresome stuff one hears so frequently about the 'neo Dada London scene....'<sup>194</sup>

Fuelled with a ready-made interpretation of the exhibition, *The Heart of London* generated significant press coverage. While most of it was positive (although the majority merely repeated the ideas put forth in the press release), some of the more traditional gallery-goers reacted unfavourably to the exhibition. An anonymous writer in the *Stratford Times* claimed that the exhibition “resembles a bad dream after Lobster Thermidor at midnight” and concluded the works must be the “expressions of ‘sick’ minds.”<sup>195</sup> Surprisingly, two negative reviews came from university newspapers: Valley Ruddick of the University of Western Ontario’s *Gazette* called the “motley collection of painting, sculpture and photographs” banal.<sup>196</sup> She took exceptional offence at Curnoe’s anti-American content: “Here you can see your country ridiculed by a London ‘artist’ in an abomination of stenciled [sic] junk called *The North Strong and Free: Nos. 1-5*, by Greg Curnoe, who, not content to drag down his country, must bring with him the name of Canadian artists.”<sup>197</sup> Brenda Maybee in the *Queen’s Journal* reacted with bemusement to the exhibition, likening one work to a “towel rack,” and deeming the contents of the entire exhibition “inanities.”<sup>198</sup>

One particularly vehement reviewer objected strongly to the cost of organizing and circulating *The Heart of London*. Barry Thorne, a Queen’s University professor, wrote in the *Kingston Whig-Standard* that “the sort of gay triviality characterizing this exhibition cannot reach me. What does reach me, however, is the \$100,000 tab picked up by the National Gallery of Canada to send the bleeding ‘Heart of London’ perambulating around the country.”<sup>199</sup>

The occasional negative review may have actually proved beneficial to the exhibition's attendance, since people ventured forth to see what all the fuss was about. Indeed, in the National Gallery's press release Curnoe's anti-establishment tendencies were mentioned, lending the exhibition a slightly risqué aura before it even opened.<sup>200</sup> The (supposedly) contentious nature of the works and the artists undoubtedly appealed to a segment of the population. Those that liked the show tended to sympathize with the 'hipness' of the works and the installations. During its trip across Canada, the exhibition was particularly well received in Edmonton, where Virgil Hammock commented enviously that he "couldn't imagine anyone putting together a Heart of Edmonton show..."<sup>201</sup> The show also made a splash in Calgary, where the local reviewer thought "[t]he show could be as far out as Calgarians are likely to get for some time."<sup>202</sup> Another Calgary reviewer called the exhibition "a welcome disturbance."<sup>203</sup>

Within a short period of time it was apparent that the show was going to be successful. In December 1968 the artists of London were featured in a second article in the *Weekend Magazine* entitled "The Maple Moose Forever." The article featured numerous photographs of the artists in their studios, at the York Hotel, and in their local environment, along with a profile of each artist. The author of the article, James Quig, allowed each of the artists to speak for themselves, articulating their own particular philosophy on what made the conservative environment of London a cultural success.<sup>204</sup> Some of the artists gave pragmatic reasons for working in London. Royden Rabinowitch claimed that it was "easier for a young artist to live in London because of low rents."<sup>205</sup> His twin brother David said, "London has always been a very conservative place [...] and it always will be."<sup>206</sup> (The conservative nature of London would soon prove too

constricting for the Rabinowitch brothers: in the early 1970s they both moved to New York City.) London's conservative nature was interpreted more positively by other artists, in particular Curnoe, who believed that it produced a self-sustaining and "thriving art scene." He insinuated that Londoners were somehow more genuine than people in other cities when he claimed that "[p]eople here react to you with the feeling they were born with."<sup>207</sup>

By the time that the show opened in Ottawa, it had gained considerable momentum. Although it was not originally scheduled to be shown in Ottawa, this decision was eventually changed and it opened there on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969, to considerable fanfare. The secretary of state, the Honourable Gérard Pelletier, was scheduled to open the exhibition (he was delayed and only arrived in time for the dinner), and there was a sit-down meal for 60 people after the event. There was an Italian theme: guests were seated at four-person tables covered in red-checked cloths and served pizza (with all the trimmings), green salad, spumoni ice cream and coffee.<sup>208</sup> A variety of dignitaries, artists and gallery staff mingled at the event.

The success of *The Heart of London* was followed quickly by the exhibition *Swinging London: Being an Exhibition of 24 London Eccentrics*. The exhibition, which was organized by Tony Urquhart for the 20/20 Gallery, was held at the Western Fair in London, and subsequently travelled to St. Catharines, Waterloo, Guelph, and Scarborough.<sup>209</sup> Through the efforts of a group of young artists who rebelled against the establishment and asserted their cultural autonomy, and with the assistance of curators, academics and reporters, the city's reputation as one of the 'hippest' places in Canada

had been secured. London was not just an important centre of artistic activity—it had also become a hotbed of anarchy and activism.

## Chapter 8: Anarchy, Activism and Anti-Americanism

Political awareness and various types of activism became the hallmarks of the 1960s and early 1970s, particularly for Curnoe. By the early 1960s he had become distressed by the political apathy (or “moderation”) that he perceived among people of his own age.<sup>210</sup> In an unpublished essay from 1963 he proclaimed, “I believe that everyone should be politically involved, even if it is only in a private way. As a painter I am politically involved.”<sup>211</sup> Curnoe’s political involvement was not conventional or organized. He declared forcefully that he “believe[d] in personal anarchism,” which, he claimed “justifie[d] any action whatsoever.”<sup>212</sup> (He parenthetically claimed that this statement made him “ineligible for admission as an immigrant to the United States of America under Section 212 (a) (28) (A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.”<sup>213</sup>) Curnoe linked anarchism with creative freedom, and he cited the examples of the French poet and director Antonin Artaud and the controversial American writer William S. Burroughs, both of whom were artists who had been misunderstood and persecuted.<sup>214</sup> “Personal anarchism,” Curnoe claimed, “gives me a lot of freedom, although, in a sense, the removal of discipline is the most difficult discipline.”<sup>215</sup> Curnoe also believed that anarchy played an important part in national politics. He reasoned, “The use of personal anarchism in national politics, for instance, gives me a wonderful justification for destroying my ballot, or not voting, or for critisizing [sic] in any way anyone in office.”<sup>216</sup>

In September 1963 Curnoe founded the Nihilist Party of London, Ontario, along with a number of like-minded friends.<sup>217</sup> He was undoubtedly influenced by the nihilism

of the international Dada movement, which revelled “in the aesthetic of chaotic, random or fortuitous acts.”<sup>218</sup> The artist’s convictions led to his involvement in a political protest over the 1963 Ontario provincial election. The London Nihilist Party, which was opposed to established methods of government (among other things), urged voters in the 1963 provincial election to “Vote Nihilist—Destroy Your Ballot.” The Party plastered London’s streets with defaced posters of the Ontario Premier John Robarts (Fig. 13).<sup>219</sup>

Curnoe recalled the event:

We were in the process of putting a poster over a John Robarts poster when a policeman appeared and ripped it down, saying that it wasn’t a fair way to do things. His action, of course, was equally unfair, especially since the other political parties had been doing the same thing, but since he had all the arguments we were helpless to do much except argue back. It rankled me for weeks until we got back at the cop in a minor way, letting him know that his authority was questioned.<sup>220</sup>

In 1964 the Nihilist Party made the local news when it organized a banquet and ball at “a secret meeting place.”<sup>221</sup> Charles Gerein, of the *London Free Press*, called the party an “anti-organization” with no leader, central philosophy or doctrine. Gerein provided a brief explanation and history of the nihilistic movement for his London readers; he also noted that the average age of the members was thirty and that roughly one-quarter of the membership were students from the University of Western Ontario. Gerein reported that the Nihilist Party was planning “to run for model parliament this year—without a platform and not as a member of a party.”<sup>222</sup>

While the Nihilist Party may have had serious conceptual underpinnings, in many respects it rapidly degenerated into a light-hearted social organization whose exploits baffled many conservative Londoners. Because of the anarchistic style of organization it was difficult to establish exactly who were the members or sympathizers.<sup>223</sup> Between

1965 and 1967 members of the party gathered at a summer cottage in Port Stanley, a small vacation town on Lake Erie. The cottage, which was dubbed “No Haven”, functioned as the Nihilist Party Lodge. On August 1 1965, the first of many Nihilist Picnics was held in Port Stanley. The Nihilist Party also dabbled in the arts, producing *No Movie I* in 1965. *No Movie I* was a colour documentary about the Nihilist Party filmed on location in Curnoe’s studio. In August 1965 a number of members of the Party gathered in the studio to record the soundtrack for *No Movie I*.<sup>224</sup>

One reviewer recognized the tongue-in-cheek aspects of the Nihilist Party, calling it “a semi-serious organization that looked a lot like the Rhinoceros Party of Quebec.”<sup>225</sup> He noted that the party was very active socially—organizing suppers, picnics, get-togethers, sporting events, and so on.

In October of the same year The Nihilist Spasm Band (the members of which had recorded the *No Movie* soundtrack) was formed. In addition to Curnoe, the original members of the Nihilist Spasm Band were John Boyle, Bill Exley, Murray Favro, Hugh McIntyre and Art Pratten. In 1966 John Clement and Archie Leitch join the band. The band consisted of Curnoe and the other men playing atonal experimental music on homemade instruments. (The precursor to the Nihilist Spasm Band, the London Jazz Kazoo Octet, was formed in May 1965.) John Boyle caught the significance of the band: “Although some would hesitate to call it music, the Nihilist Spasm Band was perhaps the supreme experiment in collective Nihilist culture making....”<sup>226</sup> Barry Lord engaged in the spirit of the Nihilist Spasm Band when he called it “the squawking mouthpiece of the Nihilist party of Canada (Vote No!), which has its non-headquarters (and, of course, denies its existence) in London.”<sup>227</sup>

The Nihilist Spasm Band attracted London's young and hip avant-garde and, of course, students from the local college and university. Grant Fair of the University of Western Ontario's newspaper, *The Gazette*, expressed its attraction colourfully: "Waddling across the highway 401 of middle class convention like a toad crawling out of the slime of London's collective unconscious, pulsing to the beat of the cosmos, it's what's happening! It is the NIHILIST SPASM BAND!" The Nihilist Spasm Band rapidly gained fame around London, and, for a number of years, had a regular Monday night gig at the York Hotel (in addition to many special engagements). The York Hotel was a local public house across from the CN Station, with a loyal group of regulars. On Monday nights, however, the hotel was filled with students, professors, artists, "the occasional Canada Council member, social workers—the jaded and hip of London."<sup>228</sup> At one of the Monday night gigs Grant Fair asked Curnoe what the Band's goals were. Curnoe replied: "Don't ask me that, Christ! You can't be serious."<sup>229</sup> John Boyle would have been a better one to ask: "We have no themes, we throw everything in. But it's not protest," Boyle claimed, "[i]t's a portable happening."<sup>230</sup>

The Nihilist Spasm Band was also featured on television, appearing on the local programme "The Umbrella." In 1967 they recorded a flexi-disc single, "Canada, I Think I Love You," which appeared in the centennial issue of *artscanada* (edited by Barry Lord). One of Curnoe's old classmates from the Ontario College of Art, Julie (Weatherstone) Barker, was teaching a Grade 8 class and she played the recording to her students. The students, whose responses were generally very favourable, then wrote letters about the recording to Curnoe.<sup>231</sup>

While both the Nihilist Party and the Nihilist Spasm Band were on the surface facetious mockeries of the establishment, they served a more important purpose. Through their sense of fraternity both organizations served to reinforce a strong sense of collective identity within London's disaffected cultural community. Although the Nihilist Party espoused an anarchistic approach to politics, the individual members of the Nihilist Spasm Band did not necessarily share any focused political beliefs. They did not share a lot of common interests outside the band activities, nor were they all practising artists. There have been numerous attempts to try to articulate what it was exactly that connected them. Some believe there was unity in the disunity of the members; Art Pratten discussed why the band's performances were successful despite the lack of structure: "Friction between individuals is what keeps it going often."<sup>232</sup> Others believed the cohesion of the group had a lot to do with the age of the members and their dissatisfaction with the status quo. The art critic Barrie Hale believed what united the band was "the youth of its members, and their unshakable belief in a culture that comes from the roots up, not from the establishment down...."<sup>233</sup>

In 1999 John Boyle remembered the social, political and cultural milieu of the time:

During the 1960's, I shared with my contemporaries a general malaise, in part an unhappiness with most of the societal and cultural structures that governed our lives. John Diefenbaker was colourful, but he had scrapped Arrow. Lester Pearson was intelligent but colourless. The Conservatives had been in power in Ontario forever, and the Chamber of Commerce was the local government. The London Art Gallery was remote and conservative, the Little Theatre was by turns British or American. And, of course, popular cultural industries were and remain almost entirely American owned and operated. It goes without saying that outlets for local creative people were non existent, and regional cultural traditions were discouraged and discarded, to vanish into the Canadian culture pit that already contained hundreds of original folk songs, poems, dances, and stories.<sup>234</sup>

Boyle claims London's young and hip cultural community reacted to the stifling social and cultural atmosphere by organizing itself in opposition to the conservative London environment; groups like the Nihilist Party and the Nihilist Spasm Band provided alternatives (or a "parallel society") to the staid establishment that existed in London in the 1960s. The antidote to the malaise noted above was, as Boyle claims, "the London arts phenomenon of the 1960's and 1970's [...] a somewhat successful if disjointed and disorganized attempt to fabricate a parallel culture [to] replace for us the entirely unsatisfactory official culture that threatened to suffocate us."<sup>235</sup>

Membership in the Nihilist Party fostered a sense of belonging among the young and (supposedly) rebellious counter-culture artists and their friends in London during the 1960s, and gave them the impression that they were united in opposition to the conservative establishment. Ironically, one of the employees of Canada's premier cultural establishment, the National Gallery of Canada, would eventually become one of the Band's greatest supporters.

In 1969 Pierre Théberge selected the Nihilist Spasm Band as Canada's musical representative at the Paris *Biennale des Jeunes*, an exhibition for artists under the age of 35.<sup>236</sup> (Curnoe's film *Souwesto* was one of Canada's film selections.<sup>237</sup>) The unusual selection of the Nihilist Spasm Band had been an idea that Joanna Woods Marsden (coordinator of travelling exhibitions) and Théberge had been discussing at least a year previously. In a letter to Guy Viau, the cultural liaison contact from the Department of External Affairs, Marsden wrote: "[A]t the moment Pierre Théberge and I are thinking of a participation very specially tailored to the Carnival atmosphere of the Paris

Biennale....”<sup>238</sup> The director of the gallery, Jean Sutherland Boggs, initially expressed concern over the choice, particularly as the *São Paulo Bienial* was scheduled at the same time. Boggs, seeing her young curatorial team’s enthusiasm getting close to out of control, is seen trying to rein in Théberge and Marsden: “I am also worried about the emphasis on Paris. I am afraid of the effect if the performance is not first rate. We must still give Sao Paulo [sic] the top priority since it was our primary commitment.”<sup>239</sup>

The selection of the band was controversial with the public; complaints over the government’s decision to spend taxpayers’ money to send a “band that does not play music, but only makes noise” to Paris, appeared in newspapers.<sup>240</sup> The reviewer for the *St. Catharine’s Standard* contended that it was “a case of ‘pull’ and knowing the right people” that was responsible for the selection of the group.<sup>241</sup> He wrote: “some dimwit—or a committee of dimwits—holding public purse strings at the National Gallery in Ottawa, has decided the band will represent Canada in the musical category at the Paris show.”<sup>242</sup> Phone-in listeners to a London radio station expressed the belief that the band was nothing more than a “put-on,” and a “sinful” waste of money.<sup>243</sup>

The irony of the selection of a nihilistic group by Canada’s National Gallery and the Department of External Affairs was not lost on the band members and their friends. In the *Five Cents Review* (“the monthly review of the arts in Canada”), band members were asked if their selection by the gallery meant that they had been “co-opted” and were now “official culture.”<sup>244</sup> Hugh McIntyre responded facetiously: “*five cent’s* question has forced me to think deeply about the whole situation. Slowly, and reluctantly,

I have been forced to the conclusion that the Nihilist Spasm Band has co-opted the Government of Canada. But we didn't mean to. Honest."<sup>245</sup> John Boyle, who had become disenchanted with the Band because it had ceased to be 'fun', replied: "If there is an opportunity to embarrass Canada in Paris, I will take advantage of it."<sup>246</sup> Curnoe took the question more seriously, and saw the band's participation in the Biennial in a positive light—"At last Canada is starting to export, under a cultural label, indigenous or rooted things [...] like The Spasm Band...."<sup>247</sup>

In addition to the seven band members and the curator, five wives accompanied the group on their trip. The band was scheduled to play four concerts in Paris, followed by two in London, and Théberge was dispatched to act as the group's chaperone for the trip. Marsden was responsible for much of the overall organization of the Biennale and part of her job was to ensure that the band had a pleasant stay during their trip. This meant accommodating their bohemian taste, and she attempted to book them into a hotel near the Musée National d'Art Moderne that was "both attractive and cheap." In a letter to the Canadian Embassy she elaborated on what she meant by this:

Cheap for the Spasm group means a maximum of \$11 for a double room; attractive in their terms means swinging rather than pleasant. I have warned them that there is not much (at least this is my impression) in the way of typically swinging French hotels (!) in this part of Paris but can you see what you can come up with. They are a great bunch of guys and I would like them to enjoy their first visit to Paris as much as possible.<sup>248</sup>

Due to high cost of hotels near the Musée, Marsden had to book the Spasm Band into a hotel farther afield (the Hotel Danube on rue Jacob in the 6ième arrondissement).

She wrote to Gérard Régner, of the musée:

I rather gloomily foresee a week spent hunting for the odd Spasm player or their wives, in the corners of the St. Germain-des-Prés, but never mind; Pierre really seems to believe that he will be able to convince them to turn up at the Musée

when it's their turn to play. They are so sweet that it should be fun, and they will certainly enjoy the 6ième much more.<sup>249</sup>

The logistics of transporting all of the band's equipment overseas also provided some stressful moments, particularly as they were highly unorthodox instruments that weighed about 300 pounds in total.<sup>250</sup> Marsden expressed concern over how the considerable musical equipment would travel and whether there would be any "difficulty with the French Customs on their arrival."<sup>251</sup> Despite her trepidation, the band and their equipment arrived safely in Paris and the performances proceeded as scheduled. The band gleefully played up their selection as "Canada's Official Music Team 1969," and even sported crests on their jackets identifying themselves as such. The team affiliation was superimposed over a Canadian flag, in the centre of which appeared the words "No Captain."

The opening venue for the Spasm Band's Paris engagement was the basin of a drained fountain in front of the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, a large neo-classical structure on the bank of the Seine River (Fig. 14). Marsden provided on-the-scene reports for the National Gallery back in Ottawa. In a telex shortly after the opening, Marsden noted that there were about 200 people at the opening, "including artists, critics, curators in Paris for the Biennale...." who looked at the exhibitions and listened to the Nihilist Spasm Band. Among the guests at the opening were Michel Sanouillet and Teeny Duchamp, wife of the artist Marcel Duchamp. General members of the audience did not know quite what to make of the band. Marsden, however, put a positive spin on the band's performance, writing that "[g]uests very clearly enjoyed themselves even if conversation difficult at times. In addition lunch-hour crowds were attracted off

Faubourg St-Honore [sic] into courtyard by noise.”<sup>252</sup> Curnoe also noted the audience’s bemusement at the band’s performance in Paris. He recalled: “The audience was made up of young French intellectuals, and they just didn’t know how to place us, somehow.”<sup>253</sup>

Marsden realized that the appeal of the band was clearly not their music. In a memo to the National Gallery she reported that the band

was a big hit in Paris and charmed everyone who heard them although possibly for reasons other than the sound. The qualities which seemed to charm listeners most: 1) total informality and complete lack of self-consciousness, 2) sense of humour (commented on as quote Anglo Saxon unquote trait), light hearted approach and evident enjoyment they got out of the whole thing (most groups at Biennale take themselves very seriously), 3) strong personal individuality of all members, seemingly quite unchanged in French context. By being so totally and happily themselves they contributed greatly to the atmosphere of the Biennale a fact recognized by all....<sup>254</sup>

In the preparations for the Biennale there had been some debate over the name of the band, and whether or not it should be translated into French. After some consultation with Gérard Régnier of the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Marsden recommended against translating the name to capitalize “on current anglomania in France.”<sup>255</sup> (In addition to the desire to capitalize on anglomania, it had become apparent that the word “spasm”, when translated into French, had erotic connotations that Marsden feared would make the band the object of ridicule in Paris.<sup>256</sup>)

After the opening of the Biennial the Spasm Band was invited to a reception at the Canadian Embassy (Fig. 15). Their unorthodox appearance and behaviour caused some consternation; the next day a reporter commented on their hairy appearance, turtleneck sweaters and running shoes. The reporter also noted how, in order to safeguard the 18<sup>th</sup> century embassy’s fine furnishings and crystal chandeliers, the ambassador’s wife

prohibited dancing at the event.<sup>257</sup> At one point Archie Leach was asked by the ambassador's wife to remove his river-walking boots from the antique coffee table, and Art and Barbara Pratten spent some time kissing under a chandelier for photographers.<sup>258</sup> "Champagne flowed freely, and as subtle signs that the reception was over meant nothing to the uncouth Nihilists, they had to be nudged toward the door."<sup>259</sup>

As Marsden had feared, the organization of the band members during their trip was anything but simple; in true anarchist fashion they resisted any type of schedule or discipline, preferring to pursue their separate interests. Some visited local landmarks and cultural sites, while others preferred to hang out at cafés or brasseries in Paris such as Les Deux Magots and wander around London's seedy Soho district watching strip shows.<sup>260</sup>

The fact that the Nihilist Spasm Band was made up of a group of loosely affiliated individuals was made even more evident on the trip. Art Pratten related:

One thing was proved while we were there. Individual members of the Spasm Band, any two or three, can put up with each other for periods of time. But the Spasm Band as a whole cannot stay together for any period of time over about five minutes, without playing. Playing is the only thing that we have in common, that will keep us together. We couldn't agree on a place to eat, we couldn't even agree on which way to walk, what streets to go on, how to get there, how to get away from there, what time to pack up, what time to play, whether or not we should play at all or go and drink beer. We couldn't agree on anything, not one thing...<sup>261</sup>

The band travelled to England after the Paris Biennale where they played two gigs in London at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Marsden was not impressed by the reception that the band received in England. Despite an agreement with the Institute of Contemporary Art that the band would play a concert on October 7<sup>th</sup>, not much had been

done to promote the event. In one of her many missives to the National Gallery she observed that

when Pierre Théberge and the Spasm members arrived in London they were not made to feel that they were welcome or that anyone looked forward to the concert. They were treated in an offhand and casual way and were made to feel that they were intruding on the more important affairs of the I.C.A. Very little interest was actually taken in publicizing the concert, and no member of the I.C.A. attended it other than two members of the workshop staff. The attendance in fact consisted of fifteen people.<sup>262</sup>

Théberge recalled how the audience dwindled over the evening, leaving “slowly one by one or two by two,” until only Théberge was left.<sup>263</sup> He put the less than enthusiastic reception of the band in London down to “English reserve.”<sup>264</sup>

The trip to London might have been an utter disaster if the English pop artist Richard Hamilton had not stepped in to help. Hamilton had met Curnoe in London, Ontario the previous year when he came to Canada to organize and judge *Canadian Artists '68* (awarding prizes to both Curnoe and Chambers).<sup>265</sup> In another memo to the National Gallery Marsden described Hamilton's intervention:

Attempts by the Band to have a second concert arranged while they were in London proved fruitless until the artist Richard Hamilton took up their cause and virtually shamed the I.C.A. into giving them another. Although the audience at the 2<sup>nd</sup> concert was still not large, it could be considered a success because it included people like David Hockney, Jim Dine, Richard Hamilton, and William Townsend, all of whom apparently thoroughly enjoyed themselves.<sup>266</sup>

Despite the success of the second concert, the band members did not particularly like London. Not only was there was a garbage strike in the city but their hotel, the Green Park Hotel, Half Moon Street, Shepherd's Market,<sup>267</sup> was a 'dive' and they found the British food almost inedible.<sup>268</sup> After their two gigs, the group separated before returning to Canada: Archie Leitch and his wife went to Ireland for a visit and Curnoe and his wife, Sheila, went to Brampton to visit her relatives.

Upon their return to Canada, various members of the band contributed letters, reminiscences and articles to *20 Cents Magazine* about their experiences. In general, they liked Paris much better than London. Murray Favro noted that the “cool” Parisians “were not threatened by the band,” and that he felt at home there.<sup>269</sup> John Boyle considered the band “[v]ictims of a colossal archetypal bastard British snub at the Institute of Contemporary Art, who didn’t want to soil their avant garde reputation.”<sup>270</sup> Boyle was so disenchanted with England that he left a day early to return home: “Canada is better in every way.”<sup>271</sup> In an interview with Robert McKenzie (editor of *20 Cents Magazine*) Bill Exley complained about the plain appearance and lack of talent among the Soho strippers, and John Boyle complained about the greasy British food: “They put bacon in a pan and fry it. Then they fry potatoes in the bacon grease. Then they fry tomatoes in the grease. Then they serve it all to you, swimming in grease.”<sup>272</sup>

While Curnoe’s anarchistic involvement with the Nihilist Party had an underlying seriousness, it also had facetious and playful aspects. Chambers’ involvement with his fellow artists, on the other hand, was much more focused and businesslike. One of the most significant contributions that Chambers made to the visual arts community was his role in the formation of the Canadian Artists’ Representation group.<sup>273</sup> The origins of CAR extended back to August 1967 when Chambers and a number of other Canadian artists received letters from James Borcoman, director of education at the National Gallery of Canada, telling them that the gallery intended to reproduce slides of a selection of their works unless the artists specifically objected.<sup>274</sup> The artists who received letters had been part of the centennial exhibition *300 Years of Canadian Art*. Borcoman informed the artists that the exhibition “contains such important material for an

understanding of the development of Canadian art that the National Gallery has decided to use it as a basis for producing a slide library of Canadian art in sets containing approximately 2,000 slides.<sup>275</sup> These slide sets were intended for restricted distribution to “museums, schools, universities and other educational institutions.”<sup>276</sup>

The gallery was not offering to pay the artists a royalty fee for the use of the original art. This infuriated Chambers, who believed that artists should be fairly compensated for their art. He later recalled the letter from Borcoman: “The letter was to the point and offered that exploitive tone characteristic of galleries, government offices, patrons and institutions who want something from the artist and count on getting it for nothing.”<sup>277</sup> Chambers believed that a united group of artists could successfully counter the gallery’s proposal, so he photocopied Borcoman’s letter and sent it to 130 artists across Canada.<sup>278</sup> The artists responded with support for Chambers’ position, and he quickly sent out a form letter for them to send to the National Gallery. The letter was polite, and conceded that the production of an educational slide set was a “very good idea.”<sup>279</sup> He pointed out that the National Gallery was “only one of a network of middle interests which profit from their involvement with reproducing the slide” and advocated that “[t]he artist should be the first to benefit from his own work in this process but in fact, he has no place in the present arrangement.”<sup>280</sup> To rectify this situation, he proposed that the artist receive royalties in exchange for reproduction rights to their work and requested a meeting with the National Gallery to discuss the matter.<sup>281</sup> The mobilization of artists was ultimately successful (they eventually would get royalty rights), but it scuttled the gallery’s slide set project.<sup>282</sup>

Chambers did not just rely on his fellow artists to pressure the gallery. He also enlisted the help of David P. Silcox, arts officer at the Canada Council. Silcox, on behalf of the artist Jacques de Tonnancour, wrote to Borcoman expressing his dismay that the gallery was not offering to pay royalties for the use of the artist's work, since "[i]t seems to me and to the other officers of the Council a most important principle to insure both respect and fair payment for the artist."<sup>283</sup> Silcox wrote to Chambers later that year letting him know that he had tried to intervene with the National Gallery. Silcox indicated his sympathy for Chambers' dilemma: "as you yourself suggest, the biggest problem is one of getting the artists involved to speak with one voice and to insist unequivocally upon whatever rights they have."<sup>284</sup>

Chambers was ultimately successful in assembling a number of interested artists and, toward the end of 1967, he christened the "fledgling group of artists" Canadian Artists' Representation.<sup>285</sup> The group was centred in London, Ontario, and Chambers, Tony Urquhart, and Kim Ondaatje acted as the unelected executive. By his own admission, though, Chambers was the main decision maker:

...up until the First National Conference, Sept. 1971, CAR was really a kind of centralized 'benevolent dictatorship'. It really was, and often is, the quickest and best way to get things done. I would make decisions on certain issues or present certain proposals and send them on to the membership by mail for comment and/or approval. At that time, from 1967-1971 there was no organization to speak of at the regional level.<sup>286</sup>

Despite the fact that there were no organized regional branches of CAR, artists from across the country were interested in the same issues that Chambers was—particularly the question of copyright. In 1968 Chambers organized a meeting in Ottawa with several artists from different regions of Canada (Takao Tanabe from British Columbia, Ken Lochhead from the Prairies, Bob Downing from Ontario, Yves Gaucher

from Quebec and Peter Bell from the Atlantic Provinces), representatives from the National Gallery, the Canada Council, the Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization (CAMDO), and the Professional Art Dealers Association of Canada (PADAC), to discuss copyright.<sup>287</sup> The meeting was a success, with the institutions agreeing that legally copyright belonged to the artist in Canada unless they signed it away. The representatives of CAR insisted that the law be honoured.<sup>288</sup> The same year, Chambers and Urquhart drafted a fee schedule for art rentals, which they sent to every gallery in Canada. The schedule was not met with enthusiasm as “the whole concept was out of line with the established practice.”<sup>289</sup>

CAR grew quickly, and locals sprang up in a number of cities across Canada (including London) by the end of 1970. Curnoe and Bob Bozak had the distinction of being the first elected representatives of a local when they were elected in London.<sup>290</sup> In 1971 the first national conference of CAR was held in Winnipeg (coinciding with the opening of the new Winnipeg Art Gallery). At the Winnipeg conference, Chambers was officially elected president, Tony Urquhart secretary, and Kim Ondaatje treasurer (a continuation of their unofficial roles). Although he was not part of the national executive, Curnoe was one of the almost 300 original members (a number that grew to 500 practising artists by the next year<sup>291</sup>). The first executive was all based in London, Ontario; however, it was the intention of CAR to have a rotating system of executives based in different areas of the country (for the sake of convenience it was felt that the executive would function most effectively if the members were all residents of the same city or region). The executive would hold their positions for two-year terms, after which voting members would elect a new executive.<sup>292</sup>

In 1971 CAR had had a fairly simple goal: "To provide revenue for the practising artists."<sup>293</sup> The ideology behind the organization rapidly evolved from a simple payment-for-services philosophy to one that was much broader. In 1972 Ted Johns wrote: "Because CAR is operated democratically and serves to present the demands and proposals of the membership to the institutions and government bodies which dominate the art world, CAR now finds itself concerned with much wider areas of general reference."<sup>294</sup> These widening areas of reference can be seen in the editorial statement of the CAR spring 1973 newsletter:

Artists intended their alignment to CAR as a gesture of mutual support; and as the broadest possible basis for expressing opinion, and knowing what artists think. CAR is also a tangible sign whereby the extent of opinion can be articulated to those galleries and institutions whose staff depends upon the artist and his produce for its livelihood. It was towards improving the professional and economic status of Canadian artists that we founded a common basis on which to come together. CAR's aims seek for all artists, whether they are members or not, the benefits and the status due their professionalism, which other segments of society already enjoy.<sup>295</sup>

From the beginning, CAR emphasized an interest in the practical aspects of art, rather than focusing on the 'high culture' side of it. They presented their rationale in egalitarian and collective terms:

CAR seeks for artists, through their mutual support, the principle of a fair exchange in the economy: i.e. payment for services. The artist is probably the last professional in our society who is systematically exploited by other organized groups and professions. We have brought this situation upon ourselves, to a great extent, through our inability to smother momentarily ourselves as individuals, for the sake of benefiting ourselves as a whole...CAR's aim is to uncover the means, implicit in the works themselves, for providing revenue to the practising artist, without his having to take on other major employment in order to live on a par with the rest of society.<sup>296</sup>

As previously mentioned, the initial aim of CAR was simply to provide revenue for working artists. This sounded perfectly reasonable, but how was this to be

accomplished? CAR claimed it would be achieved firstly through exhibition fees, secondly, “by supporting, encouraging and initiating plans and programs which assist or subsidize the practising artist, providing him with some sort of guaranteed income,” thirdly, “through copyright, by making it easy for an artist to be aware of and exercise his rights in this area,” and lastly, “through the abolishment of the 12% Federal Manufacturers’ tax on any fine art work regardless of materials or process used, and by freeing fine artists from having to pay any business occupancy tax at the regional level.”<sup>297</sup>

How to determine whether an artist was professional was tricky from the beginning. Chambers believed “the artist himself should decide if he was ready for CAR and could CAR be useful to him.”<sup>298</sup> The definition of an artist continued to be problematic over the years; in the 1977 *CAR News* not only those who earned a living from art, but also those who had appropriate academic credentials, those who taught art, exhibited regularly, or those who were deemed to be artists through the consensus of opinion of other artists were eligible for membership.<sup>299</sup>

At the beginning, elements within CAR were decidedly left wing—indeed, a proposal was put forth at the first national conference calling for the name to be changed to “Canadian Artists’ Union.”<sup>300</sup> This proposal, however, was defeated in a vote.<sup>301</sup>

Chambers was always opposed to the idea of CAR as a union; he reasoned that,

CAR in my view has never been nor can be a bona fide union. We have no common employer and therefore no bargaining basis to unite us unconditionally to a policy. Rather, whatever loyalty brings us together stems from the problems we face in common in confronting the organized institutional attitude which can itself only be effectively influenced by group organization.<sup>302</sup>

Curnoe, on the other hand, was one of the members who wished to see CAR operate as a union. The first issue of the *National Newsletter* reported: "Greg Curnoe presented a plan for discussion based on the structure of a farmer's union, feeling that farmers were similar to artists in that most of them were self-employed."<sup>303</sup> Curnoe's desire for representation by a union was entirely consistent with his desire to be seen as a worker and not just a hobby artist. It also probably stemmed from his working-class background. He was not alone in wanting recognition for the hard work of being a practising artist.

Indeed, CAR strove to be a democratic and inclusive organization that stressed the professional aspect of art making over the subjective, value laden criteria that had hitherto determined membership in art organizations. Chambers pointed out that "[a]ll artist organizations, associations and societies that existed presently or in the past, imposed an aesthetic and/or social criteria in their selection of members."<sup>304</sup> CAR sought to be different: "Membership in CAR is open to all practising artists in Canada. CAR is not a society; it is simply a non-profit organization working to improve the position of artists in this country and to represent their interests whenever and wherever possible."<sup>305</sup>

Paddy O'Brien suggested that Chambers' experiences in Spain had a strong influence on how he viewed his profession:

The eight years Jack spent in Spain, where the profession of artist is a respected one, laid the philosophical groundwork for his concept of the practising artist as a person who not only has a right to earn a living from his professional product, but who has a responsibility to assist his fellow artists in the struggle to exercise that right by every means possible.<sup>306</sup>

Although it was conceived with regional components, CAR was foremost a national organization. From the beginning, an uneasy tension existed between the two.<sup>307</sup>

Members of the Quebec group, fearful of regional fragmentation, petitioned CAR to downplay regionalism: “Unity is strength. The proposed regionalization will multiply bureaucracy, make for particularism and duplicate existing art societies and their ineffectiveness.”<sup>308</sup> Chambers did not believe that being a nationalist group was detrimental to the organization. He defended the nationalist bent of CAR:

CAR has been wrongly criticised as being primarily a nationalist group. Nationalism can be a deep feeling that also expresses itself in political issues. But it can be a feeling about all you cherish of what you are, a good feeling for yourself and what you have grown out of. Nationalism can be your participation in the growth of that feeling and in its agelessness in your own time. That way you become it, you give it form. It’s not just the history you read about nor is it only the accumulated past.<sup>309</sup>

Not all CAR members were happy about the national focus, though; at the 1972 Ontario CAR conference in St. Catharines, John Boyle, a CARO spokesperson read a letter from a member who had resigned “because he felt that the apolitical, loosely-structured, and nationalist nature of CAR was inconsistent with his political ideology.”<sup>310</sup>

The significance of a nation-wide arts organization trying to get a fair deal for its members was highlighted in the report from the first annual conference. Chambers, somewhat inaccurately, “stressed the fact that this was the first time, in the history of this country, that artists representing Canadian regions from coast to coast had met in the interest of mutual support.”<sup>311</sup> It was also noted, “[t]he President stressed the basic principle of CAR—the principle of FAIR EXCHANGE in the economy.”<sup>312</sup> This was a truly Canadian organization—working for the benefit of all Canadian artists.

From the beginning, Chambers believed very strongly in the power of collective action. At the first annual conference he addressed the need for “national cohesion

amongst the membership to enable CAR to negotiate effectively with institutions.”<sup>313</sup>

This was something that he continued to believe in; at the third annual conference in 1974 he stressed that practising artists were central to the cultural sector in Canada, claiming, “artists, galleries and museums must all work together. If the artists are a large enough group, the others cannot exist without them. Therefore, community of efforts by all artists is extremely important.”<sup>314</sup>

In November 1972 the annual Canadian Conference of the Arts was held at the University of Calgary.<sup>315</sup> In preparation for this conference CAR members were urged to give their regional representatives suggestions to bring forward to the conference. Jack Chambers, the president of CAR at the time, wrote an open letter to members of the organization. In it he stated that CAR had been working towards:

- 1) The making legal and mandatory of the amount of 1% (one per cent) of the cost of all federal, provincial, and municipal public buildings to be earmarked for artists to service such buildings with works of art.
- 2) That artists receive the 12% manufacturer’s tax exemption on purchase of materials for his art.
- 3) Who are to receive such exemptions? How do you identify an artist in each case? Well, perhaps those who are CAR members should be liable for commission in (1), and exemption in (2). A guideline is necessary to get started, and the recognition of CAR artists is a good place to start. Look at our membership.
- 4) That the National Gallery begin paying fees for exhibitions of living Canadian artists as of January 1, 1973.<sup>316</sup>

This letter expanded on the fundamental principles under which CAR was founded, and in the years to come CAR would go on to become involved in many more aspects of arts and public policy in Canada.

Although it was initially conceived of as a nation-wide organization, CAR served as the governing body for individual regional, and later provincial, chapters. Each self-contained region would have its own executive, the president of which would serve as its

regional national representative.<sup>317</sup> The regional organizations pursued a variety of activities separately from the national body. The initial five regions were British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces (the northern territories were linked vertically to the regions below). The regional divisions later became provincially delineated (although the Territories still lacked their own representation).

Both Chambers and Curnoe were active members of CARO. While the national and regional organizations often had overlapping concerns, the provincial organization also dealt with concerns specific to Ontario. For example, with financial help from CAR, it produced a number of helpful publications for artists in Ontario: "Some Facts About Artists' Relations With Their Dealers in Ontario" (May 1976),<sup>318</sup> and a tax handbook for visual artists (May 1975).<sup>319</sup>

Many of the personal concerns that artists such as Curnoe and Chambers had (the fear of American political domination and cultural imperialism, insistence on artists' rights and remuneration, the unsatisfactory policies and practices of Canada's cultural institutions, etc.) could be seen in the policies and activism of CAR. For example, it was reported that at the first annual conference that the executive "was directed to send telegrams to President Nixon and Prime Minister Trudeau" asking for the cancellation of the Amchitka nuclear test and urging the Canadian government "to continue to take a firm stand" against the testing.<sup>320</sup>

Although Jack Chambers was only president of CAR for the first two years of its existence, he insisted on being involved in its decision-making processes once his term was up. He reasoned that it was important that he continue to be involved in CAR, in

order to ensure continuity on projects that had begun under his direction. At the third annual conference in Edmonton on 2-3 March 1974, it became apparent that there were problems with the continuity of some CAR projects and policies, and Chambers suggested that the role of the past president needed to be clarified. He insisted that the official wording that the past president should “act as an official advisor to the national representative and to the national council” was not sufficiently specific.<sup>321</sup> At a meeting later that month, it was agreed that Chambers henceforth be known as the “Founding and Past President of CAR”.<sup>322</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, CAR expressed alarm about the number of foreign (specifically American) academics and instructors at Canadian universities and art schools. At the first annual meeting, Barry Lord made a request that CAR “endorse the petition that 85% of the faculties of Canadian universities and art colleges be Canadian citizens.”<sup>323</sup> The request was accepted. In 1972 Jack Chambers wrote to John Yolton, the president of York University, expressing concern over the hiring of a non-Canadian as the dean of Fine Arts.

The shaping of our culture by Canadian educators is a responsibility and a heritage which only we as Canadians can pass on to one another. This assumption is not blindly nationalistic but rather the bitter experience gleaned from universities across the country where deanships, chairmanships and professorships are held by non-Canadians. Subjects such as History, Sociology, Fine Arts, for example are being held today to a large extent by non-Canadians. These studies in particular provide the direct vehicles by which Canadians express themselves as individuals, as a society, and as a country. If the structuring of these vehicles so essential to a country’s personality are in foreign hands, by what reason will we still call ourselves Canadian in the too near future?<sup>324</sup>

Chambers was backed up by John Boyle, CARO spokesperson, who also wrote an angry letter to Yolton. Boyle protested:

We regard claims that qualified Canadians do not exist to fill such positions as evidence of a racist colonial mentality, and an insult to the intelligence and industry of the Canadian people. Surely one hundred six years after confederation it cannot still be argued that we require foreign expertise to help us come of age, especially in cultural fields such as the visual arts where it is essential that Canadians be at the helm not only to teach Canadian culture, but to provide a Canadian perspective on world culture, as opposed to an American or British one....<sup>325</sup>

The fight continued throughout the decade, and in 1977, CAR (under the aegis of Dale Amundson, the national vice-representative at the time), circulated a questionnaire to the department heads of Canadian schools asking questions about such things as whether or not Canadian art was being taught, what the hiring and recruiting practices of the schools were, and so on.<sup>326</sup> The survey findings were contentious—in an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*, Kathleen Walker wrote that the survey findings showed that 65% of the faculty members in Canadian art schools were non-Canadian. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) had the highest percentage of foreign faculty members—80%<sup>327</sup> (NSCAD would immediately refute this percentage in the next issue of the CAR newsletter).<sup>328</sup> The spring 1977 issue of *CAR/FAC News* was directed towards “Canadianism” (or the lack of it) in Canadian art schools and universities.

Foreign academics posed a very real threat to Canadian art schools. The following year, the “Smedley affair” caused outrage when the English artist Geoffrey Smedley was hired at the University of British Columbia. Other instructors at UBC claimed that the position was not advertised within the university, and that Smedley’s appointment constituted unfair hiring practices and smacked of cronyism. Enraged by this perceived injustice, CAR again became involved. Letters were sent to Canada Manpower requesting an investigation into the affair. Although Smedley retained his job, Manpower conceded that the hiring process had been less than fair. Lobbying efforts such as those of

CAR did lead to some positive changes, though; in 1981 the Ministry of Employment and Immigration released new advertising guidelines for jobs in Canadian universities. On May 7, 1981 the ministry announced: "Universities will be required to advertise for Canadian candidates and evaluate their suitability before seeking foreign academics for post-secondary teaching positions in Canada according to policy changes announced today by Employment and Immigration Minister Lloyd Axworthy."<sup>329</sup> These policies were not as effective as some would have wished: in January of the following year Axworthy claimed that Canadian universities were reconsidering the policy of hiring Canadians first because there were "shortages of qualified Canadian university professors in some disciplines."<sup>330</sup>

It was not only universities and schools that came under fire for hiring non-Canadians. In 1973 Chambers wrote a letter of protest to the Toronto Dominion Bank over its hiring of Mario Amaya (an American) as the bank's art consultant for its purchases of Canadian art.<sup>331</sup>

The CAR newsletter published articles about other current and pertinent issues such as the state of art education in Canada. In a panel discussion with Greg Curnoe, Ken Hughes, Leslie Poole, John Greer and Tony Tascona, the participants were asked if art schools should exist at all. True to form, Curnoe replied, "I feel that the most effective way to educate artists, young artists or art students, is not in art schools but through the availability of other working artists in the community that they live in."<sup>332</sup> When asked how art schools could do their job better, Curnoe again responded true to form: "The reason is that we don't have a proper knowledge of our own art history in this country. Our art is seen as being a provincial variant of what happens in the imperial centres."<sup>333</sup>

As far as what the appropriate qualifications for art school teachers should be, Curnoe advocated that “[a] person should have to pass tests on the culture of this country in order to teach the people of this country about the culture in this country” (he did not elaborate on who would or could administer or grade such tests).<sup>334</sup>

CAR was also extremely vocal about the administration and funding of culture in Canada and the state of national cultural institutions. Under the aegis of the Canada Council, the Art Bank was established in 1972. CAR expressed concerns about the administration of the Art Bank, who and how the selection committee was chosen, the percentage the commercial galleries received on sales to the Art Bank and so on.<sup>335</sup>

The National Gallery of Canada underwent a number of changes in the 1970s. Long-time director Jean Sutherland Boggs resigned in 1976, shortly afterwards Dennis Reid, the curator of historical Canadian art moved to the Art Gallery of Ontario and Pierre Théberge, the curator of contemporary Canadian art, moved to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1979.<sup>336</sup> In the early 1970s, the federal government began plans to relocate the museum from its site in an office building on Elgin Street, and CAR became involved in the plans for the new National Gallery (with limited success). In January 1974, concerned about proposed plans by the government to move the National Gallery to Breweries’ Creek near Hull, Quebec, Jack Chambers urged Sylvain Voyer, the national representative of CAR, to convey to Prime Minister Trudeau and the secretary of state that CAR wished “it to remain in downtown Ottawa where it is accessible to a much greater number of Canadians.”<sup>337</sup> Cartier Square was proposed as one possible site, although the eventual choice would be near Major’s Hill Park on Sussex Drive.

CAR was also worried by the lack of artist representation in the National Gallery's decision-making processes, which they believed directly affected Canadian artists. In 1976 CAR tried to have a member of the organization included in the National Gallery's selection committee for a new director (this attempt was unsuccessful).<sup>338</sup> Three years later, in 1979, when the curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery, Pierre Théberge, resigned, CAR again tried to get a representative on the gallery's selection board (Bill Lobchuk, the national director, proposed Joe Fafard).<sup>339</sup> The Ottawa artist, and vocal CARO member, Jennifer Dickson, also became involved in the debate, proposing Greg Curnoe as a possible CAR representative on the selection board.<sup>340</sup> The requests were denied and Ian Clark, director of museums and visual arts for the secretary of state, replied that the appointment of curators was the sole responsibility of the director concerned.<sup>341</sup> To reflect contemporary Canadian artists more fully in the National Gallery's collection, in 1979 CAR recommended the appointment of a curator of contemporary Canadian prints and drawings.<sup>342</sup>

Undeterred by the lack of co-operation by the National Gallery, members of CAR expressed interest in the government establishing a museum of Canadian Contemporary Art (their attempts were unsuccessful).<sup>343</sup> More successful was CAR's support for a Canadian centre for photography. The proposal for the centre—"Image Canada"—made some lofty claims. The NFB purported that the centre could benefit Canada in a number of areas—it would foster national unity, help reinforce a national identity, aid with efforts towards bilingualism and multi-culturalism, boost the economy, assist with leisure programs, and increase local initiatives.<sup>344</sup> CAR believed the centre would be beneficial for Canadian photographers, and suggested that Toronto would be the most logical place

to locate the gallery. Jennifer Dickson wrote to artist Dennis Tourbin in 1977 urging CAR on a national level to support the idea of a Canadian centre for photography.<sup>345</sup> The following spring, Gary Greenwood, CAR's national vice-representative, wrote to the Honourable John Roberts, secretary of state, showing the organization's support for the centre and offering comments on behalf of its members. The efforts of CAR and other lobbyists were successful, and, in 1985 the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography opened in Ottawa.

Wherever the visual arts could be promoted CAR could be found. Eager to see the visual arts assume a greater profile, Bill Lobchuk sent a letter to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1978 communicating a motion that "The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation should revise their policy to provide local and national daily arts broadcasts equal in time to the regular daily sports broadcasts." CAR believed that "your endorsement of the motion would be of great assistance in our endeavour to reach a greater AM Radio arts audience."<sup>346</sup> Efforts to get daily arts bulletins did not meet with success: CBC claimed that it already covered the arts quite adequately.

In 1972 the American Friends of Canada (AFC) was incorporated in New York state "by a group of distinguished American citizens headed by Mr. Hoyt Ammidon, a prominent business executive and art patron," and the Canadian art patron and philanthropist Bluma Appel, to encourage "American citizens who are interested in Canada to make gifts of bequests of works of art to the people of Canada."<sup>347</sup> The AFC planned to donate works of the 'old master' type to Canadian art museums (inferring that they lacked sufficient works of this kind). This organization, despite its apparent altruism, was conceived to secure tax breaks (in the United States) for the donors. In return for the

privilege of donating works and getting tax breaks, the association also planned to organise an exhibition of works of Canadian art that would tour the state of New York. The association's proposed donation(s), the resultant tax breaks, and the touring exhibition raised the hackles of members of the Canadian art community, particularly CAR. Members of the Canadian arts community opposed this project, and on 26 June 1972, when American delegates from the AFC came to Ottawa to meet with Prime Minister Trudeau, a number of people demonstrated in front of Bluma Appel's home.

In July 1972, Jack Chambers wrote a letter to Jean Sutherland Boggs opposing this endeavour. He also sent a copy of the letter to members of CAR. In his letter, Chambers claimed that he, and several other members of CAR, did not believe the AFC was "organized for a benefit to the art community of Canada, but as a cultural 'mending' operation in view of the dominant position taken in our culture and economy by Americans and American interests."<sup>348</sup> Chambers also wrote to Bluma Appel, offering her CAR support but cautioning:

In order for the artists to lend you that support, they have to be convinced of your concern for them and for their cultural identity. Our culture is a direct result of our being able to make a living from our art. Our livelihood [sic] comes first, then our culture. It is not enough for any Canadian to be only interested in art.<sup>349</sup>

The debate over the AFC continued for a number of years. In February 1974, Chambers wrote to Bryan Robertson, the curator of the exhibition in New York, to apprise him of CAR policies. On behalf of CAR, Chambers expressed concern that plans for this exhibition were being made without consulting artists. He also had qualms about non-Canadians promoting Canadian art, a state of affairs that he believed would lead to a

select few artists becoming rich and famous while excluding many others (he blamed commercial dealers and the dominant U.S. art market for this).<sup>350</sup>

It was not only the exhibition of Canadian art that was proving problematic for CAR; the proposed donation of artworks to Canada, and the resultant tax breaks, also continued to be a source of concern. These things were seen as a paternalistic gesture on the part of America, as it implied that Canada was nothing more than an extra-territorial extension of the United States. It also implied that Canada's artistic holdings were deficient. In 1974 Chambers wrote to Ian Clark, director of museums and visual arts for the secretary of state, clarifying CAR's position on the issue:

CAR feels that if the AFC wishes to show their friendliness to the Canadian people using an artistic gesture, they could well do so by the purchase by [sic] works of art by living Canadian artists from the tax rebate that they will receive from their gifts. These contemporary works could be earmarked for Canadian museums whose purchasing funds are excessively low.<sup>351</sup>

In early 1975 a report was written on the state of affairs. A number of prominent anti-American left-wing academics and members of CARO became involved in the discussion, with predictably anti-American results. CARO members Susan Crean, George Russell, and Peter Wilson met on 16 January 1975, to discuss the AFC and its proposals. In the confidential report produced from this meeting, the authors echoed Chambers' concerns when they stated what they believed were the motivating factors for the AFC.

These were:

- (1) to do some P.R. in Canada (2) to make money (NOTE: while it looks on the surface as if the AFC is giving, Russell noted that imperialists generally give before they take, and he outlined the affect [sic] of the AFC on the US art market.
- (3) In the case of the current art market, we are not, in fact dealing with a market but with a CARTEL which controls the supply and the demand.<sup>352</sup>

Crean, Russell, and Wilson stressed that the AFC had the power to make some Canadian artists very famous: "This means a short-term benefit to artists (some) but in the long run it will be the AFC (or the US Art Cartel) who will decide who goes [into the touring exhibition of Canadian art]...effectly [sic] will decide who in Canada is an artist." Crean, Russell, and Wilson warned that "the exhibition as a mechanism for a much larger process will none the less have the potential to divide the artistic community in Canada and will start a long but continuous process of integration into the US economic and aesthetic mainstream of Canadian creative output."

Throughout the 1970s, CAR and its regional groups were quick to intervene when they perceived that Canadian artists were not being accorded sufficient respect. In 1973 CARO submitted a brief to the Ontario Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Economic and Cultural Nationalism, in which it stated: "Perhaps the most important recommendation that can be made is that the government consult with the Canadian artists on matters of cultural policy. Artists are not a lunatic fringe but an integral part of our society, and we would suggest a very important part in that they specialize in creative thinking and innovative endeavour."<sup>353</sup> The summary of their recommendations listed twenty-one points ranging from increased government funding of the arts to the appointment of an art ombudsman to the encouragement of "mass education in the arts".<sup>354</sup>

The lack of academic credentials that practising artists were accorded by the Canadian educational system was another sore point for CAR. Chambers had long expressed the belief that artists should be eligible to receive degrees that were equivalent to those earned by academics. Because most of the art schools in Canada were not

degree-granting institutions, artists who had attended these schools were unable to teach in universities because they did not have appropriate degrees. At the third national conference in 1974 a proposal was put forth that artists who have practised their art for a minimum of five years be awarded a doctorate of art (this proposal was unsuccessful).<sup>355</sup>

In 1976 CARO decided to tighten up policies regarding artists' fees (previously all artists had been eligible for fees whether they were members of the organization or not), by taxing rental fees of non-members. CAR, and Chambers in particular, did not accept this decision and in June 1977 Chambers wrote "Reminder to CARO," in the *CAR/FAC News*. Claiming that, "CAR does not want to conscript members," Chambers reiterated his position that "CAR was founded for the good of all artists whether they became members or not...."<sup>356</sup>

When Jack Chambers died on April 13, 1978, representatives from CAR and its provincial chapters were quick to acknowledge the contribution that he had made to the arts in Canada. CARO spokesperson Dennis Tourbin wrote to Jack's widow, Olga:

The contribution Jack made to all artists in Canada by working so hard in the development of CAR will be remembered and appreciated always. His was a special contribution, a contribution which artists in Canada will benefit from for all time.<sup>357</sup>

Members of CAR had ideas on how to recognise the contribution that Chambers had made to the organization (and continued to make posthumously). Jane Martin wrote to Bill Lobchuk (the CAR national representative): "We are all very saddened by the news of Jack's death; and extremely moved by his request that donations be sent to CAR. I wonder whether, if ENOUGH money comes in, we might consider putting it in a fund, and every 5 years using the accumulated interest for a cash award to the recipient of the

Chambers Medal.”<sup>358</sup> (Martin also proposed that Chambers be the first recipient of the newly established CAR/FAC Order of Merit.<sup>359</sup>)

Eventually it was decided to use the money to create the Jack Chambers Foundation For Research and Educational Development Projects to Benefit Canadian Visual Artists. The foundation, headquartered in Winnipeg, aimed to help Canadian artists for the eventual benefit of Canadian society. In a press release it stated:

The establishment of the Foundation was initiated at the CARFAC 10th Conference in honour of the late Jack Chambers, whose work as founder of the artists’ rights organization named Canadian Artists’ Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens for the benefit of living professional artists has benefited artists throughout the world. The Foundation’s aim will be to pursue and develop research and educational projects which will result in a higher profile for Canadian art and will thus be of inestimable value to the Canadian public as a whole.”<sup>360</sup>

In 1985 the Jack Chambers Memorial Foundation published its second newsletter, *Artnet*, in which it focused its objective “to encourage an examination and acceptance by society of the relevance of contemporary art and artists.”<sup>361</sup> The foundation’s first project was to be “a 1000 slide set of contemporary Canadian art,” available for purchase by institutions and individuals. Consistent with CAR’s democratic goals, the artists included were to be chosen “by artists and educators from every province so the list is comprehensive and regionally representative.”<sup>362</sup> At the May 27th 1978 CARO conference in Toronto, it was noted that the slide collection was “a fitting if ironic tribute to Jack who was responsible for stopping the National Gallery from making such a collection.”<sup>363</sup> Due to financial constraints, the project was never realized in its entirety, although the name of Jack Chambers continues to be synonymous with the empowerment of the artist in Canada.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the 1960s and 1970s, Chambers and Curnoe lived and worked within a general climate of anti-Americanism. In fact, this sentiment was so pervasive that it was one of the factors that strengthened their sense of group identity. It also featured in a portion of their work. In this context, it is worthwhile mentioning certain episodes and occurrences of anti-Americanism in the lives and works of Chambers and Curnoe.

A number of specific issues were the focus of the artists' anti-Americanism—the Vietnam War and American cultural and economic domination in Canada foremost among them. The issues that roused Chambers and Curnoe to action were not so much theoretical as they were ones that touched them either personally and pragmatically, professionally, or emotionally and morally.

Although Curnoe became known for his anti-Americanism, and for most of his career took a public stand against exhibiting his work in the United States, he initially tried to find an interested outlet in New York for his art. In March 1965, he and Chambers brought some works for an exhibition to the Forum Gallery in New York City.<sup>364</sup> While in New York, he took slides of his work to several galleries, which expressed interest but did not offer anything definite.<sup>365</sup> The trip had an unexpected outcome though; while on an outing with the Canadian artist Les Levine (who was living in New York City at the time), they were attacked by some hooligans who injured Levine with a broken bottle. This episode seems to have been pivotal in souring Curnoe against the States. Later the same year, he immortalized the incident in an artwork *Les Levine on Canal Street* (Fig. 16), which depicted the mugging (he included the text of the obscene epithet that the muggers used as well as hanging a broken Dr. Pepper bottle from the

painting). After this episode, Curnoe refused to exhibit in the United States, and twice refused permission to reproduce his art on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Chambers was neither as nationalistic nor as stridently anti-American as Curnoe, but, like many Canadians (and a good number of Americans), he had extremely strong feelings about the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Chamber's most potent indictment of the United States came in 1967, with his blatantly anti-war film *Hybrid*. In *Hybrid*, Chambers depicted the tragic civilian casualties of the war through the use of numerous still photographs of hideously napalmed women and children, interspersed with footage from an instructional film on rose cultivation (Fig. 17).<sup>366</sup> (He apparently spent four days in New York collecting images showing the atrocities of the Vietnam War for the film.<sup>367</sup>) The juxtaposition of images is jarring and disturbing, but not without connection; Michael Zyrd notes that there are "metaphorical parallels between the work of the hybridizer [of the roses] and the work of the United States military in Vietnam."<sup>368</sup>

*Hybrid* was much more than an experimental film; Chambers used it as an anti-war tool. Chambers found the war so dreadful that he helped form an Aid to Vietnam group in London, and all rental proceeds of *Hybrid* went to the fund.<sup>369</sup> "The Vietnam war was very upsetting to me," Chambers later recalled, "I did not agree with the American presence in Vietnam, nor did I believe the ideological propaganda by which they tried to justify their aggression. I thought that a film showing some of the tragic aspects of war should serve as a useful tool for fund-raising."<sup>370</sup> The film had a visceral effect on its audience; in a review of the fund-raising screening Matthew Wherry reported: "Naturally, nobody clapped."<sup>371</sup> Chambers' film elicited a significant charitable

response from the audience. Wherry claimed that “the contribution for medical aid [...] was the highest, per capita, that I have ever seen at a meeting.”<sup>372</sup>

*Hybrid* was undoubtedly a powerful film, and Chambers’ reputation grew substantially with its screening; Wherry suggested that, with the film, Chambers had emerged “as a great social artist.”<sup>373</sup> The film would later be described as “a defiantly personal response to a war whose images haunted the public imagery of the 60’s”; a film that “stands in answer to any who feel an irreconcilable divide between art and politics....”<sup>374</sup>

Curnoe, on the other hand, was stridently anti-American, and proclaimed it whenever he got the chance. In the catalogue for *Canada 101*, an exhibition held at the Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland in 1968, Curnoe proudly stated: “I am a Regionalist and an anti-American.”<sup>375</sup> In the late 1960s he also became increasingly disenchanted with American involvement in Vietnam, although his manner of expression was very different from Chambers’. Curnoe approached the subject with wit and irony, and his style belied the seriousness of his feelings. While his work was stylistically very different than Chambers’, Curnoe nevertheless employed a similar strategy—the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated images to create a more effective statement.

In March 1968, Curnoe achieved national infamy when a controversy sprang up surrounding a public commission he was in the process of installing at Montreal’s Dorval Airport. The previous October, he had received a commission from the Department of Transport to design a mural for the arrivals corridor at the airport. The commission was significant, particularly as Dorval was Canada’s largest airport at the time. The large sum of money he was awarded received coverage in the *London Free Press*: “London artist

Greg Curnoe has received a \$12,500 commission for artwork to adorn one of the corridors of Dorval Airport....<sup>376</sup>

The completed mural, *Hommage to the R34*, measured more than 30 metres in length and was composed of 26 panels (Fig. 18). The title of the mural ostensibly referred to the historic flight of the British dirigible across the Atlantic Ocean—the first such trans-Atlantic flight. The images and text in the mural contained a multitude of personal and political references. In typically bright ‘Pop’ colours, the artist included a variety of personal images of his wife Sheila and son Owen, and friends of his such as Jack Chambers and Jack’s son, John, Bill Exley, Tony Urquhart and Tony’s son, Marsh, along with military figures (the First World War German Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy, and the British air force hero and captain of the R-34 Major G.H. Scott), and revolutionaries such as Louis Riel and Paul Joseph Chartier, the anarchist who tried to blow up the Canadian House of Commons in 1966.<sup>377</sup>

Much to the dismay of the Department of Transport, though, the mural also contained some contentiously anti-American references. In one of the panels, Curnoe painted a man who strongly resembled Lyndon B. Johnson, the president of the United States at the time, being maimed by a swirling propeller. The face of the president was painted in a vivid yellow, and his features were given a decidedly ‘oriental’ cast. Sarah Milroy comments that in the work “victim and aggressor are one.”<sup>378</sup> Curnoe denied, however, that the man was Johnson, claiming instead, it was a friend of his from London, Ontario. The text in another of the panels of the mural referred to Mohammad Ali’s refusal to fight in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, an action that resulted in the boxer being

stripped of his world heavyweight boxing championship title by the American World Boxing Association.

No sooner had Curnoe installed the first panel, than complaints began arriving. Meetings were scheduled with the Department of Transport, and the installation went ahead (although it was stipulated that it must remain covered until inspected by a government bureaucrat). Once it was completed, Curnoe was asked to remove one of the panels, a request that he flatly refused. Four of the offending panels were subsequently removed by the Department of Transport, and then the entire mural disassembled. It ended up in the vaults of the National Gallery of Canada. (The Canada Council commented on the event in its tenth annual report: “Not every one of the many commissions [for airports] was successful, but the process seems to us at least as important as the product.”<sup>379</sup>)

The Dorval mural controversy received national newspaper coverage, most of it critical. The editor of the *Regina Leader Post* wrote: “Ridicule of the head of a neighbouring nation and the glorification of a demented man—few will even remember his name—are not the sort of things taxpayers care to subsidize. That stuff should be peddled elsewhere, if anyone is silly enough to buy it.”<sup>380</sup> The editor of the *London Evening Free Press* also lamented, “Anti-Americanism is an unfortunate fact in the life of some Canadians.”<sup>381</sup> While acknowledging that Curnoe would “be a poor painter of pictures if his work had no message,” the editor concluded that: “this was the wrong message, delivered in the wrong place and at the wrong time.”<sup>382</sup> (The editor also called the commission “an exercise in poor judgement by the artist and poor husbandry of taxpayers’ funds by the government.”<sup>383</sup>)

Many of Curnoe's friends and colleagues supported his warnings about the cultural imperialism of the United States and its effects on Canadian identity. On 11 March 1970, Curnoe and John Boyle participated in "an evening of conversation" at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University in Kingston. At the event, Boyle read a rant about the United States entitled "Continental Refusal/Refus Continental."<sup>384</sup> Boyle presented a grim overview of Canadian inferiority, and a pessimistic view of the future of Canadian culture in the face of encroaching Americanization. He ended his paper by calling Canadians to action in order to preserve the country's cultural autonomy. He offered the challenge: "I feel that if there is such a thing as a duty for a Canadian, it may be to harness and institutionalize Canadian apathy and skepticism, and to remove foreign impositions so that the idea of Canada may grow and give birth to things of worth and beauty."<sup>385</sup>

Curnoe's contribution to the evening of conversation was a reading from his journal of a trip to Nova Scotia, and a series of amendments to the "Continental Refusal" (both of which fell on unresponsive ears). The amendments to the "Continental Refusal" (along with Boyle's paper) were published in *20 Cents Magazine* in April 1970. Numbers 1 to 10 of Curnoe's amendments were read in Kingston; a week later he added another twenty-seven amendments in a reading at the University of Windsor.<sup>386</sup> The amendments ranged from the emphatic ("That we the citizens of the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest country in the world should sever all connections with the smaller country immediately to the south of us"<sup>387</sup>) and the defensive ("A 100 mile wide defoliated-depopulated zone along the old Can. U.S. border"<sup>388</sup>), to the ridiculous ("Canadians with American blood to have 3 notches clipped in their left ear"<sup>389</sup>). Boyle's and Curnoe's "Continental Refusal" was obviously

modelled after Paul-Emile Borduas' *Refus global*, a politically radical artistic manifesto in which Borduas and *les automatistes* called for artistic and cultural autonomy from Quebec's traditional establishment.<sup>390</sup>

Curnoe elaborated on his anti-Americanism in an interview in *File* magazine in 1973. Recalling the 1970 reading of the "Continental Refusal" manifesto at the University of Windsor, he recounted:

It was fantastic because all the Americans went home. The Chairman apologized you know to our American friends after I was finished. It was really funny...I was just laying on a little Canadian chauvinism on the people who lay American chauvinism on and they couldn't take it and went home...I got a standing ovation from the people that stayed. It was really unbelievable.<sup>391</sup>

For Curnoe, Canadian nationalism during the 1970s was inextricably linked to anti-Americanism. He was adamant that he did not believe in a homogenous "national character," claiming that his sense of nationalism was "simply protective." He stated: "my sense of nationalism is purely Anti-Americanism, just fuck the Americans."<sup>392</sup>

Curnoe's idea of protectionism stemmed from his feelings about the strong influence of American culture and opinions in Canada. He disliked the way that the United States set the criteria for how Canada was judged, whether it was artistically or intellectually. Curnoe believed that the presence of Americans in Canadian public institutions had a detrimental effect on the uniqueness and variety of Canadian culture; in fact, he claimed that because the Americans who were getting jobs in Canada were "not as cosmopolitan as Canadians," Canadian institutions were suffering. "As [the institutions] become more and more Americanized," Curnoe contended, "they become more and more parochial and more and more provincial."<sup>393</sup>

Curnoe had voiced similar concerns a few years earlier in the exhibition catalogue for the *São Paulo X Bienial*. As noted in Chapter 5, at the back of the catalogue Curnoe posed six questions; two of which were to do with Americanization and both of which framed his other questions (Appendix B). His first question read: “Canadians are more and more concerned with America and less and less concerned with the state in which they live. Will this lead to Canada becoming a free geographical area where all things are possible except the expression of anti-American sentiments, an anarchist society except...?” His last question read: “Can my culture survive the constant destruction of its parts in favour of a ‘better’ (American, British) culture. Or is that what my culture is?”<sup>394</sup> (The other four questions had to do with the personal, the cosmic, the mundane, and the civic).

Curnoe spent a good deal of time considering his feelings on the United States, and he used his *Computer Journals* to voice his opinions. In 1970 he wrote: “I am against internationalism which in Canada means exclusively Americanisation—whether it takes the form of contentaly [sic] identical cities or a continental energy policy or a continental defense policy and it is and will be Canadians who get us into these continental arrangements with our gracious American neighbours.”<sup>395</sup>

He explicitly linked his concept of anti-Americanism with regionalism in an unpublished exhibition review from around 1970.<sup>396</sup> In a discussion of the American artist Don Bonham, who lived and worked in London for eight years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Curnoe wrote: “Don chooses to see regionalism and the situation in London as narrow provincialism rather than as an alternative to increasing centralization and Americanization.”<sup>397</sup> Curnoe’s defensive position was clear: “What Don would like to see

set up in London is a New York branch plant like those that exist in fine arts depts. All over the States and at the Nova Scotia College as well.”<sup>398</sup> Curnoe was especially sensitive to criticism of London because Bonham was not only an outsider but also an American one at that.<sup>399</sup> To make matters worse, Bonham was not a draft-dodger fleeing to Canada, but had served proudly with the United States Marines. He had also received funding from the Canada Council.

The antipathy between Curnoe and Bonham may have also stemmed partly from a caustic performance that Bonham staged at the 20/20 Gallery in the late 1960s. Citing a “boring” speech from Royden Rabinowitch as his impetus, Bonham hired several actors to play himself, Pierre Théberge and Barry Lord in a simulated talk at the gallery. Bonham had written to Théberge and Lord asking them what they would say if they were to give a talk at the 20/20 Gallery, and he used their actual replies in the performance. The actor who played Bonham was dressed in a Stars and Stripes shirt. “The script went on and on,” Bonham remembered “with the actors playing Pierre Théberge and Barry Lord, then an art critic. I also hired a very straight looking actor to sit in the crowd who kept standing up and saying, “This is Sh..! Do we have to listen to this?”<sup>400</sup> Bonham gleefully claimed, “The 20-20 never again had such an event. Did Curnoe and the boys ever get upset!!”<sup>401</sup> Despite his fond recollections of his time in London, Bonham appeared to have little respect for the position of artists like Curnoe and Chambers while he lived there.

Curnoe continued to expound upon his fears of American cultural domination. In 1970 he wrote:

Citizens of small countries along the borders of the U.S.S.R. exist in a similar situation to Canadians and Mexicans with regard to the U.S.A. However 2/3 of

Canada's population has another ominous contact with the Americans—we speak the same language. It is this fact of geography combined with increasing numbers of Americans teaching in our schools, running our art museums and editing our art magazines which has led to the rise of 'protective nationalism' on the left in Canada. We seek to protect ourselves from American culture and Americanized Canadians by asserting our own culture and by fostering awareness of American imperialism in Canada—as practiced by many of the Americans here. It is important to see most American art as a manifestation of American imperialism. Art expresses the society that made it. It does not transcend political boundaries.<sup>402</sup>

Curnoe believed that the assumption that Canadian art did not 'measure up' to American standards was partly due to Canada's inferiority complex. This was not a new idea; Curnoe claimed that in the 1940s people like Selwyn Dewdney believed that "Canadian's [sic] put themselves down, sell themselves out and generally denigrate their own accomplishments...."<sup>403</sup>

Canada's ongoing inferiority complex rankled Curnoe, and he put a good deal of time and effort into touting Canadian history and culture. He was exasperated by the fact that "Europeans even bunch Americans and Canadians together. They don't know anything about us and that isn't right."<sup>404</sup> Curnoe railed against the fact that contemporary Canadian art was virtually unknown outside Canada, a situation that he ascribed to Canada's unwillingness to promote its own culture: "much of the blame lies with us, we are similar to Canadian manufacturing etc. etc. in our international timidity."<sup>405</sup> Lenore Crawford claimed Curnoe's "anti-Americanism [was] the result of a burning wish for Canadians to stand up and say: 'We're good, sometimes even great and we are Canadians, not Americans'."<sup>406</sup>

In 1972, Ross Woodman asked Curnoe to design the cover of the spring issue of *The Business Quarterly* (an issue that included an article on Chambers and Curnoe).

Curnoe seized the opportunity to express more anti-Americanism, creating a stamped work that read:

«Les Ontariens impuissants se prosternent vers les États-Unis.»

D'après Francis Picabia

«Impotent Ontarians always prostrate themselves to the United States.»

After Francis Picabia<sup>407</sup>

One of Chambers' and Curnoe's supporters was the outspoken art critic and short-lived editor of *artscanada*, Barry Lord, who frequently voiced his anti-American beliefs. In 1967 Lord was responsible for organizing an exhibition of contemporary Canadian painting at the Canadian government pavilion at Expo 67 (which included the work of Chambers and Curnoe). During the exposition, the American president, Lyndon B. Johnson, visited Montreal, and Lord was charged with breaching the peace for allegedly yelling at the president that he was "a murderer" and "a bloody butcher."<sup>408</sup> Soon after this, the board of directors of *artscanada* decided not to renew his contract.

Lord articulated the feelings of many of Canada's left-wing academics and artists in 1971 when he wrote an article entitled "Living Inside the American Empire of Taste." The article was published in *Saturday Night* magazine. "Imperialist control of a culture," Lord wrote,

... is very different from merely influencing another nation. U.S. investment in Canada overtook British shortly after the First World War, but it was only after the Second World War that U.S. cultural imperialism could really take hold. American art had influenced Canada's long before that, but the relationship that has developed since the mid-1940s is far more intense and pervasive than any 'influence.' It consists in the conviction that the art of the imperial centre sets the only criterion of quality, while the art of the colonial appendages can only occasionally hope to rise to the imperial standard.<sup>409</sup>

Lord believed the pervasiveness of American taste had profoundly influenced all aspects in Canadian art: "style, content, purchases, grants, careers and livelihoods."<sup>410</sup> He

claimed that, during the 1950s and 1960s, the strong influence of the New York critic Clement Greenberg contributed to the production of art in parts of Canada that was virtually indistinguishable from that produced in New York.<sup>411</sup> Lord also used his article to decry the domination by American academics at Canadian art colleges and universities, a situation that he saw as merely replacing the previous British colonial domination in these institutions.<sup>412</sup> The dearth of courses in Canadian art offered at Canadian universities also offered evidence that Canadian culture was in a sorry state.

The outlook was not entirely grim; Lord believed that artists in London, Ontario (in particular Chambers and Curnoe), had formed a pocket of resistance against American imperialism. This resistance had begun at the beginning of the 1960s “when Greg Curnoe and Jack Chambers decided to stay in that southwest Ontario city and base their art on their own experience in that region.”<sup>413</sup> Lord believed that if there was to be a new ‘Canadian’ art, it would spring from London, and the persistence of figurative art among some of its artists. He called Chambers’ and Curnoe’s “attention to the figure in its environment [...] the most promising development in Canadian art over the past decade.”<sup>414</sup> Lord was also a staunch Maoist who believed “the only hope for this country [lay] in the people themselves.”<sup>415</sup> His ideas proved extremely popular with London artists, and struck a chord with cultural producers responsive to the notion that Canada could and should produce an indigenous ‘Canadian’ art.

By the late 1970s, Curnoe had acknowledged that there were drawbacks to being labelled “anti-American”. In a paper that he presented in Ottawa for the 1979 “Art and Ideology” conference he wrote:

There is a danger in holding a position of anti-Americanism in life and work as I have done (a position that I believe to be essential for the continued existence of

this country). If such a position is held too rigidly it loses its function of giving a vantage point for examining situations as they come up. I don't want to be forced to do something absurd or to act in an absurd fashion.<sup>416</sup>

The same year he produced an unpublished manuscript, "This is a mixture, not a solution," in which he quoted the Canadian political scientist Gad Horowitz. Horowitz advocated that "[t]he purpose of Canadian nationalism is not to close Canada to the world, but to open Canada to the world by keeping out of the United States." Curnoe annotated the quote with his own remark: "Absolutely right."<sup>417</sup>

Curnoe's anti-Americanism became more focused over time, and by the early 1980s he was able to cast a retrospective eye back over the past several decades. He continued to believe that the United States exerted a strong and potentially smothering cultural influence in Canada, and he also became more concerned with how this Americanization influenced his own work, writing in 1982, "My work is about resisting as much as possible the tendency of American culture to overwhelm other cultures."<sup>418</sup> In 1987 he wrote an essay, "London and the Crisis of Cultural Growth," in which, reflecting back on the 1960s, he concluded that "Canada in the sixties thought of itself as growing up, casting off its dependence upon the lingering maternalism of England (Canada's mother complex) and the rather more hidden, and therefore sinister, paternalism of the United States."<sup>419</sup>

The wide variety of activities and organizations that Chambers and Curnoe were involved in during the 1960s and 1970s helped foster a strong sense of collective identity, not just among London's artistic community, but also on a larger national scale. Local organizations such as the Nihilist Party and their social gatherings and group exhibitions of London artists solidified the reputation of London as one of the most interesting places

in Canada during the time period, and this acted as an inspiration to artists across the country. The organization of artists through the development of artist-run centres and the formation of CARFAC led to artists becoming more involved in the processes that governed their livelihood, and irrevocably changed the relationship of visual artists and public cultural institutions. Throughout all of these activities the undercurrent of anti-Americanism helped further to define Canadian identity.

- <sup>1</sup> Stanley Fish, "Is There a Text in This Class?" In *The Stanley Fish Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999).
- <sup>2</sup> Lewis A. Coser, "Introduction," In Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans. and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1-34.
- <sup>3</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, "Language and Memory," *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans. and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.
- <sup>4</sup> Halbwachs, "The Localization of Memory," *On Collective Memory*, 53.
- <sup>5</sup> Roxanne Rimstead, "Double Take: The Uses of Cultural Memory," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 80 (Fall 2003): 4.
- <sup>6</sup> Jan Assman, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," trans. John Czapicka, *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies (Spring-Summer 1995): 127.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 128.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., 128-129.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 129.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> E.H. Gombrich. *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1970), 283-306.
- <sup>14</sup> Pierre Nora, "From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of Memory," *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. Volume I: Conflicts and Divisions*, Preface to the English-Language Edition, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998), xvii.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., xviii
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., xx.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., xix.
- <sup>18</sup> Mieke Bal, "Introduction," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), vii.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., vii-viii.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., vii.i
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., viii.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., x.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., x.
- <sup>25</sup> Herb Ariss. "Foreword." *Eleven London Artists*. (Stratford: The Gallery/Stratford, 1979), unpaginated.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Nancy Poole. *The Art of London 1830-1980* (London, Ont.: Blackpool Press, 1984), 89-91.
- <sup>28</sup> Two years later, in 1942, the McIntosh Memorial Gallery at the University of Western Ontario opened. Ibid., 93, 103.
- <sup>29</sup> The art gallery moved from the library when the London Regional Art Gallery was built in 1980. It was later renamed the London Regional Art and Historical Museum and is now called Museum London.
- <sup>30</sup> Ariss, "Foreword," *Eleven London Artists*.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Bice rented a studio on Queens Avenue in London. Poole, *Art of London*, 108.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 106-107.
- <sup>34</sup> Bice served overseas during World War Two with the Canadian forces, where he continued to pursue his art "as a means of relaxation." He claimed that it "continued to be a release for his feelings for the rest of his life." Ibid., 108.
- <sup>35</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles: A Guide to the Creative Ferment During the '40s and '50s," *London Magazine* (March 1982): 36.
- <sup>36</sup> The Guild House group of younger London artists included Wally McMurran, Don Vincent, Larry Russell, Don Carter, Bernice Goodsell (later Vincent), Gillian Saward, Lois Steen, Joan Balch, Don Wilson

and Don Carter. Curnoe mentions two other groups of London artists in the mid 1950s, one based at a house at 321 Queens Avenue and the other centred upon Charlie Savage's apartment at the rear of St. Paul's Cathedral (Savage was the sexton of the church). *Ibid.*, 23, 36.

<sup>37</sup> After the denial of their request by the London Art Gallery, the artists rented a studio on Kent Street in the old Guild House where they were free to hire nude models. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Poole, *Art of London*, 116.

<sup>40</sup> Vera L. Zolberg, "Art Museums and Living Artists: Contentious Communities," in *Museums and Communities*, eds. Ivan Karp, Christine Kreamer and Steven Lavine (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 106.

<sup>41</sup> Zolberg, "Art Museums and Living Artists," 109.

<sup>42</sup> Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles," 23: 36-38.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Jack Chambers. *Jack Chambers, 1931-1978*. (London, Ont.: Nancy Poole's Studio, 1978), 109-110.

<sup>45</sup> David MacWilliam, "Bikes, U-Roy, Fiddles and Curnoe," *Georgia Straight* (31 March-7 April 1977): 22.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Ross Woodman, *Greg Curnoe*, Essay for *Greg Curnoe's Series* Exhibition (London, Ont.: 20/20 Gallery, February 14-March 5, 1967), 1.

<sup>48</sup> MacWilliam, "Bikes, U-Roy, Fiddles and Curnoe," 22.

<sup>49</sup> John B. Boyle, "Reflections on Greg Curnoe: He Is Us," *Carnet* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 20.

<sup>50</sup> Woodman, *Greg Curnoe*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 88, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Judith Rodgers, "Chronology," in *Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff*, eds. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (Toronto and Vancouver: Art Gallery of Ontario and Douglas and McIntyre, 2001), 144.

<sup>53</sup> The Labatt's company wished their donation to remain anonymous. Poole, *Art of London*, 127-128; Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 88, 90.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>55</sup> Greg Curnoe, Untitled typewritten manuscript (Symposium for Jack Chambers), Dated May 25/26/27/28 & October 7/8/9/10, 1989. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 3, 1989 Writing.

<sup>56</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Jack Chambers Remembered," Paper delivered at the International Experimental Film Congress, Art Gallery of Ontario, 28 May 1989. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 3, 1989 Writing.

<sup>57</sup> Greg Curnoe, Draft of typed letter to Galen Curnoe. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Correspondence File, 1990.

This contradicts Curnoe's statement to Herman Goodden that, on the ride back from the Ontario College of Art to London, his father was sympathetic to Curnoe's desire to set up a studio. Herman Goodden, "Greg Curnoe and the New Jerusalem," Manuscript of talk given at Eldon House, London, 26 November 1995. London Room Archives, London Public Library, London, Ontario.

<sup>58</sup> Zolberg, "Art Museums and Living Artists," 109.

<sup>59</sup> Curnoe claimed that this situation continued unchanged to the 1980s. Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles," 38.

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Milroy. "Time Machines," *Life and Stuff*, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Théberge links Curnoe's choice of the sidewalk-salting incident to a book of Marcel Duchamp's writings published by Michel Sanouillet in 1958—*Marchand du sel (The Salt Seller)*. Curnoe was familiar with this book. Pierre Théberge, *Greg Curnoe: Rétrospective/Retrospective* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1982), 14.

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

<sup>63</sup> Michel Sanouillet, E-Mail Correspondence with Judith Rodger, February 4, 2000. In Rodgers, "Chronology," 147.

<sup>64</sup> Tony Urquhart quoted in Poole, *Art of London*, 131.

<sup>65</sup> Katie Cholette, Interview with Tony Urquhart. 6 February 2005.

<sup>66</sup> Poole, *Art of London*, 131.

<sup>67</sup> Greg Curnoe, Michel Sanouillet and Greg Curnoe in Conversation. 7 November 1979. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Tape 55. Despite Curnoe's claims that

*Celebration* was different from 'happenings', I do not believe that it was. I believe that his anti-Americanism precluded acknowledging any links between his event and American ones.

<sup>68</sup> Curnoe quoted in Milroy, "Time Machines," 35.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Zolberg, "Art Museums," 106.

<sup>71</sup> The exhibition was held at the London Public Library and Art Museum from 4-29 January 1966.

<sup>72</sup> Poole, *Art of London*, 133.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>74</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Galleries Like Works of Londoner," *The London Free Press*, 30 September 1964.

<sup>75</sup> Crawford, "Artist Curnoe Now More 'Involved' Than Ever."

<sup>76</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 96, 98.

<sup>77</sup> Jack Chambers, Edited Copy of Autobiography from *Red and Green*, Original unpublished manuscript. Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 17-3, Files. Page 51.

<sup>78</sup> Zolberg, "Art Museums and Living Artists," 106.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>80</sup> Poole, *Art of London*, 212.

<sup>81</sup> Greg Curnoe, Letter to Daniel [no surname] regarding the London Regional Art Gallery, and the role of Curnoe and other artists on the board, 17 October 1979. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO.

<sup>82</sup> Greg Curnoe, cited in Poole, *Art of London*, 212.

<sup>83</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2 *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

<sup>84</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA, and London, U.K.: The MIT Press, 1992), 109-142.

<sup>85</sup> The Canada Council would not fund society exhibitions or juried exhibitions. This established a more rigorous curatorial model for art galleries. As a result, many of the traditional exhibition venues available to contemporary artists disappeared. Also, the Art Gallery of Toronto ousted the Ontario Society of Artists' annual exhibition and the National Gallery of Canada downplayed the founding relationship with the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

<sup>86</sup> The Garret Art Gallery was located at 218 John Street, overlooking Grange Park. Herb Watson, "The Story of the Garret," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) 1957. The first floor of the building was occupied by a furrier. Greg Curnoe, "Five Co-op Galleries in Toronto and London from 1957 to 1992," Typewritten transcript of paper delivered in Montreal, October 12, 1992. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 3, 1992 Writing.

<sup>87</sup> Curnoe had met and befriended Walter Sunahara, a Japanese Canadian, in 1944 when Curnoe was around 8 years old. Sunahara and his family had been expelled from British Columbia and were being billeted by a London family that lived around the corner from Curnoe. Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 9.

<sup>88</sup> Curnoe wrote that three artists lived there; Watson claims there were two.

<sup>89</sup> The other eight members were George Nalywajko, Viktor Tinkl, Cameron Cowan, Donald Thompson, Walter Toshiyuki Sunahara, Robert Ralph Carmichael, Silvio Laroque and Herb Watson. Watson, "Story of the Garret." *The Globe and Mail*, 1957.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Watson describes how the group assembled furniture from old paint barrels, which they "cushioned with fur from the furriers' waste basket." Ibid. Curnoe recounts that the burlap they used to cover the walls was stolen from a "stretch of new cement sidewalk on Bloor Street." Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 1.

<sup>92</sup> Watson, "The Story of the Garret." *The Globe and Mail* 1957.

Sarah Milroy writes that the Garret Art Gallery was "a kind of natural evolution to Curnoe's Langarth Street clubhouse." Milroy, "Time Machines," *Life and Stuff*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 1.

<sup>95</sup> "Four Recent Graduates from the Ontario College of Art...." *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) 1959.

<sup>96</sup> The new Garret Art Gallery was located on the south side of Gerrard Street between Yonge and Bay. Curnoe notes that it was near the Greenwich Gallery, later the Isaacs Gallery. Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 1.

- <sup>97</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>98</sup> Curnoe claims that gallery opened in the fall of 1961. Ibid. The gallery opened, in fact, on November 3, 1962.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>100</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Region=Regionalism," *The University of Western Ontario Gazette*, 15 March, 1963.
- <sup>101</sup> John Boyle, "Building a Nihilist Universe," *Paradigm* 6 (1999): 3.
- <sup>102</sup> Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles," 36-37.
- <sup>103</sup> Shirley Warrington later married the writer Graeme Gibson (who is now married to Margaret Atwood). Ibid., 37.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>105</sup> Among those who were connected with 321 Queens Avenue were: Ray Prince (psychologist), Dick O'Brien and Leon Wolf (doctors), Paddy Gunn O'Brien (artist), Dan Slote (poet), Henry and Betty de Menthon (occupations not stated), Ross Woodman (professor), Stuart Shaw (artist and author) and Ted McGuire and John Hicks (philosophy students). Ibid.
- <sup>106</sup> Ann Thurlow, "The Parallel Galleries: Portraits from the First and Second Generation," *artmagazine* 8, no. 34 (August/September 1977): 7.
- <sup>107</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 1.
- <sup>108</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 2.
- <sup>109</sup> Andrew Hunter, "When Parallels Converge: Programming Strategies in Ontario's Artist-Run Centres," *Parallélogramme* 18, no. 1 (1992): 35.
- <sup>110</sup> Curnoe, "Region=Regionalism."
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>112</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 1-2.
- <sup>113</sup> The founding board members of the 20/20 Gallery were: "Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe, John Davis (philosophy professor, U.W.O., art collector), Rae Davis, Murray Favro, Geoffrey Rans (English professor, U.W.O., art collector), Goldie Rans (writer, art collector), Richard Shroyer (English professor, U.W.O.), Tony Urquhart, Ross Woodman (English professor, U.W.O., art collector), Archie Young (English professor, U.W.O., art collector)." Ibid., 9
- <sup>114</sup> Curnoe claims that the 20/20 Gallery was "one of the models used by the Canada Council when funding for alternative galleries was developed." Ibid., 2.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>116</sup> "20/20 Gallery Closes," Press Release (27 April, 1970). Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 9, 20/20 Gallery.
- <sup>117</sup> J. Stewart Reaney, *James Reaney* (Agincourt, Ontario: Gage Educational Publishing Limited, 1977), 1.
- <sup>118</sup> Richard Stingle, *James Reaney and His Works* (Toronto: ECW Press, between 1988-91), 3.
- <sup>119</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 2.
- <sup>120</sup> Stingle, *James Reaney*, 4.
- <sup>121</sup> "20/20 Gallery Closes."
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>123</sup> Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, and Graham Coughtry all had one-person shows at the 20/20 Gallery in 1966/1967.
- <sup>124</sup> *Young London* featured Richard Gault, Beverley Lambert-Kelly, Paul Page, David and Royden Rabinowitch, Ken Smithers, and Nangee Warner. Ibid.
- <sup>125</sup> The exhibition was entitled *Ariss-Coulter-Steinbacher*. Ibid., 2.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>127</sup> Poetry readings were by David McFadden, b p nichol, and Roy Kiyooka. The two plays were "Balls" by Paul Foster, and "Chairs" by Eugene Ionesco, both directed by Rae Davis. There were two bus trips: one to the Toledo Museum of Art and another to the Art Gallery of Ontario. The forum "Subsidy in the Arts Today," featured David Silcox of the Canada Council. Ibid., 2-3
- <sup>128</sup> Curnoe exhibited works in *The Art of the Collage*. The exhibits in the *Little Gallery* were diverse, ranging from figure drawings to a Christmas art and craft sale to U.S. Art Posters. Ibid., 3.
- <sup>129</sup> Artists Bev Kelly, Royden Rabinowitch and Nina Lubojanski taught art classes at the 20/20 Gallery in 1967-1968. Ibid., 3.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid., 2.

- <sup>131</sup> Robert Fones taught Saturday morning art classes for children. David Rabinowitch taught the Saturday afternoon teen class, and Nina Lubojanski taught the adult classes. *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>132</sup> *Swinging London* toured to the Western Fair in London, the University of Waterloo, the University of Guelph, St. Catharines and District Arts Council and Scarborough College. *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>134</sup> The *Michael Snow Film Program* featured seven films by Michael Snow. *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>135</sup> The exhibition featured Walter Brock, Fred Dicey, Erhardt Kaden, Matt O'Brien, Dan Patterson, Walter Stansell and Glen Thomas. Greg Curnoe, Exhibition catalogue text for "Inventions and Perceptual Motion Machines," 20/20 Gallery, May 1970. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 2, Journals 1970.
- <sup>136</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 2.
- <sup>137</sup> "20/20 Gallery Closes," 5-6.
- <sup>138</sup> Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 2.
- <sup>139</sup> "20/20 Gallery Closes," 7.
- <sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>141</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. The Power of Identity*, Volume II (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 60.
- <sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.
- <sup>145</sup> For a time Chambers worked with James Reaney to show films at the Alphacentre. They rented films from a Montreal film co-op. Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 106-107.
- <sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>147</sup> European films were not screened in regular theatres until the mid 1960s in London. Curnoe, "Cultural Chronicles," 38
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>149</sup> Coleman claims that the first networks are the major galleries, the second networks the National Exhibition Centres, and the third networks the parallel galleries. Coleman quoted in Thurlow, "Parallel Galleries," 7.
- <sup>150</sup> Thurlow, "Parallel Galleries," 7.
- <sup>151</sup> Hassan and Gordon broke away from the Polyglot Gallery when they felt that the book store owner was trying "to assert control over the exhibitions." Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 3.
- <sup>152</sup> The founding members of the Forest City Gallery were: Bob Bozak, Greg Curnoe, Murray Favro, Kerry Ferris, Jamelie Hassan, Dave Gordon, Ron Martin, Ray Sedge and Goldie Rans (manager). *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>153</sup> Performance art by Gerald Pas in 1978. Dave Gordon, Untitled article on the Forest City Gallery, *Slap* 1, no. 1 (May 1978): 10.
- <sup>154</sup> In 1976 Stanley Sarazin from the Golden Lake Reserve built a birch bark canoe in the gallery. The construction of the canoe was videotaped, and when completed it was purchased by the gallery and raffled off. Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 3. Hassan is a Lebanese-Canadian artist whose work often delves into her ethnic and cultural heritage. She has exhibited widely and in 2001 she won the Governor General's Award for Visual Art.
- <sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>157</sup> The 20/20 Gallery voluntarily paid artists an exhibition fee before CAR formally proposed their exhibition fee schedule in 1968. *Ibid.*
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>161</sup> Curnoe claims that the high degree of external funding during this time meant that "social and political factors (as opposed to calibre of work and professionalism) began to be important elements in the choosing of new Forest City Gallery board members." *Ibid.*, 6.
- For a good but biased overview of the history of artist-run galleries in Canada see: A.A. Bronson. *From Sea to Shining Sea: Artist-initiated Activity in Canada, 1939-1987* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1987).
- <sup>162</sup> Jamelie Hassan, Ron Benner and Eric Stach were the founders of the Embassy Cultural House. Curnoe, "Five Co-Op Galleries," 4.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>164</sup> By 1992 Curnoe noted that the board was made up of both artists and writers who supported themselves either through teaching at the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe Community College or with other jobs. Only a few of the members were self-supporting as artists. The gallery became increasingly dependent on government funding, which developed into a contentious issue. Ibid., 5.

<sup>165</sup> Gordon, Forest City Gallery, 10.

<sup>166</sup> Gordon, Forest City Gallery, 10.

<sup>167</sup> Lenore Crawford wrote: "ironically, the initial showcase is the London Public Art Museum, criticized by several of the Heart of London artists as being out-of-date in its policies and cool to *avant garde* or experimental London artists." Lenore Crawford, "'Swing' Art-wise, London-wise," *The London Free Press*, 21 September 1958.

<sup>168</sup> The other artists were: John Boyle, Jack Chambers, Murray Favro, Bev Kelly, Ron Martin, David and Royden Rabinowitch, Walter Redinger, Tony Urquhart and Ed Zelenak.

<sup>169</sup> Press Release, 9 September 1968, "The Heart of London," (Exhibition records), National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives, Catalogue. EX 1304.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Barry Lord claims that Curnoe's painting *The Heart of London* actually "convinced National Gallery exhibition coordinator Pierre Theberge [sic] that it should provide theme and title for his show...." Barry Lord, "Art and Artists: London Issues a Challenge," *Kitchener Waterloo Record*, 5 October 1968.

<sup>172</sup> William Bragg quoted in Grace Gleuck, "Art Notes: From Face To Shining Face," *The New York Times*, 29 September 1968.

<sup>173</sup> Press Release, 9 September 1968. National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>174</sup> *Le Droit* ran a small article featuring a reproduction of a page of the catalogue. "Catalogue nouveau genre." *Le Droit*, 24 September 1968. *Le Devoir* also featured a photograph of the exhibition catalogue. "'Le Coeur de London' en bandes illustrées par onze artisans," *Le Devoir*, 7 mai 1969. *The New York Times* also gave special mention to the comic-book format of the exhibition. Gleuck, "Art Notes."

<sup>175</sup> Lord, "London Issues a Challenge."

<sup>176</sup> "Swinging London," *The Montreal Star*, 5 October 1968.

<sup>177</sup> Don Vincent, "They Share a Direct Force of Expression...a Season in London (Ont.)," *artscanada* 24, nos. 8/9, issue nos. 111/112 (August/September 1967): 3 ["artscan" insert].

<sup>178</sup> Vincent, "Season in London," 3.

<sup>179</sup> Milroy, "Time Machines," *Life & Stuff*, 62.

<sup>180</sup> Barry Lord, "Swinging London (Ontario)," *Star Weekly Magazine*, 13 January 1968, 21

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Gary Michael Dault, "London: *Heart of London*," *artscanada* 25, no. issue nos. 122/123 (October/November 1968): 43.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> "'Heart of London': Expressed by Sick Minds," *The Stratford Times*, 19 December 1968.

<sup>196</sup> Valley Ruddick, "Deep in the Heart of London," *The Gazette*, University of Western Ontario, 4 October 1968.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Brenda Maybee, "Female Bodies and Towel Racks," *Queen's Journal*, 4 February 1969.

<sup>199</sup> Barry Thorne, "And the tab...\$100,000," *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, 25 January 1969.

- <sup>200</sup> The press release referred to the controversial Dorval Mural episode and the *Canada 101* exhibition in Edinburgh which “raised civic eyebrows.” Press Release, “The Heart of London.”
- <sup>201</sup> Virgil Hammock, “Gallery Rocks as Show Opens,” *The Edmonton Journal*, 21 March 1969.
- <sup>202</sup> “Heart of London to Show in City,” *Calgary Albertan*, 2 November 1968.
- <sup>203</sup> David Thompson, “And ‘It’s Well Worth Seeing’: Heart of London Art Show a ‘Welcome Disturbance,’” *The Calgary Herald*, 3 December 1968.
- <sup>204</sup> James Quig, “The Maple Moose Forever,” *The Weekend Magazine*, no. 49. 7 December 1968.
- <sup>205</sup> Royden Rabinowitch quoted in Quig, “Maple Moose Forever.”
- <sup>206</sup> David Rabinowitch quoted in *ibid.*
- <sup>207</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in *ibid.*
- <sup>208</sup> Letter from Mrs. R.B. Hale (Greta) of Morrison Lamothe Catering to Richard Graburn, executive assistant to the director, 14 April 1969, “The Heart of London,” (Exhibition records), National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives, Catalogue. EX 1304.
- <sup>209</sup> The title of both Barry Lord’s article and Urquhart’s exhibition may refer to Karl Dallas’ book *Swinging London: A Guide to Where the Action Is*, a 1967 guidebook to London, England’s hip boutiques, galleries and clubs that included photographs and psychedelic drawings.
- <sup>210</sup> Greg Curnoe, “The Relation of Art to Politics,” Unpublished typescript. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Writings 1963, 9.
- <sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>214</sup> Antonin Artaud’s famous play *The Theatre and its Double* looked at the relationship between artistic production (specifically poetry) and anarchy. William S. Burrough’s *Naked Lunch* (1959) was put on trial for obscenity in the United States in 1962 (a decision that was reversed in 1966 by the Massachusetts Supreme Court).
- <sup>215</sup> Curnoe, “Relation of Art to Politics,” 4.
- <sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>217</sup> The other founding members were John Boyle, Gary Bryant, Toby Chapman, Brian Dibb, Bill Exley, Marg McCullough, Hugh MacIntyre, Art Pratten and Liz Sandler. There were two other non-identified co-founders). Rodger, “Chronology,” *Life & Stuff*, 148.
- <sup>218</sup> Dennis Reid, “Marcel Duchamp in Canada,” *Canadian Art* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 52.
- <sup>219</sup> The slogan was printed on a black banner that covered Robarts’ eyes. See James Reaney, “Introduction,” *John Chambers, Greg Curnoe* (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1964) [pamphlet]. John Robarts, who was born in Banff, Alberta, moved to London in 1931. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1939. After serving in World War II, and studying law at Osgoode Hall he returned to London where he entered local politics. He was elected an alderman in 1950 and a Conservative MPP in 1951. In 1961 he was elected premier of Ontario. Allan K. McDougall, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Volume 3 (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1988), 1878.
- <sup>220</sup> Curnoe, “Relation of Art to Politics,” 8.
- <sup>221</sup> Charles Gerein, “Anti-Organization Group Organizes Banquet,” *The London Free Press*. 7 December 1964.
- <sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>223</sup> Translation this authors’. “Film du Partie Nihiliste de London, *La Revue Ontarienne* (London, Ont.) 1, no. 19 (October 1965): 1.
- <sup>224</sup> Théberge, *Rétrospective/Retrospective*, 59.
- <sup>225</sup> Translation this authors’. “Film du Parti Nihiliste,” 1.
- <sup>226</sup> Boyle, “Nihilist Universe,” 7.
- <sup>227</sup> Lord, “Swinging London,” 19.
- In September 1966 Barry Lord became editor of *Canadian Art* magazine, which he transformed into *artscanada*. The first issue of *artscanada* came out in January 1967 with a cover design by Curnoe. The magazine included a 45 RPM recording of the Nihilist Spasm Band playing “Canada I think I love you, but I want to know for sure....” Katie Cholette, E-mail correspondence with Barry Lord, 21 March 2006.
- Lord was head of education at the National Gallery of Canada from 1970 to 1972. *Ibid.*
- <sup>228</sup> Grant Fair, “Nihilist Noise Numbs York Hotel,” *The Gazette* (University of Western Ontario) (7 October 1966): 20.

- <sup>229</sup> Ibid., 20.
- <sup>230</sup> John Boyle quoted in Marjorie Harris, "You Should See it When it's Working it's Really Great," *artscanada* 25, no. 2, issue no 118/119 (June 1968): 7.
- <sup>231</sup> Correspondence between Greg Curnoe and Grade 8 students at Wybridge School. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Correspondence 1967.
- <sup>232</sup> Art Pratten quoted in Barrie Hale, "Home-made Music is Pure," *The Toronto Star*, 25 October 1969.
- <sup>233</sup> Hale, "Home-made Music."
- <sup>234</sup> Boyle, "Nihilist Universe," 4.
- <sup>235</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>236</sup> The seven band members who went to Europe were: John Boyle, Greg Curnoe, Bill Exley, Murray Favro, Archie Leitch, Hugh McIntyre and Art Pratten.
- <sup>237</sup> The other film entries were: Kee Dewdney (*The Maltese Cross Movement*), Charles Gagnon (*Son d'un espace*), and Les Levine (*The American Book of the Dead*).
- <sup>238</sup> Letter from Joanna Woods Marsden to Guy Viau, 16 April 1968, Exhibition Files, EX 1280 File 12-5-40, *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui*, Volume 4. NGC fonds, NGC Archives.
- <sup>239</sup> Memorandum from Jean Sutherland Boggs to Guy Viau, 11 July 1969, Exhibition files, B-34. Paris Biennale 6e Biennale de Paris, Untitled folder. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>240</sup> Andy Neimers. "Canada Represented by Garbage." *The St. Catharines Standard*, 26 September 1969.
- <sup>241</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>242</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>243</sup> Transcript of John Dickins' *Open Line* Radio call-in show, CFPL, London, Ontario, 8 October 1969, 20 *Cents Magazine* 3, no. 9 (November 1969).
- <sup>244</sup> Barry Lord was the editor of *Five Cents Review* in 1969.
- <sup>245</sup> Hugh McIntyre, *Five Cents Review* (October 1969): 21.
- <sup>246</sup> Boyle claimed that his goal was "the destruction of the R.C.M.P., the National Gallery, the Government of Canada. My heroes are Paul Joseph Chartier, John Diefenbaker and Jehovah's Witnesses." John Boyle *Five Cents Review* (October 1969): 21.
- <sup>247</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Written by Greg Curnoe on Aug. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18/19," *Five Cents Review*, (October 1969): 21.
- <sup>248</sup> Letter from Joanna Woods Marsden, to M. Léopold Amyot, counsellor, Canadian Embassy, Paris, 17 April 1969. Exhibition files. B-34. Paris Biennale 6e Biennale de Paris, Volume I. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>249</sup> Letter from Joanna Woods Marsden to Mr. Gérard Régnier, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 28 May 1969. Exhibition files. B-34. Paris Biennale 6e Biennale de Paris, Volume I. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>250</sup> The band's instruments contained such items as: loudspeakers, a large violin, two large kazoos, a drum set, two bass cellos, a theramin, an electric bass, a kettle drum. Memorandum from Pierre Théberge to Mrs. G. Leeder, Traffic and Customs, 18 June 1969. Exhibition Files. B-34. Paris Biennale 6e Biennale de Paris, Biennale de Paris Correspondence. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>251</sup> Marsden to Régnier, 28 May 1969.
- <sup>252</sup> Copy for telex from Joanna Woods Marsden to Jean Sutherland Boggs and Guy Viau, 7 October 1969. Paris Biennale, 6e Biennale de Paris, Volume II, Paris Oct-Nov '69. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>253</sup> Hale, "Home Made Music."
- <sup>254</sup> Marsden to Boggs and Viau, 7 October 1969.
- <sup>255</sup> Letter from Joanna Woods Marsden to Jean Sutherland Boggs, Guy Viau and Pierre Théberge, 10 July 1969. Exhibition Files. B-34. Jeunes peintres et sculpteurs du Canada à la Galerie de France, Paris. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>256</sup> Letter from Joanna Woods Marsden to Jean-René Ostiguy, Guy Viau and Pierre Théberge, 9 July 1969. 6<sup>th</sup> Biennale de Paris, 1969. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.
- <sup>257</sup> "Parmi les invites, des garçons hirsutes, en blouson, cols roulés et chaussures de sport: les musiciens de l'orchestre 'bruitiste' qui représentera le Canada à la Biennale de Paris. Détail: ils ont fabriqué eux-mêmes leurs instruments, dont on cigare siffleure." "L'ambassade du Canada craint le musique 'bruitiste'," *France-Soir*, 3 October 1969.
- <sup>258</sup> Robert C. McKenzie, "Canada's Official Music Team," 20 *Cents Magazine* 3, no. 9. (November 1969), unpaginated.
- <sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Art Pratten quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> Memo from Joanna Marsden Woods to Jean Sutherland Boggs, 29 October 1969. Exhibition Files. B-34. Biennale de Paris Correspondence. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>263</sup> Pierre Théberge, "Confessions of a Nihilist Spasm Band Addict," *artscanada* XXVI, no. 6 (Issue no. 138/139) (December 1969): 68.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> In September 1968 Richard Hamilton visited Curnoe's studio with Dennis Young, curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Hamilton decided to include Curnoe and Chambers in an exhibition that he was helping to organize—*Canadian Artists '68*. The show ran from November 29–December 29 at the Art Gallery of Ontario and both Chambers and Curnoe were awarded \$2,000 prizes by Hamilton.

<sup>266</sup> Woods to Boggs, 29 October 1969.

<sup>267</sup> Itinerary from Pierre Théberge to NSB members, CC'd to Joanna Woods Marsden, 25 August, 1969. Exhibition Files. B-34. Biennale de Paris Correspondence. NGC fonds. NGC Archives.

<sup>268</sup> McKenzie, "Canada's Official Music Team," *20 Cents Magazine*.

<sup>269</sup> Murray Favro, "Murray Favro's Journal," *20 Cents Magazine*. (November 1969).

<sup>270</sup> John Boyle, "John Boyle Away From Home," *20 Cents Magazine* (November 1969).

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> McKenzie, "Canada's Official Music Team," *20 Cents Magazine*.

<sup>273</sup> The name Canadian Artists' Representation (CAR) became bilingual in 1976. From that point it was known as Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiennes or CARFAC. For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to it throughout as CAR.

There were no issues that were too minute for CAR; even something as seemingly innocuous as the logo for CAR harboured politically charged messages. In 1976, the year that the name of the organization changed from CAR to CARFAC (to reflect its bilingual nature), a new logo was proposed. "Minutes and Proceedings—Eighth National Conference, 12-14 November 1976." Container 1, File 8. CARFAC fonds, NAC. The prototype logo consisted of two colours to differentiate the separate acronyms—the letters CAR would appear in red (one of Canada's national colours), and the letters FAC in blue (as a tribute to one of the provincial colours of the province of Quebec). A small maple leaf would appear in the first "A" and a small fleur de lis would appear in the second "A." After some debate it was decided that in the interests of national unity that both "A"s should appear with small maple leaves, although the dual colours were acceptable. It was decided that the fleur de lis and the colour blue did not represent all French Canadians, only Quebecers. "Minutes Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiennes." Container 1, File 9 "Minutes and Proceedings—Ninth National Conference, 6-9 May 1977, Ottawa, Ontario." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>274</sup> The gallery wished to reproduce Chambers' 1967 painting *Antonio and Miguel in the U.S.A.* which had been included in the recent exhibition *300 Years of Canadian Art*. Paddy O'Brien, Typescript of "Jack Chambers and Canadian Artists Representation," for *Jack Chambers: The Last Decade*, ed. José L. Barriogaray (London, Ont.: London Regional Art Gallery, 1980). Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 21-5. Interviews, Exhibitions, etc., Page 2.

<sup>275</sup> J.W. Borcoman, Letter to Jack Chambers regarding reproduction of his work, 23 August 1967. Jack Chambers fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 22, CAR.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Jack Chambers, Edited Copy of Autobiography from *Red and Green*, Original unpublished manuscript. Jack Chambers fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 17-3, Files. Page 49.

<sup>278</sup> The 130 artists were chosen by Chambers arbitrarily; they were "simply the artists whose addresses I could find at the time." Chambers, *Red and Green*, 49.

<sup>279</sup> Jack Chambers, Letter to Jim Borcoman regarding reproduction of artists' works, 30 August 1967. Jack Chambers fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 22, CAR

<sup>280</sup> Chambers claimed that the original artwork was "a MATERIA PRIMA, the raw product from which many business concerns derive profit beginning with the attendant who gases the photographer's car through buying the film, taking the picture, processing, printing, distribution etc. etc. etc." Chambers to Borcoman, 30 August, 1967.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>282</sup> 14 page untitled typed history of CARFAC. Container 14, File 8. "Miscellaneous Materials, 1983-1985." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>283</sup> David P. Silcox, Letter to J.W. Borcoman regarding reproduction of artists' work, 25 August 1967. Jack Chambers fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 22, CAR.
- <sup>284</sup> David Silcox, Letter to Jack Chambers regarding reproduction of artists' work, 6 December 1967. Jack Chambers fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 22, CAR.
- <sup>285</sup> Chambers, *Red and Green*, 51.
- <sup>286</sup> This entry was struck out in the manuscript. Chambers, *Red and Green*, 53.
- <sup>287</sup> Chambers, *Red and Green*, 52.
- <sup>288</sup> O'Brien, "Jack Chambers and Canadian Artists Representation," 5.
- <sup>289</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>290</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>291</sup> Ted Johns, "Bread and Butter Conspiracy," *CAROT* (1972): 1.
- <sup>292</sup> In 1974 the executive moved to Edmonton; in 1976 they moved to Winnipeg, following the election of "a largely Winnipeg based Executive." In 1977 the organization was incorporated and the name changed to the Canadian Artists' Representation/le Front des artistes Canadiens, or CARFAC. The organization ultimately moved to Ottawa where a full-time National Director was hired. Container 14, File 8. CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>293</sup> "Pre-Conference Notes," CAR, 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference, Winnipeg, 24-26 September 1971. Container 1, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-1972." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>294</sup> Johns, "Bread and Butter," 1.
- <sup>295</sup> "Canadian Artists' Representation National Newsletter, Spring, 1973," Page 2. Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>296</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>297</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>298</sup> Chambers, *Red and Green*, 53.
- <sup>299</sup> "So You Want to Be an Artist," *CAR News*, Volume 11, Number 3 (Spring 1977): page 9. Container 2, File 5. "Publication—National Newsletter, 1977." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>300</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>301</sup> "Canadian Artists' Representation: A Report from the First National Conference, Winnipeg, September 1971." Container 1, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-72." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>302</sup> Jack Chambers, Untitled writings on CAR by Jack Chambers (published posthumously). *CAROT* (1979/80): unpaginated.
- <sup>303</sup> "CAR Newsletter and Membership List as of January 15, 1972." Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>304</sup> Chambers, *Red and Green*, 53.
- <sup>305</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>306</sup> O'Brien, "Jack Chambers and Canadian Artists Representation," 1.
- <sup>307</sup> The Federation of Canadian Artists had been plagued with the same tensions. Michael Bell, "Introduction," *The Kingston Conference Proceedings* (Kingston, Ont.: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1991).
- <sup>308</sup> "For National C.A.R./Against Regionalization," Container 1, File 1. "First National Conference. Appendix H-1." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>309</sup> Chambers, Untitled writings on CAR, *CAROT* (1979/80).
- <sup>310</sup> Curnoe was also present at this meeting. "Minutes of the Ontario C.A.R. Conference held at John Boyle's Studio, St. Catharines, January 17, 1972. Container 1, File 1. "First National Conference." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>311</sup> "Canadian Artists' Representation: A Report from the First National Conference, Winnipeg, September 1971." Container 2, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-72." Page 1. CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- This quotation indicates that Chambers was unaware of the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists.
- <sup>312</sup> "First National Conference." Container 2, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-72." Page 1. CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> "Report: Cathy Bates re: Quebec C.A.R. Thursday, February 7, 1974." Container 1, File 3. "Minutes and Proceedings—Third National Conference, 1974." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>315</sup> "Canada West: CCA", November 17, 18, 19, 1972, University of Calgary.

<sup>316</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers, president, CAR to CAR members, 15 August, 1972. Container 5, File 1, "Canadian Conference of the Arts." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>317</sup> "First National Conference." Container 1, File 1, CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>318</sup> Deborah Meldazy and Peter Denny, "Some Facts About Artists' Relations With Their Dealers in Ontario" (May 1976), Container 4, File 20. "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (5/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>319</sup> Gary Greenwood, CARO vice-spokesman to Sylvain Voyer, national CAR representative. "Research Proposal," May 1975. Container 4, File 21. "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (6/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>320</sup> "Canadian Artists' Representation: A Report from the First National Conference, Winnipeg, September 1971." Container 2, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-72." Page 4. CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>321</sup> "C.A.R.: Continuity for C.A.R." Meeting held in London, Ontario 29-30 March, 1974 between John Chambers, founding and past president and Sylvain Voyer, national representative. Container 1, File 3. "Minutes and Proceedings—Third National Conference, 1974." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> "CAR: Report from the First National Conference," Container 2, File 1. "Minutes and Proceedings—First National Conference, 1971-72." Page 4. CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>324</sup> Chambers was concerned over the decision by York University to hire Joe Green (a non-Canadian) to replace Jules Heller (also a non-Canadian) as the Dean of the Fine Arts Department. Letter from Jack Chambers to Mr. John Yolton, 6 March, 1973 (Reprinted in CAR Newsletter, Spring 1973, page 31). Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>325</sup> Letter from John Boyle, spokesman CARO to John Yolton, acting president, York University, 7 March 1973 (Reprinted in CAR Newsletter, Spring 1973, page 32). (Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter." CARFAC fonds, NAC.)

<sup>326</sup> "Questionnaire to Canadian Schools," Container 18, File 14. "Art Departments—Hiring Canadian vs U.S. Professors, 1977-1982." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>327</sup> Kathleen Walker, "Survey Finds Most Art School Teachers Non-Canadian," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 May 1977.

<sup>328</sup> CAR/FAC News #11, Volume 13, No. 1.

<sup>329</sup> "For Release," Minister; Employment and Immigration, May 7, 1981, Subject 81-16. Page 1.

<sup>330</sup> "Prof problem," *The Charlatan*, 21 January 1982.

<sup>331</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers to Mr. Alan Lambert, board chairman, Toronto Dominion Bank, 16 February, 1973 (Reprinted in CAR Newsletter, Spring 1973, page 3). Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter, 1972-73." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>332</sup> "And What Do You Think?," *CAR News*, Volume 11, Number 3, Spring 1977, page 8. Container 2, File 5. "Publication—National Newsletter, 1977." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

Amaya was later hired by the Art Gallery of Ontario as a curator, an appointment that caused a good deal of controversy.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> CAR Newsletter, Spring 1973, page 50. Container 2, File 1. "Publication—National Newsletter." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

<sup>336</sup> Boggs resigned in a dispute with Bernard Ostry, secretary general of the National Museums Corporation over who controlled the formation of policy for the National Gallery of Canada—the director or the secretary general. Correspondence with Michael Bell. 21 February 2007.

<sup>337</sup> This was the proposed wording of a telegram to be sent to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and the secretary of state. Letter from Jack Chambers to Sylvain Voyer, CAR national representative, 7 January 1974. Container 13, File 5 "National Gallery (2/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

- <sup>338</sup> Letter from Sylvain Voyer, CAR national representative to George Ignatieff, chairman of the Board of Trustees, National Museum of Canada, 30 April, 1976. Container 13, File 5 "National Gallery (2/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>339</sup> Letter from Bill Lobchuk, CARFAC director to Ian Clark, director, Museums and Visual Arts, Secretary of State, 16 July 1979. Container 13, File 4 "National Gallery (1/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>340</sup> Letter from Jennifer Dickson to Dale Amundson, CAR national representative, 12 June 1979. Container 13, File 5 "National Gallery (2/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Ian Clark to Bill Lobchuk, 30 August, 1979. Container 13, File 4 "National Gallery (1/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>342</sup> Minutes and Proceedings—Eleventh National Conference. Container 1, File 11. CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>343</sup> CARFAC established a committee to evaluate and seek greater involvement with the National Gallery's hiring policies. Letter from Jennifer Dickson, Chairperson, National Gallery Committee to Timothy Porteous, assistant director, visual arts, Canada Council, 21 August, 1979. Letter from Jennifer Dickson to Brydon Smith, assistant director, collections and research, National Gallery of Canada, 21 August, 1979. Container 13, File 4 "National Gallery (1/2)." CARFAC fonds, NAC. "The committee, as I visualize it would not meet in the formal sense but would act as provincial gathering point for artists in that province feeding suggestions to me re National Gallery policy issues that they would like to see dealt with, criticisms of current policy and ideas for better representation on a regional basis." Letter from Jennifer Dickson to Bill Lobchuk, 14 August, 1979. Container 14, File 14, "CARFAC National Director—Lobchuk, Bill." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>344</sup> Untitled document [Proposal for *Image Canada*]. Container 4, File 31, "Canadian Centre for Photography." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>345</sup> Letter from Jennifer Dickson to Dennis Tourbin (CARO), 27 November 1977. Container 4, File 31, "Canadian Centre for Photography." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>346</sup> Letter from Bill Lobchuk, CARFAC national representative to Margaret Lyons, network program director (AM), CBC, 17 February 1978. Container 4, File 30, "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>347</sup> Secretary of State Department, "Canadian Government Welcomes Establishment of a Canadian American Cultural Institution," Release No. 6-0972E, June 9, 1972. Container 3, File 7 "American Friends of Canada." CARFAC fonds, NAC. Bluma Appel, a Montrealer who "began her career in the cultural sector as a person/chargée de Mission to the Honourable Gerald Pelletier, Secretary of State" co-founded the AFC with such influential American friends as Henry Ford and David Rockefeller. ArtsWeek/Arts Toronto, News Release, Protégé Honours 2003, Award 2001. www.artsworld.ca/protégé. May 14, 2004.
- <sup>348</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers to CAR members, 22 September 1972. Container 3, File 7 "American Friends of Canada." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>349</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers to Bluma Appel, 8 November 1972. Container 3, File 7 "American Friends of Canada." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>350</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers, president, C.A.R. to Mr. Bryan Robertson, c/o Newberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase, New York. February 14, 1974. Container 1, File 3 "Third National Conference." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>351</sup> Letter from Jack Chambers "Founding President" to Ian Clark, 20 April, 1974. Container 3, File 7 "American Friends of Canada." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>352</sup> At the time Susan Crean was the executive secretary of CARO (she held this position from 1973 until her resignation on 25 June, 1975). In 1974 she produced "Economic Study of Canadian Visual Artists." Container 1, File 3. "Minutes and Proceedings—Third National Conference." CARFAC fonds, NAC. Crean was also the author of *Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture?* (Don Mills, Ont.: General Pub. Co., 1976).
- <sup>353</sup> Brief to *Direction Ontario* Conference of the Canadian Conference for the Arts. Conference held in Toronto 19-21 January, 1973. Container 4, File 22. "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (7/7), 1972-79." CARFAC fonds, NAC. (John Boyle may have written some of this in "Brief to Ontario Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Economic and Cultural Nationalism.")
- <sup>354</sup> "Ontario C.A.R. Proposals to the Canadian Conference of the Arts: Toronto." Container 4, File 22. "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (7/7), 1972-79." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>355</sup> Container 1, File 3, "Third National Conference." CARFAC fonds, NAC.

- <sup>356</sup> Jack Chambers, "Reminder to CARO," CAR/FAC News (15 June 1977), Container 4, File 27, "CARO (1/3)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>357</sup> Letter from Dennis Tourbin to Olga Chambers, 15 April, 1978. Container 4, File 16 "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (2/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>358</sup> Letter from Jane Martin to Bill Lobchuk, national representative, CAR/FAC, 19 April 1978. Container 4, File 16 "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (1/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>359</sup> Letter from Jane Martin to Bill Lobchuk, national representative, CAR/FAC, 28 March 1978. Container 4, File 16 "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (2/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>360</sup> Press Release, "The Jack Chambers Foundation For Research and Educational Development Projects to Benefit Canadian Visual Artists," 10 November 1980. Container 18, File 28 "Miscellaneous Correspondence." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>361</sup> Artnet Number 2, November 1985. Container 14, File 8 "Miscellaneous Materials." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>362</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>363</sup> Minutes of CARO Conference May 27/28, 1978, Toronto. Container 4, File 16 "Canadian Artists Representation (CARO)—Ontario (1/7)." CARFAC fonds, NAC.
- <sup>364</sup> Rodger, "Chronology," *Life & Stuff*, 150.
- <sup>365</sup> Greg Curnoe, Letter to Glen Curnoe, undated, quoted in *ibid.*
- <sup>366</sup> Ross Woodman recalls that Chambers used an instructional film on rose cultivation that he 'borrowed' from the London Public Library. Chambers believed that the film would not be missed, and that he could put it to better use in his film. Personal interview between Michael Zyrd and Ross Woodman, 19 February 2002), in Michael Zyrd, "Cross/Cut: Hybrid as Allegory," in *The Films of Jack Chambers*, ed. Kathryn Elder (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 65
- <sup>367</sup> "A Dropout Whose Ambition Has Paid Off," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 10 July 1971.
- <sup>368</sup> Zyrd, "Cross/Cut," 62.
- <sup>369</sup> In the film *Chambers: Tracks and Gestures* it is reported Chambers gave the money from the film screening to an American Mormon group that gave to Vietnamese civilians. *Chambers: Tracks and Gestures*, Christopher Lowry and John Walker, 1982. Matthew Wherry claims that he collected funds "for Quaker medical relief for Viet Nam." Matthew Wherry, "The Silence of Jack Chambers," *20 Cents Magazine* 1, no. 9 (May 1967), unpaginated.
- <sup>370</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 105.
- <sup>371</sup> Wherry, "Silence of Jack Chambers," unpaginated..
- <sup>372</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>373</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>374</sup> Video dustjacket. *Hybrid*. Excerpted from *Jack Chambers: Mosaic, R-34, Hybrid*. Promotional material from The Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, 5.
- <sup>375</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in *Canada 101*.
- <sup>376</sup> "Londoner Commissioned for Airport Paintings," *The London Free Press*, 27 October 1967.
- <sup>377</sup> Sarah Milroy, "The Mural that Rocked Canada," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 2 June 2003.  
For a thorough discussion of the Dorval Mural see: Charles C. Hill, "Greg Curnoe's *Homage to the R 34*," *National Gallery of Canada REVIEW* IV (2003): 84-104.
- <sup>378</sup> Milroy, "Mural".
- <sup>379</sup> The Canada Council, *10<sup>th</sup> Annual Report* (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1966-67), 15.
- <sup>380</sup> "We Pay for a Protest," (Editorial) *Regina Leader Post*, 10 April 1968.
- <sup>381</sup> "An Artistic Affront to Americans," (Editorial) *The London Free Press*, 2 April 1968.
- <sup>382</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>383</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>384</sup> Irene McKim, a Kingston artist, reported that most of the small local audience responded with disfavour to Boyle's and Curnoe's readings. She noted however, that although they shocked people "no one will forget the night Curnoe and Boyle came to Kingston." Irene McKim, "Curnoe and Boyle Speak in Kingston," *20 Cents Magazine* 4, no. 4 (April 1970): unpaginated.
- <sup>385</sup> John Boyle, "Queen's Paper: Continental Refusal/Refus Continental," 11 March 1970, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Reprinted in *20 Cents Magazine* 4, no. 4 (April 1970): unpaginated.
- <sup>386</sup> 19 March 1970. Read at the University of Windsor.

<sup>387</sup> Amendment #1. Greg Curnoe, "Amendments to the Continental Refusal/Refus Continental," Reprinted in *20 Cents Magazine* 4, no. 4 (April 1970): unpaginated.

<sup>388</sup> Amendment # 17. Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Amendment # 24. Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Borduas and *les automatistes* were themselves strongly influenced by European and Russian groups like the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists who had produced politically radical artistic manifestos. Ray Ellenwood, "Introduction," *Total Refusal: The Complete 1948 Manifestos of the Montreal Automatistes*, trans. Ray Ellenwood (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1985), 14.

<sup>391</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in "Greg Curnoe: A File Interview," *File 2*, nos. 1-2 (May 1973): 46.

<sup>392</sup> Curnoe, "A File Interview," 46.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Questions by Greg Curnoe," *Greg Curnoe Canada* (Exhibition catalogue by Dennis Reid, X Bienal in São Paulo, Brazil) (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), 67.

<sup>395</sup> Curnoe oscillates between the British and American spelling of Americaniz[er]ation in his writings. Greg Curnoe, "Growth and Progress—Two Destructive Myths," Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Journals 1970.

<sup>396</sup> The undated review references four London exhibitions: The Warehouse Co-op, a group of seven artists at Althouse College, an exhibition of perpetual motion machines and inventions at the 20/20 Gallery and an exhibition of Curnoe's prints at 20/20 Gallery. These events all occurred in 1970. Greg Curnoe, Undated typescript about "4 openings with a week in London," Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Miscellaneous Writings.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> In 1967 Bonham, an ex-Marine in the United States Army befriended Ed Zelenak and Walt Redinger at a tobacco-picking job in West Lorne, Ontario. Zelenak and Redinger took him for a visit to London, Ontario where he met Curnoe. Bonham was so impressed with the vibrant art scene in London that he moved there from the United States in 1968. He recalls: "London was great! There must have been some 60 to 100 working artists, and I mean really working there in London at the time." Bonham credited London with providing him with the foundations of his career. He wrote: "What a wild 8 years I had in London. Times like that only happen once in a blue moon. To be honest, I loved London. It gave me my start, and it was a wonderful home base. Canadians took it for granted, but to me it was unbelievable." Don Bonham and John K. Grande, "Angels of Beauty: An Interview with Don Bonham by John K. Grande," *Wigway* 5 (Spring 2003): 37.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Greg Curnoe, Undated handwritten letter to W.I. Bice (writing unclear). Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Journals 1970.

<sup>403</sup> Greg Curnoe, Untitled text about Selwyn Dewdney, December-January 1979-1980. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Writings file, 1980.

<sup>404</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in Lenore Crawford, "Curnoe Rejects 'Parochial' Label: UWO's Resident Artist Says He's Pro-World," *The London Free Press*, 18 October 1975.

<sup>405</sup> Greg Curnoe, "This is a Mixture, Not a Solution." Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. 1979 Writing, 15.

Curnoe's complaints are rather disingenuous as he refused to exhibit in the United States.

<sup>406</sup> Crawford, "Curnoe Rejects," *The London Free Press*, 18 October 1975.

<sup>407</sup> It was noted that Curnoe's work appropriated the work of Francis Picabia, one of the founders of the American International Dada movement. Picabia's quotation read: «Les impuissants se prosternent tousjours [sic] vers le passé», *Business Quarterly* 37 no. 1 (Spring 1972): 1.

<sup>408</sup> Lord appeared in a Montreal court charged with this offense and was fined \$200. "Arts Canada Editor 'Fired'," *Hamilton Spectator*, 9 June 1967; Barrie Hale, "Editor Charged at Expo," *The Telegram* (Toronto), 31 May 1967.

Less than two weeks later the directors of the Society for Art Publications, the publishers of *artscanada*, issued a press release stating that Lord's one-year contract with *artscanada* was not going to be renewed because "many of the policies pursued by Mr. Lord as editor could no longer be endorsed by the Society.

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Press Release issued by the Directors of the Society for Art Publications, 7 June 1967. Barry Lord files. NGC fonds, NGC Archives.

<sup>409</sup> Barry Lord, "Living Inside the American Empire of Taste," *Saturday Night* 86, no. 12 (December 1971): 29-30.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>411</sup> Due to the presence of Greenberg at the Emma Lake workshops in Saskatchewan, Lord claims: "Regina became a branch plant of New York art." *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> Greg Curnoe, Untitled text prepared for the "Art and Ideology" conference at the University of Ottawa, February 1979. Unpublished. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Writings file, 1979.

<sup>417</sup> Curnoe, "This is a Mixture," 10.

<sup>418</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Some Suggestions for Exhibitions at the London Regional Art Gallery," 23 September 1982. Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Writings file, 1981.

<sup>419</sup> Greg Curnoe, "London and the Crisis of Cultural Growth." Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. 1987 Writing.

### **Part III: Regionalism, Memory and Nostalgia: the Local and the Particular**

*In order for a culture to really be itself and to produce something, the culture and its members must be convinced of their originality and even, to some extent of their superiority over others; it is only under conditions of under-communication that it can produce anything.*

—Claude Lévi-Strauss quoted in Greg Curnoe, “This is a Mixture, Not a Solution.”

In the 1960s and 1970s regionalism began to surface as an alternative method of understanding Canada. The idea that different regions in Canada had distinct cultures became extremely popular and London, Ontario, was a fertile locus for this notion. Artists, academics, and critics promoted the idea that there was an essential aspect to the southwestern city that resulted in unique, indigenous forms of cultural expression. There was also a parochial belief that the culture that was produced in London was devoid of external influences.

Both Chambers and Curnoe were dedicated to their region, although they had different conceptions of what region meant. For Chambers, region was highly personal and contingent on his personal memories of it, whereas Curnoe’s idea of region encompassed not only his personal experience of it but all of the cultural production that derived from his region. Despite this difference, each artist incorporated memories in their artworks—their own personal remembrances, ancestral memories, and community memories. As artists, they adopted the role of cultural custodians of the quotidian for their community, and through the collection and integration of numerous images, historical events, and memories into their work they acted as archivists. Through their determination to create works that were relevant (on a personal and a community level)

they not only shaped their own individual identities but they contributed to a sense of communal identity in London, Ontario. This strong sense of a particular community then became part of a larger overall vision of Canada as a nation of regions at a time when the country was seeking to redefine itself.

Due to the extent of the oeuvres of the two artists, the discussion of their art (paintings and films) will be confined to several pertinent groups of works that demonstrate a preoccupation with their everyday lives and the memorialization of the mundane. The discussion of paintings focuses on a number of Curnoe's works featuring the views from his studio windows (both textual and figurative), works that specifically reference his everyday experience (family and friends and locations), and his films *Sowesto* and *Connexions*. A group of works that Chambers painted right after he returned to London (works that incorporate portraits of his family members), his *Olga Visiting* series, his later perceptual realist paintings (featuring particularly poignant moments), and several of his films (*R-34*, *Circle*, *Mosaic*, and *The Hart of London*), will be discussed. Also of interest are the paintings that both artists did of the Victoria Hospital, and several relevant works that demonstrate a fascination with 'listing' or archiving memories or events. This section does not provide a detailed art historical analytical 'reading' of the works, nor does it present *catalogue raisonnés* of the artists. Instead, the works are being used to inform a discussion of identity formation.

## Chapter 9: The Problem of Regionalism

Regionalism has long been considered a problematic notion with respect to Canadian identity. Firstly, it is a difficult concept to define satisfactorily—is it a geographical reality, an economic pattern, a political manifestation, a social or cultural construction, an imaginary concept, a number of discrete artistic styles, or a complex combination of these elements? Secondly, regionalism can have either positive or negative connotations, depending on how one uses the term (it is considered to be good if the region being promoted is one's own, and bad if the region being discussed is perceived as threatening to something else, for example, the unity of the nation).

Throughout the twentieth century scholars and writers from a variety of disciplines began to realize that the idea of a unified Canada that ignored regional concerns invariably led to an uneven distribution of wealth, power, and recognition for much of Canada. The system of equalization payments used by the federal government to redistribute national wealth was recognition of the need to ameliorate the conditions of the have-not provinces.

Having identified a problem—the potential threat that regionalism poses to Canada's unity—scholars were then impelled to try to find solutions. Some of them believed that celebrating the diversity of the regions would lead to regional contentment, which would lessen the threat to nationalism—indeed they felt that it might even lead to an *increased* sense of nationalism (happy parts make up a happy whole). It is useful to examine how different disciplines such as geography, history, sociology, economics and art history approach the concept of regionalism (and by extension, Canadian identity).

In 2001, Gerald Friesen published “The Evolving Meanings of Region in Canada,” in which he traces the idea of region back to pre-contact North America when “[s]pace was indivisible from place” and was considered to embody spiritual properties. He notes that in the period of early European settlement, “[i]n the absence of systems of intensive administration and trade that encompassed a larger territory, the notion of region had little or no relevance.”<sup>1</sup> This gradually gave way to an awareness of regional differences as permanent European settlements became established. Print, which the settlers brought from Europe, also had an effect on the people’s perceptions of place as they became able to articulate and disseminate different perspectives. Eventually, the exploitation of Canada’s staples also began to have an effect on people’s understanding of regional difference. Confederation and Sir John A. Macdonald’s National Policy further shaped the meaning of region.

Geographers were among the first scholars to pay particular attention to the connection between regionalism and identity. Early geographers did not pay much attention to the cultural or social aspects of regionalism. Instead, they tended to emphasize the geological or environmental aspects of regionalism and the economic aspects of regionalism that derived from the distribution of natural resources and concomitant urban settlement patterns in the various physical regions of Canada. More recently, geographers have become interested in a broadened definition of regionalism. Friesen points out that geographers were the first to move away from the early strictly environmentalist definition of region to a number of broader approaches that encompass the social and cultural aspects of regionalism.<sup>2</sup> For example, John Warkentin claims that it is not just the physical differences in Canada that have shaped our regional identities

(the environmentalist approach), but that human settlement has had an equally strong influence on the geography of Canada (the economic approach) since “[l]ife and land are closely intertwined, mutually affecting one another in ever-changing combinations. Thus, very distinctive regions have emerged across the face of Canada.”<sup>3</sup>

Other geographers, such as Larry McCann and Angus Gunn, focus on the heartland and hinterland thesis that posits that there are dominant centres of power and status in Canada (areas where people, wealth, and political influence are concentrated) around which subordinate regions are grouped (areas that are deficient in the above conditions).<sup>4</sup> According to this theory, how we define ourselves depends, largely, on where we are situated with respect to the heartland. McCann and Gunn acknowledge the arbitrariness of political boundaries in assessing what is a heartland and what is a hinterland; in fact, they discuss the possibility of expanding the idea of core and periphery beyond Canada’s political boundaries, placing Canada at the periphery of more powerful nations (the United States, more particularly New York) and at the core of less powerful ones. (This theory is particularly relevant to the London-Toronto dynamic.)

Historians expanded on the basic ideas put forth by geographers; however, aware that regions were not environmentally or economically determined monolithic entities, historians focused attention on the social aspects of group or regional identities. Debates on how to redefine the nation began to gather momentum in the 1960s when historians proposed studying Canada’s regions. The roots of these ideas can be traced to the historian J.M. S. Careless, who first hinted at the rising tide of regionalism in his 1954 essay “Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History.” In this essay, he put forth the idea that regionalism is a phenomenon that arises as frontiers strive to become

metropolises. Building on the idea of westward expansion popularized by the American writer Frederick Jackson Turner, Careless noted that although 'frontierism' was a powerful influence in Canadian history, the frontier thesis proper was never "adopted as fully or dogmatically in Canada as it was in the United States."<sup>5</sup> Instead of using the term frontierism in the environmentally deterministic way that Turner did, Careless used the term to refer to the process of regions in the making. He found that the concept was limited, and used instead a new framework of 'metropolitanism' to study Canadian history.

Careless rejected the environmental determinism of the American frontier thesis. The University of Toronto historian believed that it was not solely the harsh landscape that determined a distinctive Canadian character. Nor did he agree with the moral overtones that this thesis implied—he stated that the West and its pioneer farmers were not necessarily more virtuous and superior than money-fixated Easterners. Instead, elaborating on the ideas of Harold Innis and Donald Creighton, Careless supported the Laurentian thesis that "rests on the idea that the long St. Lawrence water route and its connections across the continent became the basis of an extensive communications system around which Canada itself took shape."<sup>6</sup>

The Laurentian thesis negates a strictly environmentalist position (that mere physical geography determines national identity), basing its premise instead on the influence engendered by the expansion of eastern centres of commerce and industry. Careless noted that metropolitanism was "at root a socio-economic concept that has already seen some application in Canadian history,"<sup>7</sup> a concept that was the "other side of the coin to frontier expansion."<sup>8</sup> Although he believed that metropolitanism was an

important tool for studying Canadian history, he warned against adopting a strict theory of metropolitan determinism. Careless concluded that as a conceptual tool metropolitanism was more helpful in explaining Canadian history than the American frontier theory, and he called for “a restatement, a new perspective that may disclose new vistas and produce new patterns for Canadian history.”<sup>9</sup>

It was not until the late 1960s that academics began to examine regionalism in earnest, due, partly, to the excitement surrounding Canada’s centennial year and attempts to redefine a national identity. In 1967 the historian Ramsay Cook wrote his influential article “Canadian Centennial Cerebrations,” in which he evaluated some of the literature on Canadian nationalism that was published around the centennial year. He claimed that a strong sentiment of national malaise ran throughout the literature published at the time; the authors were questioning whether or not Canada had a national identity, and if it still retained the vestiges of one, how could it be bolstered?

Cook’s scathing essay dismissed writings of the authors who were wrestling with what he called “the great Canadian problem—our lack of unity and identity,” and he questioned if Canadians were getting any closer to the source of the problem.<sup>10</sup> “Certainly,” Cook wrote, “we should continue to try to understand ourselves; an unexamined nation is not worth living in,” and he went on to suggest, “it may be that our frame of reference is wrong. Perhaps instead of constantly deploring our lack of identity, we should attempt to understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class identities that we do have. It might just be that it is in these *limited identities* that ‘Canadianism’ is found.”<sup>11</sup> Largely as a result of this article, Cook became known as “an outspoken critic of Canadian nationalists in the 1960s.”<sup>12</sup>

By the late 1960s the federal government recognized the growing interest in regionalism. It capitalized on it by establishing the National Museums of Canada (NMC) in 1968. The NMC oversaw the administration of the National Gallery of Canada, the National Museum of Man (including the War Museum), the National Museum of Natural Sciences, and the National Museum of Science and Technology (including the National Aviation Museum). Part of the mandate of the NMC was to increase public access to Canada's national museums by creating "a network of 25 Associate Museums (including the four National Museums) and 24 National Exhibition Centres"<sup>13</sup> across the country. Exhibitions would not only travel to the regions from the centre, but exhibitions organized in the regions circulated among the regions and travelled to the centre. In effect, the federal government was using regional structures to try indeed as Cook suggested "to understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class identities that we do have."<sup>14</sup>

The shifting framework Cook proposed for studying Canadian history became extremely influential, and 'limited identities' became a catch phrase for historians who supported the concept of regionalism. In 1969 J.M.S. Careless appropriated the phrase and turned it into a "new paradigm" with his essay "'Limited Identities' in Canada."<sup>15</sup> While Careless' earlier essay "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History" did not explicitly deal with regionalism, "Limited Identities" did. In his essay, Careless was critical of writings, which dealt with the process of nation building, saying that they had developed a "teleological cast."<sup>16</sup> He wrote: "One looks for the end to be achieved; one measures developments, pro or con, in terms of the goal—a strong, united nation."<sup>17</sup> Careless contended this was not the way to discern and define Canada; instead, one

needed to use Ramsay Cook's concept of 'limited identities.' But, where Cook had referred to the 'limited identities' of region, culture and class, Careless confined his discussion of the concept to the area of region.

While he acknowledged that regionalism had strong environmentalist connotations (with regard to theories that had been developed in the United States), Careless believed "the experience of regionalism remains prominent and distinctive in Canadian history," an experience that "time has tended less to erode...than to develop."<sup>18</sup> Careless presented a number of standard reasons why regionalism was a valid tool for studying Canadian history (notably its physical geography, a north-south economic movement, English-French duality, and a weak federal union). Additionally, he opined, "the social patterning of Canada particularly tends to favour regional commitment. There is a relationship here between regional identification and broader social values that deserves investigation."<sup>19</sup> Careless suggested the reason for this was that Canadians tended to favour conceptions of people as groups and communities rather than as individuals and citizens (as the Americans did).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly,

for English Canada, the habitual emphasis on particularized social groupings rather than mass citizenship, on pragmatically nearer community interests instead of some generalized, idealized, national way of life, effectively ministers to strong identification with regions or provinces delineated by geography, economics, and history.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, regionalism was the ideal framework within which to study Canadian history.

Careless elaborated on the metropolitanism thesis he had developed fifteen years earlier in "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History." In "Limited Identities," he demonstrated how major metropolitan centres across Canada organized regional

hinterlands around themselves—regions that had their own dynamism. Instead of creating a homogenized pan-Canadian identity Careless claimed, “the growth of urbanism and metropolitanism [in Canada] has largely worked to confirm regional identities.”

Careless concluded that “the true theme of the country’s history in the twentieth century is not nation building but region building,” a theme he believed would lead to a common ‘Canadianism.’<sup>22</sup> He cautioned however, that the ultimate aim of regions was to gain maximum autonomy, something potentially threatening to Canadian unity. Care must be taken then, to ensure that the concept of autonomy “involves notions of both practical adjustment and continuing association [with the rest of Canada].”<sup>23</sup>

There was a surge of interest in regionalism during the 1970s, when, as William Westfall observed, regionalism seemed “destined to rival, if not replace, the nation-state as the central construction in Canadian studies.”<sup>24</sup> Many of the reasons for this had to do with concerns over Canadian unity as issues such as the growing Americanization of Canada, the rise of Quebec nationalism, and the Alberta oil situation threatened to fracture the nation. In addition to these potentially divisive issues, Westfall noted, “On an ideological level, the growing stress upon regions reflects a general adherence to the value of pluralism and diversity in Canadian culture.”<sup>25</sup>

In 1971 the historian Phillip A. Buckner wrote an editorial for the inaugural issue of the revived Atlantic journal *Acadiensis*.<sup>26</sup> In his editorial, “Acadiensis II,” Buckner bemoaned the fact that Canadian historians remained “obsessed with the great ‘national’ themes,” to the neglect of local history.<sup>27</sup> Although the revived *Acadiensis* was “[d]evoted to focusing regional awareness...upon Atlantic Canada,” Buckner stated it would broaden its scope to include other areas of the country (and the United States and

Europe) when this was deemed relevant. Also, and perhaps more importantly, while the journal focused on Atlantic history, it was not strictly limited to contributions from historians. Instead, Buckner invited “contributions from anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, or practitioners of any other discipline that will further our knowledge of the history of the Atlantic region.”<sup>28</sup> “Acadiensis II” heralded the surge of interest in local (regional) history during the early 1970s, and indicated the increasingly broad direction that the study of regionalism would take.

Not everyone agreed that regionalism was a worthwhile method of analyzing Canadian history; indeed, some went so far as to call it detrimental to Canadian unity.<sup>29</sup> In 1978 Lovell Clark, a historian at the University of Manitoba, claimed that scholars who jumped “on the bandwagon of regionalism” were in fact, adding “to the forces of disunity.”<sup>30</sup> In his article “Regionalism? Or Irrationalism?” Clark dismissed regionalism as a form of griping, and, in an attempt to downplay grievance-based regionalism, he likened it to a national pastime such as hockey.<sup>31</sup>

Scarcely more than a decade after regionalism was put forth as a new way to study Canada some of the strongest supporters of the idea began to question its continuing merits. In 1980 Careless questioned the validity of his earlier theory in an essay entitled “Limited Identities—Ten Years Later.” He asked if, given the nationwide discontent with the idea of Canada, there was any merit to the concept of ‘limited identities,’ or if these identities “threaten[ed] to take over and settle the matter of a Canadian national identity by ending it outright, leaving perhaps a loose league of survivor states essentially existing on American outdoor relief.”<sup>32</sup> While in 1969 (in “‘Limited Identities’ in Canada”), Careless called for increasing scholarship on

regionalism, cultural and class issues, he now concluded that the subsequent deluge of material on all these issues threatened to drown any overall national concerns.

“Limited Identities—Ten Years Later” was an examination of the type and worth of the material that was generated in the ten years since Careless elaborated on Ramsay Cook’s idea of ‘limited identities.’ Careless commented on the scholarship on class issues, on the increasing emphasis on cultural pluralism, and on regional identities, and asked if it was sufficient for understanding Canadian identity. He asked an important question: “What is left of Canada, if we display multiple identities in culture, class and region but little overall?” He continued, “‘Unity in diversity’ has been used as a hopeful Canadian motto. Now it rather seems that it should be ‘diversity Unlimited,’ if we are only to mark the particularism of so much of the historical labours of the latest decade.”<sup>33</sup>

Despite these pessimistic comments, Careless concluded that these ‘limited identities’ were still valid for a number of reasons. Firstly, nation-wide studies had not stopped being written; indeed, they had become enriched by the variety of more regionally specific scholarship produced; secondly, issues of class and ethnicity, while they appeared to be limited, did, in fact, extend across the country; thirdly, regionalism was a relational rather than a formal approach; and lastly, when considered together, these limited identities were “part of an interlaced, national mediating structure, which has an existence of its own as more than the sum of its parts.”<sup>34</sup>

Ramsay Cook was not as optimistic as Careless when he revisited his earlier ideas about ‘limited identities.’ In 1983 he wrote a review of the first edition of L.D. McCann’s textbook *A Geography of Canada: Heartland and Hinterland*, entitled “Regionalism Unmasked,” in which Cook contended that regionalism was no longer an adequate

framework for analyzing Canadian history.<sup>35</sup> After reading *Heartland and Hinterland*, Cook believed, one could conclude that regionalism, as a tool of analysis, was “a concept whose time has gone” (although Cook thought that it might still have some political uses).<sup>36</sup>

In 1988 Phillip Buckner re-examined the concept of ‘limited identities’ to see if it was still a valid tool for Canadian historiography. In his essay “‘Limited Identities’ and Canadian Historical Scholarship: An Atlantic Provinces Perspective” he set out to determine if regionalism had had the revolutionary effect that it promised. By examining the historiography of the Atlantic provinces, he concluded, while there was a plethora of regional history being produced in the Atlantic provinces, the resultant writing had had little impact on a national level. Until the 1970s, little attention had been paid to the Atlantic region, and what was produced tended to have a “strong teleological and ahistorical focus” which emphasized the region’s “backwardness and innate conservatism.”<sup>37</sup> Buckner examined what had been written since the 1970s and found it similarly deficient. Historians of regional history, he noted, generally believed that their work was only of value “if they place it into a larger national context.”<sup>38</sup> Buckner asked why the opposite might not be also true: that any study of the nation as a whole must examine its constituent parts.<sup>39</sup>

In the end, Buckner concluded that the ‘limited identities’ approach was still valid.<sup>40</sup> He pointed out that because regionalism is notoriously hard to define, and because regions do not correspond to political boundaries, “historians are frequently compelled to resort to the nebulous concept, much beloved by literary scholars, of a

‘region of the mind.’”<sup>41</sup> Just because ‘region’ had assumed the vagueness that the term ‘nation’ had, this was not a valid reason to abandon the study of either.<sup>42</sup>

While Buckner’s 1988 article dealt primarily with the Atlantic region, in 2000 he published another article dealing more broadly with the theme of ‘limited identities.’<sup>43</sup> In “‘Limited Identities’ Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History,” Buckner criticized the term ‘limited identities’ as it was used by Cook and Careless, saying that it implied you could break down Canadian identity into component parts (with certain percentages for regional identity, class identity, etc.). On the contrary, Buckner believed, “[t]he truth is that Canadians, like other peoples, hold multiple identities simultaneously.”<sup>44</sup> He stated: “All identities are socially constructed, and all are fluid and unstable and frequently in a state of re-negotiation.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, if identities are mutable, then so too must be our concept of regionalism. Buckner claimed regional boundaries were not geographic (environmentally determined); instead, they were cultural and reflected “historical, economic and political factors.”<sup>46</sup> Buckner also criticized what he called the ‘national unity’ fallacy—that everyone who thinks of himself or herself as a Canadian is necessarily “united in their values or beliefs.”<sup>47</sup> He did not deny the existence of a national identity (although he did not hazard a guess as to what it might consist of), but suggested, if there is one, that it “cannot be reduced to a single formula.”<sup>48</sup>

Buckner contended that the state has been unable to establish a hegemonic vision of the country because it is so large and diverse. Using Benedict Anderson’s theory (although he does not credit him with the origin of the idea, and had previously expressed criticism of the way in which regionalism had been portrayed as a “region of the

mind”<sup>49</sup>), Buckner claimed that “Canadian history is about immigration and pluralism, about the way in which individuals from diverse ethnic origins and with diverse backgrounds came together to form an imagined community.”<sup>50</sup> Buckner contended too much emphasis had been placed on the divisive potential of regionalism, which he believed was a unifying rather than a divisive force with respect to Canadian nationalism. He claimed: “[T]he creation of regional myths may help the populations of small and peripheral populations to define a place for themselves within a larger national community.”<sup>51</sup>

Historians and geographers were not the only scholars who were interested in the links between region and identity; by the early 1970s a wide range of disciplines were engaged in discussions of regionalism, among them Canadian literary studies. In an article in the *Journal of Canadian Studies* in 1980, William Westfall examined the history of regional writing in history and literature (he began with Ramsay Cook’s important call for the study of regional identities in place of the futility of searching for an illusive Canadian identity). Westfall claimed that writing about regions was not new; it was just new to Torontonians. Torontonians, whom he called the ‘national school’, tended to use the term regionalism in a derogatory way, linking it with parochialism, adolescence, or colonialism. Regional writing (such as W.L. Morton’s) was present, but sidelined by national writing. For the national school, regionalism was an obstacle to be overcome in the drive towards a unified nation-state with a genuinely national culture. This attitude could be seen clearly in the national school’s historical writing which made strong teleological assumptions: “Canada advanced politically, economically, and

intellectually by stages from a primitive colonial beginning towards a mature national and imperial future.”<sup>52</sup>

Westfall claimed the development of regional interpretations began as a challenge to older national schools (which he believed had become ahistorical in character). For many years the centralizing and homogenizing implications of Laurentianism informed the interpretation of regions in Canadian literary criticism. Westfall cited the example of John George Bourinot who believed that national literature (the ultimate goal) would manifest itself in international (universal) works and audiences. Bourinot argued that regional writing failed to meet these standards, and was an obstacle to national literary greatness. Westfall also noted that E.K. Brown conceded that regional literature could exist, indeed it was seen as charming, but it didn't have “the universal appeal that was a prerequisite for great literature.”<sup>53</sup>

Westfall noted that the anti-regional bias was seen in early attempts to uncover the character of the Canadian identity (the association of the Canadian character with the wilderness used the metaphor of the northern land to proclaim national values at the expense of regional ones—as Carl Berger pointed out, the northern climate could homogenize regional and ethnic differences, “and fashion a united and racially purified country”).<sup>54</sup> The ‘new regionalism’ did not discover regions; instead, it showed a change in the values that historians and literary critics applied to regions and regional cultures. As Westfall observed, “The feature of our culture that historians and literary critics once rejected is becoming the cornerstone of a new way of interpreting Canada and Canadian culture.”<sup>55</sup>

Westfall believed literary criticism asked different questions than history or geography: literary criticism was more concerned with cultural issues and regional identities than with social, political, or economic concerns. What were the distinguishing features of regional literature? How did the physical environment impart distinctive characteristics to the writing of an area? Westfall claimed regional literature was characterized by a tension between content (regional) and form (more universal). Writers had two main concerns: to focus on direct experience, and to find a way of relating it (which must be through the use of imported techniques). By relating the regional experience, writers help to shape the region. The region only achieves an identity when it is identified in art. Westfall quoted Robert Kroestsh: "We haven't got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real."<sup>56</sup>

As Westfall pointed out, the tension between content (experience) and form was not unique to literature; indeed, it ran through Canadian culture (Westfall claimed Lawren Harris and Harold Innis shared the desire to shed foreign influences in their search to find a style that would let them do justice to the unique qualities of their experience).<sup>57</sup> (How art history tries to prove similar stylistic independence will be discussed later.)

Despite their apparent differences, Westfall claimed nationalism and regionalism shared their hierarchical structure and series of categories, and their structure of interpretation was basically the same.<sup>58</sup> Both relied heavily on the romantic notion linking identity closely to the landscape. Nationalists believe there is only one landscape (the common northern experience would create a common national identity), while regionalists fragment the landscape into its separate regions, believing local environments

create local identities. The nationalist vision believes there is a logical and inevitable progression from colony to nation to empire. This process is reversed for regionalists who see the return journey from the national to the local and the authentic. Westfall held that this common structure should make us see that identities are not simple, single things that “should be treated in isolation as if one had to choose only one of them.”<sup>59</sup> Instead, he believed “an identity moves through many levels that are closely connected, and that we must examine the structure within which this series of identities exists.”<sup>60</sup>

One of the most outspoken proponents of the idea that identity was inextricably linked to one’s local geographic environment was the literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye. Frye wrote one of the most influential texts of the early 1970s—*The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, in which he discussed the connection between Canadian identity, culture, and regionalism, and concluded that Canada’s ‘famous problem’ was the need to define a Canadian identity. Frye claimed: “The question of identity [was] primarily a cultural and imaginative question” and “the question of Canadian identity, so far as it affect[ed] the creative imagination, [was] not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question.”<sup>61</sup> Frye distinguished between identity (which he claimed was “local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture”) and unity (which he said was “national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in a political feeling”).<sup>62</sup>

Frye believed that “[t]he essential element in the national sense of unity [was] the east-west feeling, developed historically along the St. Lawrence-Great lakes axis” and that “[t]he tension between this political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality is the essence of whatever the word ‘Canadian’ means.”<sup>63</sup> When this tension is

ignored, and unity and identity become confused or assimilated, then cultural nationalism, which Frye claimed was an “empty gesture”, and provincial isolation (which leads to separatism) resulted. Frye believed all the regions of Canada harboured strong separatist tendencies that flourished when the “east-west context of the Canadian outlook” was ignored.<sup>64</sup>

Frye stressed that a sense of unity was not the same thing as a sense of uniformity. While uniformity produces a society in which everyone thinks alike (a society which he believed profoundly lacks imagination), true unity “tolerates dissent and rejoices in variety of outlook and tradition.”<sup>65</sup> Frye was interested in how these ideas manifested themselves in art and culture, and he identified two opposed tendencies in Canadian life: a romantic, exploratory and idealistic tendency (which was “emotionally linked to Confederation and Canadianism”), and a reflective, observant and pastoral tendency (which was “more regional and inclined to think of the country as a series of longitudinal sections”).<sup>66</sup>

Despite the pessimistic forecasts of people like Donald Creighton and George Grant, Frye did not think that Canada as a nation was doomed. In fact, Frye proposed that “what seems to reason and experience to be perpetually coming apart at the seams may seem to the imagination something on the point of being put together again, as the imagination is occupationally disposed to synthesis.”<sup>67</sup> Imagination was a very important concept for Frye; he believed “the real function of the imagination in every community, and of the poets who articulate that imagination,” was to synthesize disorder to create unity.<sup>68</sup>

Together with his belief that “culture, like wine, seems to need a specific locality,” Frye also gave credence to the idea that the immense landscape of Canada influences our sense of identity. For Frye, “[p]oets do not live on Mount Parnassus, but in their own environments, and Canada has made itself an environmental reality.” Accordingly “[t]here would be nothing distinctive in Canadian culture at all if there were not some feeling for the immense searching distance, with the lines of communication extending to the absolute limit, which is a primarily geographical fact about Canada and has no real counterpart elsewhere.”<sup>69</sup>

The primacy of the land was developed by Frye into his theory of the ‘fear of the land,’ which other writers such as Margaret Atwood would expand upon. Linda Hutcheon claims “terror of the hostility was what Frye came to see as the single most important defining force on the Canadian imagination.”<sup>70</sup> Faced with the fear of everything that lay outside their compounds, Frye claimed Canadians developed a “garrison mentality”.

As with most subjects, scholarly work tends to evolve from generalized studies to quite specific examinations of the topic. This has certainly been the case with regionalism. Ever since Ramsay Cook urged scholars to examine Canada’s “limited identities” in 1967, an increasing number of scholars has written about regionalism. Many of them did so by focusing on a particular region of the country, for example: the Prairie provinces, or the Atlantic region.<sup>71</sup> The work of these individuals is useful because they did not try to apply one overarching idea to several different regions, and they acknowledged that what was appropriate for one region was not necessarily valid for another. Common among their work was the belief that the history of individual regions contributed as much as economic and geographical factors in the creation of regional

identity. Scholars in disciplines such as art history also became interested in how regionalism impacted their particular field.

The term regionalism is particularly problematic when one tries to apply it to the context of Canadian art. Virginia Nixon posits that the term has been used in three basic ways since the 1930s: firstly it was used as it was derived from American regionalism (a rejection by American artists of European-style modernism in favour of “American rural subjects depicted with a distinctive kind of mannered heroism”); secondly, it was used as a term that varied according to the author’s own feelings towards figuration in art; and thirdly, it was used as a “multi-purpose descriptive adjective.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1978 Nixon published “The Concept of Regionalism in Canadian Art History,” in which she surveyed the variety of ways that regionalism was conceptualized over the previous thirty years. The following is a summary of her arguments. Nixon pointed out that back in his 1948 essay “Canadian Painting, Sculpture and Print-Making” Charles Comfort made an explicit connection between American and Canadian regionalism (which he saw as a continent-wide movement).<sup>73</sup> Comfort made a vague association between aesthetics and politics that became problematic from that point. In *The Development of Canadian Art* (1963), R.L. Hubbard clearly identified Canadian regionalism as an American phenomenon, and, as Nixon pointed out, emphasized “the values of universality and progress” over regionalism’s localism and implicit backwardness.<sup>74</sup>

Nixon believes Russell Harper’s *Painting in Canada* (1966) was the first study to view regionalism in Canadian art in a positive light. Harper claimed regionalism was a quality of response to a region, and Nixon believes Harper’s “attitude is consistent with

his interest in the local, social, and human contexts of art.”<sup>75</sup> Harper did not see regionalism as a reaction (like American regionalism was); instead, he saw it as a practical response by artists who could not afford to travel, or were attracted to their own environments. Harper raised the important association between regionalism and representation, but felt uncomfortable with the use of a loose painterly style. Paul Duval, in a 1972 study of the Canadian Group of Painters, asked similar questions about the relationship of regionalism, figuration and subject matter, claiming “high realist artists usually are regional artists in the most precise sense of the world.”<sup>76</sup>

In 1972 Dennis Reid stated that Canadian regionalism was influenced by American regionalism. Nixon claimed he was the “first Canadian writer to suggest the existence of regionalist-themes.”<sup>77</sup> He placed a good deal of importance on the attitude of the painter, believing it was “one of loving intimacy” with their environment.<sup>78</sup>

Charles Hill, in his important work *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (1975), ascribed several meanings to the term: in reference to American regionalists, or, expanding the view of regionalism, as relating to nationalism (in the case of Quebec regionalism). François-Marc Gagnon (in a review of Hill’s book) used the term regionalism in the Quebec context to mean the depiction of a traditional way of life (man and culture, not only nature). The term became increasingly vague after this point, particularly in the work of Joan Murray, Peter Mellen and Ann Davis. Nixon claimed their texts show the contentious ways regionalism was used and she questioned whether it might not be better to let the term wither away altogether. In the end, she concluded that regionalism was still a useful term, and saw some hope in writings of people like David Burnett who championed the “London School of the 1960s” (Nixon’s claim that there

was such a thing as the London School is refuted by most of the London artists. This issue will be discussed below.)

Nixon believed regionalism in art history might be enriched through a study of literary criticism. She cited the approach of Frye, who associated regionalism “with the sense of identity nurtured in a particular environment,” and Eli Mandel, who thought of regions as “regions of the mind,” and claimed that it “is the kind of insight that could conceivably lead to a genuinely useful role for this much-battered word.”<sup>79</sup>

In the same year that Nixon detailed the evolution of and varied meanings of regionalism in Canadian art, George Woodcock published “There are no Universal Landscapes” in *artscanada*. In his essay he relied heavily on an environmentally determined definition of regionalism; for Woodcock, regional art meant representations of the land. Woodcock stated that provinces were political creations, whereas regions were natural realities in which landscape combined with history to create traditions. He claimed that “if Marshall McLuhan was correct in suggesting that artists anticipate what society will become, the growing regionalist consciousness of Canadian artists and poets is of obvious importance to our vision of the future of this country as well as to the history of its arts.”<sup>80</sup> Woodcock stated: “[A] great deal of what has passed for nationalist in post-Confederation Canadian arts is in fact regionalist.”<sup>81</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Group of Seven to form a national school of art, Woodcock believed “art can never be truly national any more than it can be truly cosmopolitan.” In fact, he stated, “[a]n artistic interpretation of the land is inevitably localized; there are no universal landscapes, and landscape painting is in fact the genre least likely to submit to cosmopolitan homogenization.” (By this token he said that the

Group of Seven “were among Canada’s most regionalist painters.”<sup>82</sup>) He did not claim regionalism necessarily produced landscape art, but he believed that “for us” (it is clear that his definition of ‘us’ is Canadians of European descent only), landscape is our most direct presentation of regional awareness. For Woodcock, “[t]he region does not merely provide the artist with models. Tradition, language, history, terrain; all impinge on the regional consciousness, making it more distinctive, inclining it to seek its artistic promptings locally.” (He warned against the dangers of regional localization, which he believed could lead to inferior ‘genre’ depictions of ‘local colour’).

Woodcock discussed how early artists who came to Canada persisted in using European techniques because they could not deal with the wilderness, and thus were not regional artists. He believed Canadian artists (and poets) had to free themselves from “servitude” to academic style studio painting to be true regionalists (he claimed Paul Kane might have been a true regionalist except he was overshadowed by commerce). Woodcock focused on Homer Watson, Emily Carr and J.E. H. MacDonald as three examples of Canadian regional artists, who responded in an intuitive manner to their specific environments. He believed the ‘power’ of these artists lay in their ability to transmute the elements of landscape into art, claiming that “landscape can perhaps be most inspiring when the painter gives up an intent of being in the strict representational sense, a landscapist.”<sup>83</sup>

In the 1980s Christopher Dewdney adopted the contention that there are no universal landscapes, and the belief that a particular place or region has the ability to shape an indigenous culture and produce art free of outside influences. Dewdney, a London reporter (and son of Chambers’ and Curnoe’s close friend Selwyn Dewdney),

examined the phenomenon of regionalism in London's artistic community during its heyday in the 1960s. His essay, "Oregionalism: Geocentrism and the Notion of Originality," appeared in the inaugural edition of *Provincial Essays* (published in Toronto by the Coach House Press).<sup>84</sup> Dewdney claimed that London regionalism began with the work of Curnoe and Chambers, and their friends and fellow artists John Boyle, Murray Favro and Ron Martin in the early nineteen-sixties in London and the surrounding area.<sup>85</sup> The later artistic production that "diverged and subsequently evolved from that original nexus" was "oregionalism."<sup>86</sup> Dewdney claimed his purpose was not to identify a London school, but to describe the genesis of regionalism and "its trajectory since the 'classic period' in the early sixties."<sup>87</sup>

Dewdney believed regionalism developed spontaneously in London in the early sixties in response to a couple of factors—the technological remoteness from Toronto and Detroit, and the concurrent socio-economic climate (he used the metaphor of it precipitating like a crystal). Dewdney claimed there were two manifestations of regionalism: the first was a "concern with locale proper (site specificity with a nativist perspective) and the idea of uncontrived primacy qualified by a lack of aesthetic artifice or academic notions";<sup>88</sup> the second (which he believed was the proper beginning of 'oregionalism') manifested itself "in the praxii and procedural philosophies of slightly later artists."<sup>89</sup> Dewdney posited that at the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s 'hyperoregionalism' developed among artists whose work showed a contextual or ironic attitude to London regionalism.<sup>90</sup>

The term 'oregionalism' was not Dewdney's invention; as he points out it was actually Curnoe who had coined the term (yet again defining the reception of his art/life

practice). The meaning of the term was twofold; Dewdney states it meant “both London regionalism and what it eventually developed into, as well as differentiating the whole process from both the American regionalism and from the prior London regionalism.”<sup>91</sup> According to Dewdney, London regionalism did not have anything to do with American regionalism; instead, it began with the publication of *Region* magazine in 1962.<sup>92</sup>) The term *oregional* was a combination of original and regional, and at the time original had two meanings: the first was ironic—originality represented an ideal state unobtainable in reality, the second implied that originality was the measure of significant art and that originality preceded naturally from region; that is, “[r]egion was implicit in this meaning of original because it became the final arbiter of originality, it governed originality. To be true to one’s region was of necessity to be intrinsically different from all other regions.”<sup>93</sup> (This Darwinian notion posits “geographical specialization eventually expresses itself culturally by selective adaptation.”<sup>94</sup>)

Dewdney linked the London (o)regionalists to the first inhabitants of southwestern Ontario (the Neutrals and the Hurons) who he claimed, “had thousands of years to fine-tune their cultural iconography within the psychic and ecological constraints of region.”<sup>95</sup> He discussed a number of London artists whose regionalism was manifested in different ways in their art, in particular Curnoe and his emphasis on reality and logic, and Chambers and his theory of perceptual realism: “if London regionalism,” Dewdney wrote, “could be said to have had, or still have, a group mind, then one of its outstanding characteristics was a highly regular and tenacious veracity...a highly self-congruent and acerbic critical praxis which was pragmatically grounded in equal portions of logic and gut-feeling.”<sup>96</sup>

Dewdney believed the 'classic' period of London regionalism lasted only a year or two before it evolved into a plethora of sub-regionalisms. With the arrival of new artists, and the departure of others, the nature of London regionalism changed and migrated, although, as Dewdney pointed out, "[t]he first 'colonies' of London regionalism took on the character...of the artists who inspired them..."<sup>97</sup> Dewdney used Lamarck's theory of evolution which stressed the inheritance of acquired traits to explain this "hierarchical mode of transmission."<sup>98</sup>

Dewdney claimed regionalism was not only transmitted or acquired from one generation of artists to another—he believed that it occasionally occurred sporadically and spontaneously. He declared: "There have been outstanding works, index works, within the regionalist and oregionalist traditions which have an archetypal quality, and which could only be subjectively characterized as a flavour, an essence of regional identity."<sup>99</sup> By evoking Jung's theories of archetypes and the collective unconscious, Dewdney suggested there was something inherent (or essential) in London that stimulated original cultural creativity. As the following chapter will demonstrate, this idea was developed and promoted by artists, arts' reporters and critics, intellectuals, and curators over the course of several decades.

## Chapter 10: Regionalism in London

The idea of London regionalism (or ‘Oregionalism’) developed in the early 1960s and, as Dewdney points out, Curnoe was one of the main forces behind it. Curnoe’s feelings of isolation and disenchantment during his years at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto strengthened his commitment to southwestern Ontario and his hometown. No sooner had he returned to London than he began exploring the city’s regional distinction and celebrating it in a variety of ways. He claimed the mainstream cultural attitude in Toronto (and in London at the time) was not supportive of works like his that demonstrated a “specific personal outlook,” and he was determined to foster an atmosphere that would allow him to express his individuality.<sup>100</sup> Curnoe did not mean to imply that there was a strong stylistic similarity between the works produced by London artists, nor was he suggesting they shared a single philosophy or ideology. Instead, he believed what made the artists in London regional was the fact that they were responding to their local environment (and to the stimulation of the cultural community), rather than looking elsewhere for inspiration (for either style or content).

One of the most significant early contributions Curnoe made to the idea of London regionalism was the founding of *Region* magazine. *Region* was a limited edition publication that featured poetry and other forms of writing by local personalities. Edited by Curnoe, the magazine was published ten times between the spring of 1961 and 1990. Although Curnoe could not recall how it came to be called *Region*, he claimed the magazine “was started and published before the term regionalism was used or discussed” in London.<sup>101</sup> *Region* was, for the most part, a light-hearted and frequently humorous

production. It was a low-budget endeavour that changed in appearance from issue to issue. Despite the variation between issues, the overall aesthetic of the magazine was influenced by Curnoe's artistic sensibility and his interest in local happenings.

The first issue of *Region* magazine, which was produced in January-March 1961, was a 7-page typewritten pamphlet, circular in shape, featuring a hand-painted circle on the cover. Four copies of the pamphlet were produced, and they were passed around to interested readers.<sup>102</sup> The inaugural issue included poems by Curnoe, Ken Montague, Donald Bruce Stewart, and Walter Redinger. Curnoe's contribution was a poem in which he documented the smells, sounds and random thoughts he had experienced on January 15<sup>th</sup> while in his Richmond Street studio. He chronicled things like the "[s]mell of crisped squid," the "[s]ound of men's voices car voices car around Carling Street," and "[t]he Richmond bus."<sup>103</sup> The loosely structured poem typified Curnoe's fascination with the minutiae of everyday life in London, a fascination that would continue for the next thirty years.

The second issue of *Region* was produced in January 1962, and edited by Curnoe. This time it was a more conventional 8½" x 11" format, typed and mimeographed. Demonstrating Curnoe's penchant for rubber-stamping, the cover was hand stamped with the words "ORIGINAL" and "Region." The second issue contained poems by Chambers, Curnoe, Brian Dibb and Larry Russell and an essay by Matthew Wherry. The title page facetiously listed the contributors, among them: "Jack Chambers—The Greatest Painter and Poet in the world, recently returned from Spain, he lives in London" and "Greg Curnoe—The Greatest Painter, Poet, Construction Worker in the world, he lives in London."<sup>104</sup> Curnoe's poem, entitled "Statement," was particularly interesting; he

documented his likes and dislikes (“the lovely waitress at the Casino,” and “I do not like culture”), desires (“to be unselfconscious”), sporting figures (“hockey players are of us”), architecture (“a house on Richmond Street near the Salvation Army is the best in London”), and so on. His “Statement” concluded with the lines “all of these are unimportant. Now do you understand?”<sup>105</sup>

The third issue was produced in February 1962. This time, in addition to the stamped title “Region,” the cover included an individual bus transfer (one volume featured a transfer from the Springbank bus going east.)<sup>106</sup> *Region 3* featured different coloured pages, and instead of being typewritten, each contribution was hand-written by the author. Chambers contributed “A New Flat,” Selwyn Dewdney contributed an article entitled “Therapy? For Artists?,” and Curnoe produced a rambling poem called “Hangover.”

In September 1962, the fourth issue, entitled “‘The Real Thing’ Construction Issue,” was produced. By this time, interest in the magazine had grown considerably and it claimed to have a circulation of “around 60” (although it remained free).<sup>107</sup> The cover featured a reproduction of a sewer drain with the word “Region” stamped on it, and the entire issue consisted of loose pages inside an envelope. As the title suggested, the issue was thematic: Herb Ariss contributed a piece on his opinions about constructions, Chambers contributed a piece on “Assemblages, the Found Object and Art” (in which he discussed the “anti-artist’s” methods and criteria of selecting suitable objects), and Curnoe’s contribution was done in speech bubbles like a comic strip. There were also contributions by Tony Urquhart, Brian Dibb and Larry Russell.

The fifth issue of *Region* was published in February 1963. It was handwritten and featured the reproduction of a 1962 Ontario licence plate on the front cover and a stamp for REGION Gallery in the back cover. As well as a local readership, 25 copies of *Region* 5 were sent to people who lived outside London.<sup>108</sup> Curnoe was the editor, and proudly proclaimed in a letter to the Canada Council it was “perhaps the best yet because it is small and contains the raw material from which a person can see for himself what is going on around here—without having it preached to him.”<sup>109</sup> Some of this raw material included “Confessions of an Ex-Bicycle Rider” by John Fountain (a pseudonym for Curnoe), “Social Drinking (A Play)” by Hugh McIntyre, “Dan Patterson’s Carnation Milk Tins” by Clark McDougall, and “Oval Doors and Stained Glass Windows in St. Thomas” by Brian Dibb.

In November 1963, *Region* 6 was published. Stencilled on the front cover were the words: “REGION SIX WHERRY CURNOE SHAW & OTHER RUPTURES.” Curnoe had high hopes for issue number 6: in March 1963 he wrote to the Canada Council stating that he hoped it would have the same “unblinking look at the actual situation” as the previous issues, “in spite of the fact that [it] will probably contain articles by Michel Sanouillet of Toronto and Mike Snow of New York City.”<sup>110</sup> He also anticipated that, due to an “amazing response by libraries and universities” the circulation of the sixth edition would be 100 copies.<sup>111</sup> It did not end up including articles by Sanouillet or Snow, but it did include a number of drawings and the obligatory contribution by Curnoe. This time he wrote an article in which he documented several trips he and Brian Dibb made to different locations to collect vacuum cleaner parts (presumably for one of Curnoe’s projects).<sup>112</sup>

Curnoe continued to edit the magazine and in June 1964 *Region 7* was published. The words "REGION FEEDS THE BRAIN" were printed on the table of contents page. *Region 7* contained an article by Chambers called "Fragment"—a series of obscure fantasies and thoughts like "My mind is out of control, it cannot hold everything. I must decide not to choose. By choosing, I am manufactured as workers manufacture hula-hoops."<sup>113</sup> Curnoe also contributed an article—"Selections from 'The 3<sup>rd</sup> Road Trip to Montreal, Fourth Leg'" in which he documented the minutiae of a car trip (snippets of conversations, smells, sounds, random thoughts, sexual fantasies, and memories). James Reaney contributed "Words I Really Like (Part 1)"—a selection at the beginning of the alphabet from "a" to "albatross." There were also items by Rae Davis, Tom Pratten and Brian Dibb.

After a hiatus of two years, issue number 8 was published in the summer of 1966. It was edited by Curnoe, with A. [Archie] Barton Leitch as sub-editor. This issue was published by Mr. Kemp, a printer at 202 King Street (the same building that Curnoe's studio was now in). The table of contents page included an editorial message:

Region is back after several months of inactivity, chock full of items of interest from the Forest City. This issue and all future issues will be printed on our own press. Since we are no longer dependent on the benevolent paternalism of the London Public Library for the use of their Gestetner we would like to thank Mr. Kemp and his staff for making the previous issues of Region possible.<sup>114</sup>

*Region 8* featured a photograph of the Nihilist Spasm Band (which had been formed the previous October) on the front cover, and although it was a large issue it contained no items by Curnoe or Chambers.

In the spring of 1967 Curnoe published *Region 9*, which advertised on the cover that it had a circulation of 75. The front cover featured a picture of Dan Patterson (a St.

Thomas farmer and eccentric self-taught artist), with one of his constructions of Carnation milk tins (Clark McDougall had written an article on Patterson in *Region* 5 [February 1963]).<sup>115</sup> The issue included a second instalment of “Words I Really Like” by James Reaney and an article by Curnoe—“Notes—on the North Wall.” The article, which was to be part of “a new series of journals,” featured a list of the many objects on the north wall of Curnoe’s studio.<sup>116</sup>

It was twenty-three years before another issue of *Region* was published. *Region* 10 was published in 1990 from writings assembled between 1966 and 1969. Twenty-five copies of the magazine were printed, and it remained free of charge.<sup>117</sup> *Region* 10 was dedicated to the memory of Matthew (Matt) Wherry, who had died in 1984, and featured entries by George Bowering, Hugh McIntyre, the conclusion of Reaney’s “Words I Really Like” (from “alone” to “axiom”), a “Letter to the Editor 1963” by Mike Snow/Joyce Wieland, “We Were Walking through Victoria Park” by Bernice Vincent, and a large amount of material by Matthew Wherry. At the end of the issue there was a group photograph of a number of people at the famous York Hotel. The photograph was entitled: “FOR EDDIE.”<sup>118</sup>

One of the most interesting contributions in *Region* 10 was an editorial by Curnoe. In the editorial (which had originally been written ca. 1968), Curnoe stressed the important role that *Region* magazine had played in London’s cultural scene. He wrote: “*Region* was first published in 1961. It was felt at the time that there was work being done here that should reach a public however small. And I felt in 1960 that the roots or the indigenous parts of created or found things etc. had been forgotten. Or rejected in this

country.”<sup>119</sup> At the time he wrote the editorial Curnoe expressed optimism about the future of regionalism in London:

Now there seems to be a regional consciousness growing in many areas in Canada and elsewhere. London has proved to have a very strong and cooperative group of people working here since 1960 who use both the social and geographical environment of this area. A community of people each of whom is into something is very healthy. This prevents focusing on one individual or idea.

The decision to publish this editorial written more than two decades previously is intriguing; the content of the editorial reaffirmed Curnoe’s ongoing belief in the merits of regionalism and, in a time of increasing globalization, it acted as a cautionary note against losing sight of one’s local culture. It was also poignantly nostalgic as, despite Curnoe’s evident desire to perpetuate the magazine and all it stood for, *Region 10* would be the last issue ever produced.

The idea that London had an indigenous and distinct regional culture gained popularity throughout the 1960s, stimulated partly by *Region* magazine and Region Gallery, and partly through the repetition of the idea of London regionalism in various media. Like the particular mythologies that developed around Chambers and Curnoe, the idea of London regionalism needed a willing group of participants who were committed to supporting the idea of it (and who benefited in some manner from it). London’s regional distinctiveness was articulated primarily by Curnoe, supported by a group of his peers, disseminated by critics and newspaper reporters (who, for the most part, simply gave voice to Curnoe’s own ideas), and given intellectual credence by the writings of academics and curators. While Chambers played a less evident supporting role in London regionalism, his contributions (which will be discussed later) were nevertheless important.

From its inception, Curnoe was anxious to demonstrate the relevance of a regional art gallery in London. In March 1963, the *University of Western Ontario Gazette* published the text of a letter that Curnoe wrote to the Canada Council regarding the new gallery.<sup>120</sup> Region Gallery, which opened in 1962, was an offshoot of *Region* magazine and it supported the same basic idea as the magazine: it should promote the work of local artists, reflect their local culture, and act as a forum for home grown ideas. Curnoe, who believed London's younger artists were not represented well by the public art gallery, stressed the regional role of the gallery very heavily. Stating that London's "official" art world was "completely smothered by out-of-date sophistication,"<sup>121</sup> Curnoe claimed Region Gallery was a non-public art gallery that showed the work of local artists. Curnoe stressed the need for such a gallery: "we are not using regionalism as a gimmick but rather as a collective noun to cover what so many painters, writers, and photographers have used—their own immediate environment—something we don't do in Canada very much."<sup>122</sup>

Shortly after Region Gallery opened, an article appeared in the local newspaper outlining the main objectives of the gallery: to showcase art of an experimental nature and to re-evaluate local history. In the Region Gallery "they want to be able to display, mostly for their own pleasure but also for the pleasure of others, the things they are interested in and which may, or may not, appeal to people who visit public galleries and the usual type of gallery."<sup>123</sup> Those involved with Region Gallery were interested in the past: they wanted "to give vent to their vital interest in the London district, that is in the region, not only by having their own work but also by exhibiting works they have done and things 'rescued' by them which are related closely to the region."<sup>124</sup> Curnoe was

identified as one of the driving forces behind the gallery and its interest in re-evaluating “things which belong to the past.”<sup>125</sup> The reviewer commented on the significance of the gallery’s name—“[t]he word ‘Region’ is of prime importance to Mr. Curnoe, for besides being a place to display art of the region it can be a meeting place for people who like to talk, to write and to read poetry about the district.”<sup>126</sup>

Curnoe was pragmatic enough to realize he could not support himself and his family solely by living, working, and exhibiting his art in London. At the same time that he was promoting Region Gallery in London he continued to be represented by the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto. Despite being represented in Toronto, he did not wish to be considered a Toronto artist; in the biographical material that accompanied an exhibition of his work at the Isaacs Gallery in November and December of 1966 he mentioned his connection with London several times and proclaimed proudly: “I am a Regionalist and am anti-american [sic]....”<sup>127</sup>

By the late 1960s the idea that London had a unique art scene that was producing indigenous art was widely accepted, stimulated by Curnoe’s efforts. In an interview in the *London Weekly* in July 1968, Curnoe put forth some reasons why the small city of London developed “indigenous painting or indigenous writing or indigenous film-making on its own.”<sup>128</sup> Curnoe ascribed London’s home-grown art forms to two factors: firstly, he believed Canada lacked a single large art centre, and the lack of centralization allowed regional centres to flourish, and secondly, there were a large number of ‘native’ Londoners who were practicing in London (presumably, believing that native Londoners were more inclined to create art that was ‘true’ to their region). Hoping to capitalize on the public’s desire to purchase works of art that would appreciate in value, Curnoe

enticed potential buyers: “You could do far worse than buy a painting from a London artist. They’re bound to be heard from.”<sup>129</sup>

Occasionally Curnoe got the opportunity to voice his ideas in an international arena; for example, in his artist’s statement for the catalogue of the 1968 Edinburgh exhibition *Canada 101* Curnoe repeated his defiant declaration from the Isaacs Gallery catalogue: “I am a Regionalist and an anti-American.”<sup>130</sup> For a Scottish audience who may have known very little about Canadian art (contemporary or otherwise), the use of the capital letter ‘R’ in Regionalism was significant; it inferred that regionalism was more than a personal attachment to place, it was also a Canadian artistic style. The juxtaposition of regionalism and anti-Americanism was also important, and from around this time the artist’s anti-Americanism would be considered a manifestation of his commitment to regionalism. The controversy that erupted over some expletives in one of Curnoe’s works in the exhibition resulted in an increase of publicity and Curnoe’s pithy quote was picked up by reporters across the country who repeated the phrase. For example, in an article in the *Vancouver Province* in March 1969 David Cohen reported that Curnoe called himself ‘a regionalist and...anti-American’.<sup>131</sup>

The notion of Canadian regionalism (and the importance of London’s art scene) gained popularity throughout the 1960s. In 1968 the English critic David Thompson observed that regionalism was “one of the facts of Canadian art, a significant if not a dominant one, which characterize[s] its difference from American art.”<sup>132</sup> In a series of three articles on Canadian art for the highly regarded British art journal *Studio International*, Thompson singled out Vancouver and London as particularly distinctive cities. In London he found “for no apparent reason an entirely independent art-scene,

with local loyalties but far from provincial attitudes, its own sculptors, movie-makers and intermedia-men, its own avant-garde gallery, has sprung up in a pleasant, and not notably non-conformist, small university town.”<sup>133</sup> Thompson claimed the regionalism of Chambers and Curnoe (and Tony Urquhart) was not motivated by a grass-roots philosophy. He believed “that a perfectly satisfactory answer to Canadian art’s problems of identity and status can be found by working right where you are.”<sup>134</sup>

In “A Canadian Scene: 3,” Thompson featured Curnoe as one of “five leading Canadian artists,” noting the artist’s multi-disciplinary art practice and varied interests, his anti-Americanism, and above all, his commitment to region.<sup>135</sup> Curnoe’s regionalism, Thompson claimed, was distinctive; it was “not sequestered from any of the concerns of the outside world, but which, in accepting part as representative of the whole, is content to work in and from a particular locality; in this case, Curnoe’s home town of London, Ontario.”<sup>136</sup> Thompson also discussed Curnoe’s obsessive collecting and accumulation of local material. Curnoe regarded London, Ontario “with the ironical affection which reminds ... [Thompson] of some of the English parallels. He fills his studio with what is in effect the nostalgic bric-à-brac of small town commerce, and uses it for collage objects.”<sup>137</sup>

By 1969, Curnoe’s dedication to his local environment had gained near mythic status, and he became known as London’s premier cultural chronicler. Reporters like Kay Kritzwiser wrote about him with reverence, presenting Curnoe as an artist who “makes his region his secure kingdom.”<sup>138</sup> From this kingdom, Curnoe “issues bulletins from a kind of mental daily journal.”<sup>139</sup> Despite their quotidian nature it became apparent that

Curnoe's bulletins could be seen as being about more than just his own life experiences, they served to document "his region, the times, his day, or times past."<sup>140</sup>

As London's growing art scene became increasingly recognized in Canada, a number of people sought explanations for its success. In January 1970, the Toronto critic Barrie Hale wrote an article in the national magazine *Saturday Night* entitled "Stick Around and Work with What's Around You," in which he chronicled the rise of London's art scene, and, in particular, Curnoe's role in its success. Hale made an explicit connection between Curnoe's place in London and the subject matter of his art, an idea directly influenced by the artist himself. It was not enough to live and create art in a particular location, Curnoe suggested—artists had to demonstrate their connection to place by using local and personal subject matter in their art. Curnoe, as Hale reported, believed "that by staying here in London, staying here and doing what I do, I'm doing the right thing. The country needs that, especially from its artists. Plenty of artists stick around, but their work is somewhere else, concerned with something else...I believe it's important to stick around and work with what's around you."<sup>141</sup>

A number of other writers were interested in London regionalism, and in their attempts to define it relied more and more on Curnoe's own ideas. In her article "The Art World Beats a Path to London, Ont., Mousetrap" Elizabeth Dingman, of the *Toronto Telegram*, ascribed the city's uniqueness to the originality and determination of its artists whom she called "creative geniuses." While there were other cities in Canada that had "a concentration of artists and writers," Dingman alleged London was different because of the community's "uninhibited originality and gutsy tenacity to their grassroots."<sup>142</sup> Dingman interviewed Curnoe for the article and he took the opportunity to expound on

his theories of London regionalism. Curnoe had been back in London for ten years at this point, had achieved considerable success nationally and internationally, and had spent a good deal of time thinking about why London was so culturally successful. He told Dingman,

What goes on here couldn't happen in cities over 200,000. In a small city there is less privacy but more concern with people. That's how things get done. People know what you are doing. It gets around pretty quickly. There is none of the closed-up studio paranoia of "I'll not let the guy in because he'll steal my ideas."<sup>143</sup>

The size and configuration of London was important for Curnoe, and he saw its potential growth or alteration as a cultural threat. He was unapologetic for his beliefs, and admitted, "I don't want London to change too much."<sup>144</sup> Curnoe was not advocating isolation, particularly as this would mean less financial opportunity for artists, but he emphasized the importance of being connected to one's local environment. He insisted: "You cannot afford to ignore what's going on outside but you must not lose sight of what's first: the things within hearing and seeing distance." Curnoe believed there were too many people in Canada who did not have any connection to where they lived and worked. Dingman heard,

There are so many nomads, people on the university circuit who move in and out of a suburb, rootless people who have forgotten about boundaries. There have to be people expressing an awareness of geographical arrangements. Most people who don't have pretensions to high culture live that way.<sup>145</sup>

From his early childhood Curnoe displayed a fascination with the history of his birthplace. Nurtured by his Grandfather Porter's passion for local history, Curnoe and his brother Glen developed a lifelong interest in exploring and chronicling the history of London.<sup>146</sup> The abiding interest in the city that he developed as a child grew stronger as

he matured, and, when plans were afoot in the 1960s that threatened the historic core of the city, Curnoe became one of the most outspoken critics of the plan.

In 1968 the City of London began formulating an ambitious urban renewal plan that proposed demolishing many of the old buildings in London's downtown core. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1968, the famous architect, planner and visionary thinker Buckminster Fuller, visited London, Ontario. He gave a talk at the York Hotel (one of the buildings slated for demolition) on his new vision for a "London of the Future." Following the talk, Curnoe had an informal discussion with Fuller, and expressed the concern of a group of artists over the plan, particularly as four artists' studios, the Alphacentre and the 20/20 Gallery would face the wrecker's ball. Curnoe believed the urban renewal plan would "tear the creative heart out of London," and he was quoted as saying the tangible indications of "a way of life" would be destroyed.<sup>147</sup> (Curnoe's view that urban renewal would affect culture or "wipe out where it happens" was one that he remained committed to for the rest of his life.<sup>148</sup>) Curnoe's discussion with Fuller was cut short by the regular Monday night performance of the Nihilist Spasm Band.<sup>149</sup>

Curnoe had always had a strong attachment to the old downtown core of London, the area in which he had two of his studios. In one of his textual works from the King Street studio, *Left Front Windows* (1 April 1967) (Fig. 19), he provided a descriptive view of the old buildings across from his studio; he mentioned the colours and architectural elements of the buildings (he noted things like yellow painted brick and a stylized wood flower ornament), as well as what they were used for (one housed the Chinese Freemasons while the other was Novack's outdoor supply and army surplus store).<sup>150</sup> While, on one hand, the work appears to be a simple description of what he saw,

it may also be seen as an attempt to immortalize a small portion of London's history (and by extension, his own history) in art. Curnoe strongly believed the proposed urban renewal plan was threatening the buildings from his youth and he was anxious to preserve images of his past. Ironically, it would be Curnoe's King Street Studio that was destroyed and transformed into a parking lot in the urban renewal plan, not the buildings he chose to memorialize.

In a short journal essay from 1970 entitled "Growth and Progress—2 Destructive Myths," Curnoe decried creeping urban sprawl and urban renewal:

The issues surrounding urban renewal and the idea of growth as in larger and larger cities and bigger industries—are becoming more and more obvious. It seems to me that all cities of over 200000 are undesirable and that the prospect of Southwestern Ontario from Oshawa to Windsor becoming one huge urban area is tragic.<sup>151</sup>

Curnoe did not see the point in the urban renewal plan: "the idea of destroying the existing character of downtown London to accommodate more and more cars which then add more and more pollution to the downtown air is stupid."<sup>152</sup> His "London as it exists now is unique and is a manifestation of the indigenous culture that exists in this area."<sup>153</sup> Ultimately, he blamed Americanization for London's desire for redevelopment, and he feared that imitating American cities would have a disastrous effect on London.

It is clear Curnoe felt very strongly about the issue of urban renewal, and his feelings went beyond a desire for historical preservation. Not only was he concerned over the danger the proposed renewal posed to London's cultural scene, but his aversion to the renewal reflects a desire for stability in times of change. As Kevin Lynch points out in *What Time is this Place* (1972): "Many symbolic and historic locations in a city are rarely visited by its inhabitants [...] But a threat to destroy these places will evoke a strong

reaction, even from those who have never seen, and perhaps will never see, them. The survival of these unvisited, hearsay settings conveys a sense of security and continuity.”<sup>154</sup> If the mere idea of an unseen place is capable of stimulating strong feelings in people who have never visited them, it is likely the reaction was much stronger in the case of Curnoe, who was intimately acquainted with the settings he depicted.<sup>155</sup>

Curnoe’s interest in the endangered aspects of culture extended beyond London to include the cultural production of many regions of Canada. On 8 August 1972, in St-Éleuthère, Kamouraska, Quebec, Curnoe and Pierre Théberge founded the Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects of Culture in Canada (ADNACC).<sup>156</sup> In their bilingual manifesto, Curnoe and Théberge wrote that ADNACC’s aim was “documenting what we feel to be the innate sensibility of people in Canada and spreading knowledge about it.”<sup>157</sup> The association had very populist intentions; Théberge and Curnoe claimed that “[t]he Association is not interested in integrating these manifestations of innate sensibility into any kind of system of ‘higher’ cultural values. We only want to point out the importance of these manifestations for all people in Canada and thus blur the artificial border between the ‘fine’ arts and culture.”<sup>158</sup>

The inaugural (and only) publication of ADNACC, which was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the London Public Library and Art Museum in December 1974-January 1975, was dedicated to Dan Patterson and Arthème St-Germain, two of the eccentric untrained sculptors Curnoe and Théberge had encountered. The publication included an essay on St-Germain by Théberge, one on Dan Patterson by Clark McDougall, and an essay in defence of folk art by Peter Denny. The exhibition,

entitled *Neglected Aspects of Canadian Culture*, featured the work of a number of individuals (many of them unknown). In addition to the exhibition, Curnoe and Théberge set about documenting the art with a slide collection, and a series of videotapes.

Curnoe believed adamantly that artists were largely responsible for giving concrete form to regional cultural distinctiveness. Drawing upon his own experience he stated: "When I came here, people said 'Why?' It's so isolated.' There is a distinct culture here as there is in regions all over Canada. It just needs articulate artists to bring it out."<sup>159</sup>

Chambers also supported the idea of London regionalism and the importance of individual experience in art, although he was not as vocal on these subjects as Curnoe was. This is partly because he was generally more circumspect than Curnoe; he was also a much less prolific writer. Nevertheless he was intensely interested in the city of London and his childhood memories of the city. Chambers' interest in his local surroundings is more apparent in his paintings and films than in any of his writings.

Chambers' interest in his region dates from the moment he returned to London in 1961. Returning to Canada from Spain to be with his terminally ill mother, this was the first time in eight years that Chambers had set foot on Canadian soil and it reawakened dormant feelings of belonging in him. Although he had formed strong attachments in Spain, and had grown to love the Castilian countryside, life in Canada had several advantages over Europe. On a practical level, Chambers realized that he could enjoy a level of comfort and opportunities that he could not in Spain.<sup>160</sup> On a more emotional and personal level he realized what bound him to London was his "feel for the place." He recalled: "It was also my home town, and there were spaces here along the river and in

the landscape that had become mine years ago and continued to be so. The memory of such places multiplied the longer I remained so near them, and the images wedded to their presence surfaced in me like the faces of long lost friends.”<sup>161</sup>

Chambers’ mother lingered and she did not die until August 1962. By this time, Chambers had decided to live in London again. During this period, perhaps because of his heightened awareness of mortality, he rediscovered elements of his past through family photographs. “At this time,” he recalled, “I also discovered my own past, that of my parents and of their parents, in the likenesses preserved by photographic magic. I dug up all the photos I could find from both the McIntyre and Chambers sides of the family. I was to use these photos soon in my paintings.”<sup>162</sup> Chambers would come to rely increasingly on the use of the photographic image as his source material for the rest of his life.

The discovery of his past did not occur overnight; in his published interview with Ross Woodman (1967) Chambers spoke about his attachment to London and his growing awareness of his childhood memories. His interpretation of what effect these memories had on him had also become extremely philosophical in the intervening years, sometimes waxing lyrical as he recalled that “returning to Canada over a couple of years the seasons uncovered images of myself still gesturing in the invisible. A few visual appearances possessed a fundamental legibility. There appeared memories of some boyhood incidents that had a dimension beyond the incidents themselves.”<sup>163</sup>

The idea of London regionalism was promoted through a series of exhibitions on the work of London artists. Chambers and Curnoe featured prominently in several shows. In 1966 the London Art Gallery mounted an exhibition entitled *Artists of our Region:*

*John Boyle, Jack Chambers, Greg Curnoe* (the controversy associated with this exhibition was discussed in previous chapters). In 1967 under the curatorship of Pierre Théberge from the National Gallery of Canada, the touring exhibition *The Heart of London* travelled the country (discussed in the previous chapter). This exhibition, more than any other, helped to foster the idea that London had an indigenous cultural scene. The same year, *Swinging London* firmly established London's place at the vanguard of the Canadian art scene. As it became apparent something important was happening among London artists, critics and academics tried to ascertain what it was about London's artists that made their work noteworthy and unique.

In 1967 Ross Woodman wrote an extremely important essay on London's cultural scene in the newly renamed nationally circulated periodical *artscanada*. In his essay, "London (Ont.): A New Regionalism," Woodman claimed London's artists were rejecting "the reduction of subject-matter to style" and were instead looking to their own lives for subject matter. Woodman termed the resultant work the "new regionalism."<sup>164</sup> Although Woodman's essay was nominally about the London arts' scene, it was really a feature article on Curnoe (and to a lesser extent James Reaney and Jack Chambers). Presenting Curnoe as the inspiration behind London's "new regionalism," Woodman called him a "visionary who has shaped an authentic myth out of the stuff of his region."<sup>165</sup> If the "new regionalism" was art that was derived from, and increasingly inseparable from, the everyday life experience of the producer, then Curnoe's work certainly fit the bill: "Curnoe's regionalism is a delightful playground populated, like his studio, with real persons and real things that never quite lose their identity when translated (sometimes bodily) to a canvas."<sup>166</sup>

For Woodman, London's "new regionalism" had national implications; it was not just a means to differentiate the city's artistic production from that of Canada's large metropolitan centres (Toronto in particular), but it also served as evidence of Canada's cultural emancipation from Europe, and more importantly, from America. Woodman believed that works by older Canadian 'regionalist' artists such as Jack Shadbolt, Molly and Bruno Bobak and Gordon Smith (whom he claimed relied heavily on European styles and ideas) were "essentially a form of artistic colonialism."<sup>167</sup> He believed one of the main factors that differentiated Canadians from Americans was the fact that Canada did not have the same 'frontier psychology' as the United States, and therefore, "[r]egionalism in London is essentially a region of the mind [... that] subordinates geographical or historical origins to psychic origins...."<sup>168</sup> Consequently, Woodman thought that it was not appropriate for artists in Canada to try to produce work that mimicked the methods or styles of the New York School.

In "London (Ont.): A New Regionalism" Woodman quoted James Reaney: "I don't believe that you can be world, or unprovincial or whatever, until you've sunk your claws into a very locally coloured tree-trunk and scratched your way through to universality."<sup>169</sup> Woodman believed there was no better example of creative individuals trying to do this than the artists of London, and he insisted Reaney and Curnoe (and other artists like Tony Urquhart and Murray Favro) recognized "the need for regional (and personal) roots as the basis for a national art...."<sup>170</sup>

Woodman's efforts to promote London regionalism were not wholeheartedly approved of by Curnoe, who believed that cultural production, and the criticism of those who wrote about it, should derive from local circumstances. In a lecture delivered at a

conference on regionalism at the University of Winnipeg in 1983, Curnoe argued “that cultural activities are best examined, if possible, by people who have developed an indigenous method of analysis.”<sup>171</sup> At the conference Curnoe discussed the role Woodman played in promoting London regionalism. While he contended that Woodman (and Rae Davis) had been strong supporters of “the validity of local culture” in London he believed that Woodman was writing, ultimately, from “an academic position.”<sup>172</sup> This, Curnoe believed, led to Woodman legitimizing his comments on London’s regionalism with “general ideas” and the comparison “of some of London’s artists and writers to myths and generalized imaginative concepts.”<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, Curnoe considered the writing of the local art columnist Lenore Crawford to be superior, due to “her almost totally locally derived critical approach.”<sup>174</sup>

In 1969 Barry Lord promoted the idea of London regionalism to an American readership when he wrote an article in *Art in America* on the city’s art scene. In “!Discover Canada!”, Lord celebrated London’s growing artistic independence and placed London at the vanguard of Canadian art:

London, Ontario, is Canada’s first **regional liberation** front. What London has that everywhere else needs is an understanding that provincialism in art today is a false problem. Plugged into the world but conscious of the necessity to produce work out of their own experience, London artists are indelibly Canadian, and perhaps among the first global villagers. From London, Ontario, New York looks like just another region—a pretty pompous one at that. In the global village there are no art capitals.<sup>175</sup>

During the 1960s Canadian art historians and artists grew increasingly eager to prove they stood head-to-head with theorists and artists from other countries (particularly the U.S.). In fact, part of the overall nation-building project of the late 1960s was to show that Canada was no longer second-best. Regionalism was seen as one way to assert this

independence, and people like Curnoe strove to help regionalism shed its provincial reputation. In a 1973 interview in *Canadian Forum*, Bruce Kidd asked Curnoe to define the terms regionalism and provincialism. Curnoe stated:

Provincial is what people do when they live, as they think, 'out in the sticks', and they try to imitate what they think is hip in the big centres. Regionalism is simply what people do when they are integrated people, when they are at ease with themselves in their own environment and are at ease with people with other environments.<sup>176</sup>

In order to demonstrate that London had a distinct regional culture it was necessary to downplay the extent to which Chambers and Curnoe were influenced by broader international (more specifically American) art movements.

Both artists were anxious to assert their stylistic individuality, and their attempts to do so were often backed up by critics, dealers, curators, and intellectuals. Despite the insistence of Chambers and Curnoe that what was happening artistically in London was largely uninfluenced by the outside world, there are a number of intersections between international art movements and the work of London artists.

The works Chambers had completed in Spain were heavily influenced by what he had seen and learned in Europe (particularly by Spanish artists like El Greco). His Spanish paintings like *Self Portrait, No. 2* (1952), *The Farewell* (1958-59), *Man and Dog* (1959), and *Man and Landscape* (1960) (Figs. 20-23) were expressionistic in style and generally featured universal subject matter. This would change dramatically when he left Spain; Chambers' work evolved through several different stylistic phases after his return to Canada in 1961, and, generally speaking, his subject matter became increasingly more personal with each phase. Once back in London, he shed the expressionistic heaviness of his Spanish paintings and he began painting in an unusual style and technique that was

generally characterized as surreal. In paintings like *The Unravished Bride* (1961), *McGilvary Country* (1962), *Messengers Juggling Seed* (1962), *All Things Fall* (1963), and *Olga near Arva* (1963) (Figs. 24-28) he experimented with surfaces primed with paint and ground marble dust, upon which he applied the background paint in a loose manner (he poured it on the surface and swirled it around). After the textured background had dried, he then began superimposing images in an intuitive manner (claiming that the images “grew” from the canvas) and the resulting images often gave the appearance of floating in space in a mystical or surreal manner. He continued working in this manner until 1963.

In addition to adopting a radically new technique, Chambers’ early London work underwent an equally marked shift in subject matter to one that was grounded in his personal experience and memories. Chambers began to re-examine his past, incorporating images of his ancestors, family and friends (taken from the old photographs he rediscovered upon his return to Canada) in a number of his surreal works. At times, the figures are truncated and superimposed onto the background in a disembodied manner (for example, *The Unravished Bride* and *McGilvary County*). At other times, Chambers inserted these figures in a realistic manner into identifiable and often local landscapes (for example, in *All Things Fall* and *Olga Near Arva*). The landscapes that he used were occasionally identifiable and local, although he sometimes created fictional landscapes dictated by the textured ground of the works (*Messengers Juggling Seed*).

By 1963, Chambers had moved away from his preoccupation with the past to works that were more grounded in the present and he painted a series of works featuring his wife Olga in combination with various people. In works such as *Olga Visiting Mrs. V*

(1964), *Olga and Mary Visiting* (1964-65), and *Olga Visiting Graham* (1964-65) (Figs. 29-31), Chambers continued to use photographs as the source for the figures in his paintings, although this time the photographs were mainly contemporary ones. While, at first glance, the visual elements in the paintings appeared more rational and realistic, he again combined elements within them in interesting and sometimes disturbing ways. For example, in *Olga and Mary Visiting*, Olga's disembodied hands holding a coffee cup and Mary's truncated head are repeated in a parallel image behind the women. His technique also shifted away from the use of a vibrant palette towards more muted tones.

In 1964 Chambers became interested in filmmaking (to be discussed later), and the effects he observed during the filmmaking process now began to influence his painting more overtly. In 1966, claiming to be numbed by his "intense involvement with colour" Chambers began working on a series of works known as the 'silver paintings.'<sup>177</sup> Chambers acknowledged the effect that filmmaking had on his silver paintings, calling them "instant movies."<sup>178</sup> He was particularly taken with the positive/negative effect that he could achieve with silver paint, depending on where the viewer was situated and the angle of the light. Chambers' preoccupation with silver paint was only temporary; he acknowledged "[t]he silver paintings never gave me a grip on the object the way drawing or colour painting did, but it provided the relief I needed at the time."<sup>179</sup>

By the late 1960s, he had begun to work a number of paintings that juxtaposed personal events or images (again taken from photographs or film footage) with ordinary or timeless elements. His well-known work *The Hart of London* (1968) (Fig. 32) combines family photographs with images taken from film footage of a historical event in the city of London (the hunting and eventual killing of a deer in the backyards of

London). Occasionally he included fairly mundane objects next to highly personal images; in *Moving Side and Forward* (1967) (Fig. 33) Chambers painted his wife and son next to the image of the kitchen faucet (the figures were taken from an image in the film *The Hart of London*). A number of his paintings used repeated elements as if depicting film stills (for example the *Hart of London* and the Regatta series (*Regatta No. 1* [1968] [Fig. #34])). Not all of his source material came from personal photographs or film footage. In works such as *Grass Box No. 1* (1968-70), *Grass Box No. 2* (1968-70), *Madrid Window No. 1* (1968), and *Madrid Window No. 2* (1968-69) (Figs. 35-38) he combined academic still life images appropriated from a book on still life painting he had 'borrowed' from the London Public Library with personal images taken from photographs.<sup>180</sup> In a number of these works he covered sections with coloured acrylic. (This practice echoes the notion of intertextuality in literary theory.)

Woodman believed Chambers' native landscape had a profound effect on his artwork, writing that "[t]he landscape of the London region has performed for him the same function that the Lake Country performed for Wordsworth: remembering what was so fugitive."<sup>181</sup> While labelling Chambers a regionalist, Ross Woodman considered Chambers' works of this period to be more preoccupied with death than with life. In an article that appeared in the August/September 1967 issue of *artscanada* Woodman claims, "the regionalism of Chambers is far more metaphysical than the regionalism of either Curnoe or Reaney. It has little of their spontaneity or joy; it does not evoke their Blakean vision of innocence. Chambers' regionalism is sober, dark, painful, ultimately perhaps tragic."<sup>182</sup>

Chambers' work underwent a stylistic shift around this period. In 1968 he began working in a more highly realistic style of rendering in paintings such as *401 Towards London No. 1* (1968-69) (Fig. 39), *Sunday Morning No. 2* (1968-70) (Fig. 6), *Victoria Hospital* (1970) (Fig. 7), *Sunday Morning No. 4* (1975-76) (Fig. 40), and *Lake Huron No. 4* (1972-76) (Fig. 41). The content of his work also became more 'immediate'—again relying on photography and pre-existing imagery as an aid, he began capturing and painting moments that had a profound emotional impact on him. In August 1969 (at the same time that he was diagnosed with leukaemia), Jack Chambers finished his famous article "Perceptual Realism," in which he outlined his theories of art and culture in North America, and elaborated on his ideas of perception. Chambers believed there was a lacuna in the literature on realism at the time. He later commented: "there was no critical differentiation between one approach to realism and another. Any work that was done with some objective precision was called magic realism. Any realism that didn't have the 'magic' look was called surrealism."<sup>183</sup>

Despite the immediate popularity of his theory with Canadian critics and writers, and their agreement that he had pioneered a new Canadian style of art, what Chambers was proposing was neither groundbreaking nor novel, either in style or in content. In fact, his increasingly realistic style of rendering and his theory of perception had distinct similarities with an art movement called *Nouveau Réalisme* (or *New Realism*). *Nouveau Réalisme* was a movement that had been founded in 1960 in France by Pierre Restany and Yves Klein and subsequently spread to the United States. The movement had its roots in the 1950s as a number of artists turned away from abstraction toward art that was more 'relevant' to daily life. By the late 1960s a number of artists in the United States

such as Philip Pearlstein, Richard Estes, Yvonne Jacquette, and Lowell Nesbitt were working in a highly realistic style that reflected their daily lives and surroundings.

In 1968, the year before Chambers' article appeared, an exhibition entitled *New Realists* was held at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. In the catalogue essay, Linda Nochlin claimed perception was the central feature of the new realists, and that personal and immediate experience played a vital role in their art.<sup>184</sup> Nochlin proposed that it was the foregrounding of the immediate experience that separated the work of the New Realists from that of mere copyists and gave their work relevance in their own time: "The act of perception," Nochlin wrote,

is itself total, conditioned both in its mode and its content by time, place, and concrete situation. While it may be wilfully objective—and realists have traditionally tried to divest themselves of personal and cultural impedimenta—it cannot occur in a vacuum: it is this that makes the new realism so new and so completely of our time.<sup>185</sup>

One of the common criticisms levelled at realist art was that there was little personal interpretation by the artists and their work merely replicated what could be seen in a photograph. Another criticism was that the subject matter that realist artists often chose was too ordinary or banal to be an appropriate choice for fine art. This kind of criticism was nothing new, as Nochlin was well aware:

The world of the familiar, the ordinary, the experienced, and the commonplace has traditionally been the realm of realism ever since the time of Courbet and Flaubert and down to that of contemporary film, and with it have come the more or less standard accusations of wilful ugliness, of lack of coherence or discrimination, of overemphasis on petty or distracting detail, and concomitant coldness or lack of emotion or expressiveness.<sup>186</sup>

Nochlin claimed the New Realists faced these same criticisms, and she demonstrated how their attempts to portray the essence of everyday life forced the viewer to confront "previously ignored aspects of the most ordinary experiences of our daily

life.” Not only were the New Realists endowing relatively neutral subjects such as still lives with “the impress of the immediate present,” they frequently looked to their own lives for inspiration. Nochlin noted: “It is significant that these painters so often narrow down the boundaries of contemporaneity still further to their own immediate social circle, friends or family, to the space of their own studio or apartment or neighborhood....”<sup>187</sup>

By the late 1960s Chambers began to move away from his reliance on historical imagery and the technique of juxtaposing disparate elements in his art, and began to focus on those moments of the present that struck him as particularly significant. While these moments often featured members of his family, as in works like *Sunday Morning No. 2* (Fig. 6), in other works like *401 Towards London, No. 1* (Fig. 39) and *Lombardo Avenue* (1972-73) (Fig. 42) the subject matter was very ordinary, almost to the point of banality. Despite the unremarkable subject matter of these works they held a special significance for Chambers, although he could not articulate why, and puzzled, observed that “[s]ometimes ...I do find myself in special touch with a familiar object or view. It has always been there in its place, I know, but why, I wonder, do I see such things often and hardly ever do they fill my vision?”<sup>188</sup>

In his autobiography Chambers recalled the circumstances that led to the creation of *401 Towards London, No. 1*:

I had been driving to Toronto often with the acrylic pieces, and one fall morning on my way east I looked in the rear-view window as I often did to see what the landscape looked like behind me. I kept going to the top of the hill beyond the Delhi turnoff, stopped the car and got out. It was a beautiful October day, large quick-moving clouds, rich russet colours, nice platters of alternate lush and worn greens and I responded to it all with “Wow.”<sup>189</sup>

Anxious to preserve the colours and sensations of the scene Chambers hurried back to the location several days later with his camera. He was happy, he noted, “to record, essentially the same sights that had triggered my joy a few days earlier.”<sup>190</sup>

It is tempting to attribute Chambers’ ‘perceptual realist’ works to his diagnosis with leukaemia, and indeed, his works dating from after his diagnosis may well have been conditioned by his illness. However, as is evidenced in *401 Towards London, No. 1*, he began working in this style a year before his diagnosis (although he wrote “Perceptual Realism” during his stay in Victoria Hospital), so his heightened sensitivity to certain scenes cannot be seen as solely a reaction to being forced to confront his mortality.

Despite the obvious affinity to American precedents, there were those who believed New Realism in Canada was not an offshoot of American art. In 1971 Walter Klepac wrote an article on the newly opened Nancy Poole Studio in Toronto in which he categorized a number of artists as “the London Realists.”<sup>191</sup> The opening exhibition at Poole’s Yorkville studio featured the work of London artists, among them Chambers and Curnoe. Klepac, impressed by the strength of Chambers’ and Curnoe’s works, claimed the London Realists, were “the single most significant movement in Canadian painting and graphic art today.”<sup>192</sup> Without any apparent awareness that New Realism had become firmly established as a movement in the United States the previous decade, Klepac declared that the London Realist movement (which he claimed was “loosely called the new realism”) was “indigenous to Canada.”<sup>193</sup> He believed the movement was attracting “many of the best known and/or most gifted Canadian painters around these days,” a fact he believed was important for Canadian cultural development. He suggested that “[t]he

new realism is perhaps the one mode in which Canadians can compete on an equal level with Americans and not be considered mere followers.”<sup>194</sup>

Curnoe also experimented with various international styles during the 1960s. His works from the early 1960s showed many similarities to the work of the early twentieth-century Dada movement, an influence he freely admitted. Curnoe had been introduced to Dada during his years at Beal Tech and the ideological underpinnings of the group appealed to him. Dada began in Europe at the time of the First World War and was comprised of a number of loosely affiliated artists and writers who were anti-war. They were also nihilistic and cynical about art; they ignored the aesthetics of art, rejected the notion of meaning in art, and rebelled against the art establishment. They espoused the notion of “anti-art” and their works were influenced by ideas of chance, randomness, and absurdity. All of these things appealed greatly to a young Curnoe.

In late 1961, Curnoe was part of a group exhibition of neo-Dada artists at the Isaacs Gallery, an exhibition that Robert Fulford called “an exercise in the art of anarchy”<sup>195</sup> (discussed in Part I). One of the works exhibited, *Drawer Full of Stuff* (Fig. 8), was exactly what it purported to be—a drawer full of assorted objects such as old fuses, toy cars, bus tickets and so on. The work was interactive, and visitors to the gallery were encouraged to rearrange the items in the drawer. Robert Fulford covered the opening and noted that the audience could, “as one distinguished visitor did on opening night [...] make a personal contribution to the exhibition by leaving some object of your own amid the assembled junk.”<sup>196</sup>

While Curnoe’s work shared the Dada tendency to favour the use of objects and images in ironic, cynical or nihilistic ways, he nevertheless managed to inject his works

with items or imagery that had personal significance. He often took pains to catalogue the specificities of his source material: for example, in the *Drawer Full of Stuff* he was careful to document the provenance of the items so the viewer would understand that the drawer included things like part of his old bicycle seat, a number of items from his studio at 432 Richmond Street, one of his grandmother Curnoe's table spoons, a number of items from his parent's house at 75 Langarth Street including part of his mother's clothesline and a door handle from the garage shed, and a large number of bus transfers from trips he had taken. During the early 1960s he created a number of other Dada-inspired works such as *Hurdle for Art Lovers* (9 April 1962), *Dada!!* (late 1964), and *Mother!* (late 1964) (Figs. 43-45).

In the early 1960s, Curnoe's work also began to exhibit strong similarities with another international art movement—Pop Art. During the early 1960s the Pop Art movement gained widespread popularity in Britain and in the United States. Like Dada, Pop Art was an art movement that featured the appropriation of objects and images, although this time the objects and images were taken from mass and consumer culture. Pop artists incorporated these objects and images into their artworks in a manner that called attention to their inherent properties. Robert Fulford characterized the strategies of the Pop artists as reaching “down for the most vulgar symbols of their time and lift[ing] these into the art gallery.”<sup>197</sup> Fulford claims that instead of transforming these vulgar symbols or objects into art objects (as the Cubists did with their collages), Pop artists changed the context or scale of the objects, and thus their meaning or significance.<sup>198</sup> During the 1960s there were some questions about whether Pop Art was a style or whether it referred to the content of the works. Arnold Rockman claimed that it was all

about the subject matter: “[t]he only thing that ‘pop art’ describes is subject matter.”<sup>199</sup>

Others believed that Pop Art was more a visual style.

In the autumn of 1963, the Jerrold Morris Gallery introduced Pop Art to Toronto with an exhibition entitled *The Art of Things*. Critics were quick to notice a stylistic affinity between some of the works in the Morris exhibition (particularly Tom Wesselmann’s *American Still Life with Refrigerator*, [April 1963]) and Curnoe’s work, and from this point Curnoe was often described as a Pop artist.<sup>200</sup> In an article in December 1963, Elizabeth Kilbourn of the *Toronto Star* called him “one of the best Canadian exponents of pop art.”<sup>201</sup> She pointed out, however, that while he used “many tricks and techniques of the Americans” the subject matter of his work was much more personal. She claimed, “his work is jam-packed with local pride, the artefacts, symbols, flotsam and jetsam of the Western Ontario countryside where he lives.”<sup>202</sup> Harry Malcolmson also noted while Curnoe used the style of Pop Art, the personal nature of Curnoe’s work set it apart from the mainstream trend: “unlike other Pop artists, his [Curnoe’s] characters seem to be talking to one another and the scene is almost continuous.”<sup>203</sup>

Curnoe strongly objected to being called a Pop artist, undoubtedly because of its American associations. Lenore Crawford wrote in the *London Free Press* in 1963, that Curnoe “resents this label strenuously, contends ‘That’s nonsense.’”<sup>204</sup> In the film by Chambers, *R-34*, Curnoe declared: “I think the term Pop Art is an awfully narrow term. I’m just dealing with what a lot of painters have dealt with...just my immediate surroundings.”<sup>205</sup> In addition to his insistence that Pop Art was too constricting a term to define his art, Curnoe also protested that he had been creating his works before Pop Art

had become a trend. However, despite these statements, it is hard to deny that Curnoe adopted many of the technical and stylistic devices of American and British Pop Art (although he was less concerned with popular culture than ‘classic’ Pop artists such as Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann were). Indeed, a number of his brightly coloured constructions from the 1960s (works such as *On the Bed* [1963] (Fig. 46), *Spring on the Ridgeway* [1964] (Fig. 47), *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* [1966] (Fig. 1), and *Six Piece Set* [1965-67]) (Fig. 48), feature Pop Art’s bright primary colours applied in flat areas, collaged photographic images, the incorporation of real objects such as a yoyo, and mass-produced items such as candy bar wrappers, newspaper clippings and cigarette papers.

It is hardly surprising that Curnoe would progress from his neo-Dada constructions to using many of the devices of Pop Art (although his interest in the nihilistic and anarchical behaviour of Dada would persist throughout his life). As Lucy Lippard points out in her introduction to *Pop Art*, there were strong European and American iconographic precedents for Pop Art (among them Dada and Cubism).<sup>206</sup> Lippard, in her survey text on Pop Art, claimed Canadian artists “gravitated” towards the United States, and Canada could not “be said to be much of a Pop Art Centre.”<sup>207</sup> However, she singled out the work of a few artists, including Curnoe, whose “main connection with Pop Art [was] his flat rendering of figures and the frequent but unobtrusive ‘caption’ across the top....”

Lippard was correct in stating that Curnoe’s affinity to Pop Art was primarily stylistic; despite the appropriation of the outward trappings of Pop Art he never reconciled himself to the impersonal subject matter that characterized the movement. The

Canadian critic Paul Russell agreed; he claimed Curnoe was “stylistically a New Yorker, but his paintings happily display[ed] an attitude and background which [were] unmistakably stamped ‘London, Ontario, Canada’.”<sup>208</sup> Russell noted that Curnoe “employ[ed] the medium but reject[ed] the philosophy” of Pop Art and as a result, his paintings were “sincere and happy revelations of his personal life, his friends, his attitudes to current events, and his affection for London Ontario.”<sup>209</sup> Russell’s observation was certainly true; Curnoe had always been a firm believer in the idea of working with what was in his own backyard. Sometimes he interpreted this idea metaphorically (although he would have been quick to deny any metaphorical intention); at other times he took it quite literally.

Throughout his entire career Curnoe maintained that worthwhile art had to derive from personal experience. In *R-34*, he stated: “I deal to quite an extent with actual things,” and admitted that “what communicates with me is experience.”<sup>210</sup> Curnoe did not mean he had actually experienced everything that featured in his art, but whatever subject matter he chose (for example, music, sports, and history), interested him and therefore had a personal relevance to him. Curnoe amassed imagery and drew inspiration from a wide variety of sources, a fact he readily acknowledged, claiming to be “like an outdoor painter in that nearly everything I paint has been seen outside or read in the news media or ... seen in magazines and I bring it back here and work on it.”<sup>211</sup> Frequently, however, he looked no farther than what was literally immediately before him for his subject matter.

Although both Chambers and Curnoe often worked in a manner that was stylistically similar to contemporary international art trends, the highly personal and

particular subject matter and content of their work set it apart. By focusing on the personal, the immediate, the local and the regional they managed to assert a sense of an identity that was rooted in a particular time and place, in a region.

## Chapter 11: Memories of the Present

One of the most consistent features of both Chambers' and Curnoe's work is the incorporation of autobiographical material. Although they both explored their ancestry, local history and significant moments of Canada's and Europe's past, they were just as likely to feature moments from their day-to-day lives in their works. By presenting autobiographical images or events of the present in their artworks, they effectively immortalized these moments, turning them into tangible objects or what David Lowenthal refers to as 'relics'.<sup>212</sup> Even though some of the moments and memories they captured are highly personal and private, once they were transferred into relics they then entered into the realm of history. The mundane moments of their lives were preserved in their artworks, which were viewed and understood by their peers, many of whom identified with the subject matter strongly, or even featured in it. The feeling of familiarity engendered by the works contributed to a strong sense of collective identity among their circle of friends in London. Through their autobiographical works both Chambers and Curnoe created a sense of living history that has helped to define the cultural community of London ever since.

Why were the two artists so engaged in the preservation of these ordinary moments, and what was the result of their doing so? In order to understand their preoccupation with memory and the role it played in forming and sustaining identity (both on a personal and a collective level) it is helpful to look at some theories of memory and the practice of archiving.

Pierre Nora claims there has been a profound shift in the way that people think about their past, and there was an “irrevocable break marked by the disappearance of peasant culture, that quintessential repository of collective memory.”<sup>213</sup> (Interestingly, this coincides with the modernist view of nationalism that nations came into being in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a time of mass migration to cities.) With the collapse of pre-modern societies, which had structures that “assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values” (organizations like churches and the extended family), there has been a concomitant collapse of memory.<sup>214</sup> Instead of having a collective memory, and in the face of progress (what he calls “the acceleration of history”), nations now have *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory or the places “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself.”<sup>215</sup>

Nora contends there is an essential difference between real memory and history. He believes memory and history are becoming increasingly distanced; indeed, he declares they are now “in fundamental opposition.”<sup>216</sup> Real memory is “unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents traditions, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myths.”<sup>217</sup> History, on the other hand, is “how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past.” As a result of the ‘acceleration of history’, our memories are now “nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces.”<sup>218</sup>

The perpetuation of memory is vital, because, as Nora points out, memory is an active and actual phenomenon connecting us to “the eternal present.”<sup>219</sup> “Memory,” Nora writes, “is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent

evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.” History, conversely, “is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”<sup>220</sup> Memory also differs from history in that it “only accommodates those facts that suit it,” whereas, history “because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism.”<sup>221</sup> In modern times the rift between memory and history has become even more pronounced, due to “the growing belief in a right, a capacity, and even a duty to change.”<sup>222</sup>

There is some debate over the nature of memory: David Lowenthal believes while “the remembered past is both individual and collective,” memory is uniquely individual and personally experienced, although we often need to rely on the memories of other people to support and confirm our own versions of events.<sup>223</sup> He categorizes memory as “a form of awareness” and the past that we each remember as “innately our own.”<sup>224</sup> Lowenthal’s idea of memory as individual is influenced by B.S. Benjamin. “Nothing is so uniquely personal to a man as his memories,” Benjamin wrote, “and in guarding their privacy we seem almost to be protecting the very basis of our personality.”<sup>225</sup> Lowenthal, who believes that it is impossible to truly ‘share’ memories, contends that remembering the past is a fundamental component of our personal identity—“to know what we were confirms that we are.”<sup>226</sup>

Remembering the past, whether it is done individually or in a group context, is a fundamental component of collective identity, especially when the memories are incorporated into various art media, which are then made public. While the particular make-up or configurations of memories that are experienced in our own minds are

undoubtedly unique to each of us, as Halbwachs pointed out, how we remember is conditioned by our positioning within a group.<sup>227</sup>

Nora claims that “modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image.”<sup>228</sup>

Indeed, he believes the hallmark of our era is our obsession with the archive. “The imperative of our epoch,” according to Nora, “is not only to keep everything, to preserve every indicator of memory—even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated—but also to produce archives.”<sup>229</sup> What factors account for this behaviour?

Nora believes we are obsessed with archiving because we are afraid of losing the past, anxious about the present, and uncertain about the future. We lack the critical distance to recognize what may be important and what is not, and as a result, we feel compelled to preserve everything that we can about the past and the present, as a sort of insurance against the future.

Nora avows that “the less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs.”<sup>230</sup> As collective memory becomes more distant, the signs of the present must become more tangible and accurate, to provide a comprehensive storeroom of remembering. However, once the traces of these memories are archived, they are promptly forgotten. Nora suggests that “as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged, assiduously to collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been, as if this burgeoning dossier were to be called upon to furnish some proof to who knows what tribunal of history.”<sup>231</sup> He goes on to claim “the passage from memory to history has

required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his own historian.”<sup>232</sup>

The philosopher, literary critic, essayist, and bibliophile Walter Benjamin wrote about the phenomenon of collecting and its complex relationship with memory; he believed “[e]very passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memories [...],” which leads to “a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order.”<sup>233</sup> Beata Frydryczak points out that Benjamin recognized several ways of understanding collecting: firstly, it could “be understood as a kind of activity in the material and socio-cultural space” and secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, it is a way for the collector to “create his own space, and—in consequence—his own identity.”<sup>234</sup>

For Benjamin there were three distinct aspects of collecting: the collector, the collection, and the act of collecting, each of which informs the others. Benjamin believed collectors possessed a tactical instinct and they viewed the world in terms of its potential to add to their collections.<sup>235</sup> He also believed that the significance of a collection extends far beyond the actual objects it contains. As Frydryczak points out, “[t]he collector knows that in fact the world consists of various fragments; nevertheless he also knows that the fragment bears on traces of the wholeness.”<sup>236</sup> It is the ability of fragments to bear traces of the whole (acting as a synecdoche) that can make a collection a significant cultural chronicle. Benjamin claimed what was important about a collection was the ownership of it by the collector and “the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner.”<sup>237</sup> He believed the collector lived in his collection, not the other way around (another way to say this might be “you are what you collect.”)

Benjamin believed that collecting was both a whimsical activity and a process of renewal (a process that children do instinctively, but that most adults do not). As a redemptive practice, it is significant, as Benjamin understood “[t]o renew the old world—that is the collector’s deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things.”<sup>238</sup>

Frydryczak’s engagement with Benjamin’s ideas leads her to conclude that “the collector, as an allegorist, moves in the world of ruins and fragments in order to renew the past world, to give things a new life; in a word, Benjamin’s notion of collecting is a form of practical remembrance.”<sup>239</sup> By collecting “fragments of the past” and placing them in a new context with other fragments, their uniqueness becomes more apparent.<sup>240</sup> The act of collecting not only removes the object from its initial context, which somehow cleanses the object of its original associations, but also constructs a new context for the object within the newly formed collection.

Anthony Kiendl discusses the difference between ordinary people who collect, and institutions or otherwise sanctioned individuals who collect: “Extreme collecting by the individual is often associated with insanity, yet in the context of the museum, library or archive, it is a sensible cultural act, even a duty.”<sup>241</sup> The figure of the artist occupies a liminal space between ordinary mortal activity and collecting institutions. Their role as artist demands that they act as conduits through which the essential culture of a particular region or people is expressed; that is as seers.

Perhaps no figures are better placed to act as cultural historians than artists—a role both Chambers and Curnoe willingly assumed. In their own individual ways, both artists strove to uncover, interpret, and preserve their community’s history. More often than not, however, they chose to examine their own daily lives and personal memories.

Using a number of techniques and a variety of media, each of which allowed them to explore the past and memorialize the present, Chambers' and Curnoe's incorporation of personal memories into their films, writings, lectures, and artworks made their individually experienced memories public. These memories could then be assessed by their viewers, and, particularly in the case of their peers, many of their memories struck a chord of familiarity. The members of the cultural community of London (and in some cases farther afield) saw aspects of their own lives in the works of the two artists through familiar imagery, references to shared experiences, political views, and similarities in lifestyles. The identification of the viewer with the artworks fostered the impression of a shared sense of remembering, which, in turn, strengthened a collective identity in the community.

What were the memories or moments that were being immortalized, and how were the artists doing so? I will now examine several of Chambers' films and a series of Curnoe's paintings that show them memorializing and archiving the quotidian.

Chambers' preoccupation with capturing what was immediately around him is especially apparent in his films. In 1964 he borrowed a Cine Kodak silent camera and began experimenting with filmmaking. He enjoyed the experience of filming and soon purchased a used Bolex camera.<sup>242</sup> Chambers approached filmmaking very differently from his painting. Where his paintings were laborious and time-consuming endeavours, his film-making was rapid, intuitive, and a matter of expediency: "if I attempted to go into films as I would in say painting, it would take up too much effort and too much time. There just isn't time, for me, for both."<sup>243</sup> Filmmaking also provided him with a diversion

from the rigours of painting and he claimed that his new interest was more “relaxing” than painting.<sup>244</sup> He discussed the technical appeal that film-making held for him:

It’s like the piano for somebody else, and film is very musical because it’s all a matter of beat and rhythm. You’re dealing with sections of film, so a two-inch strip and a six-inch strip and a 12-inch strip and back to a 10-inch strip is a rhythm, and you can create a visual beat out of this kind of juxtaposition, this kind of constructing.<sup>245</sup>

While filmmaking was a diversion from painting, there were similarities between his two pastimes. Consistent with his use of personal imagery and source material in his paintings, Chambers’ films also demonstrated a strong interest in his local environment and personal life. His first film, *Mosaic*, which was made between 1964 and 1966, was a short, black and white 16mm film, that consisted of a number of disparate vignettes.<sup>246</sup> Some of the images Chambers chose were personal, such as footage of his wife and child; others were merely shots of things that took his fancy. In his initial excitement at owning a camera Chambers recalled filming furiously: “I shot literally miles of film since I was also learning to use the camera. The film finally ended up nine minutes long.”<sup>247</sup> He drove around the London region with Don Vincent, seeking out interesting locations and motifs to shoot. On one of their excursions Chambers and Vincent visited an area north of Fanshawe Park where they discovered a deserted farmhouse with a dead racoon. Chambers was struck with the image, which he filmed and included in *Mosaic*.<sup>248</sup> In addition to ‘found’ images or actual events such as his pregnant wife Olga entering a doctor’s office, attending a baby shower and having contractions in the family car, some of the imagery in the film was staged. In one scene, Curnoe recalled, Olga dressed up in a gauzy white dress and scattered flower petals found in a nearby field<sup>249</sup> (Fig. 49). The motif of showering flower petals was repeated periodically in the film.<sup>250</sup>

The overall reception of *Mosaic* agreed it was a poetic and touching film that transcended the personal subject matter to portray universal truths. This impression was encouraged by Chambers' own take on it. He subtitled the film "A lyrical treatment of birth and death," and this interpretation was picked up by writers and critics who elaborated on the idea. Ross Woodman wrote that *Mosaic* was about birth in the "more esoteric sense of Chambers making his first 'personal' film in an effort to give birth to himself."<sup>251</sup> Kathryn Elder claims that *Mosaic* (and *Circle*) are studies on "the fragility of domestic happiness...or the transience of existence."<sup>252</sup>

Not all critics liked Chambers' films; in 1967 Barrie Hale claimed Chambers' recent experiments with film were "not too successful...." Hale singled out *Mosaic*, saying that it was "a not-too-interesting lecture on the way [...] painting should be thought about; and put together." He concluded that it was "a dry and emptying dissertation...."<sup>253</sup>

In 1967 Chambers made *R34*, a 30-minute 16mm film about Curnoe. *R34* was not a typical documentary film. It did not provide a chronological look at Curnoe's life and work; instead, it featured a series of juxtaposed images in black and white and colour. Chambers filmed Curnoe creating collages and paintings and the artist talking about his own work. He also included images of some of Curnoe's paintings and occasionally separated scenes with rubber stamped text (which evoked old silent movie intertitles). Chambers' intention was to document the multiple aspects of Curnoe's life and art, and, as a result, the film also features a number of non-art-related activities such as Curnoe combing his wife's hair (interspersed with the word "HAIR"), taking the garbage outside, and sitting in a chair playing with his baby. All of this was complemented by the sound

track: sometimes the Nihilist Spasm Band noise is audible, at other times Curnoe provided a voice-over commentary. In his commentary, Curnoe expounded on his philosophies, among them his belief that his life and his art were inextricably linked, his Nihilism, his dislike of the dealer system, his interest in figurative art, and so on. Curnoe's attachment to his hometown is apparent: at one point, he said, "I was born in London"; at another he declared, "You're in beautiful country."<sup>254</sup> While the film was ostensibly about Curnoe, it nevertheless revealed much about the maker; in fact, Chambers contended that *R34* was "a kind of self-expressive documentary about someone else."<sup>255</sup>

The film was screened as an entry in *Canadian Artists 68* at the Art Gallery of Ontario, where it was awarded a \$1,500 prize by British Pop artist Richard Hamilton and the American filmmaker Jonas Mekas. Not everyone liked the film though; the outspoken film critic Manny Farber thought "[t]he documentary reeks with the idea of this artist, a cool and industrious Gideon of Scotland Yard (no neuroses, just a lot of industry), as a good-guy-husband-worker."<sup>256</sup> Farber went on to ask why the "lackluster, haphazard moments" Chambers chose to film should "be considered salient in the life of a creative person?"<sup>257</sup> (Ultimately Farber concluded it was because Chambers wanted to present an alternative to the popular view of the artist as a heroic and tortured genius seen in such films as *Lust for Life*.<sup>258</sup>) Bernadette Andrews, of the *Telegram*, complained that "for the most part the film handling seems amateurish and the sound is raspy and frequently incomprehensible" (although she conceded that the fault could have been with the Art Gallery of Ontario's projectors).<sup>259</sup> Andrews' main criticism of *R34* however was that "it doesn't really tell the viewer much about Curnoe."<sup>260</sup>

The technically unsophisticated aspect of Chambers' films would ultimately be seen as unimportant, at least by art critics. In 1970, when Chambers' films were shown as part of the large retrospective exhibition that was organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Vancouver Art Gallery, Joan Lowndes, of the *Vancouver Sun*, commented on how many people were put off by the "obvious amateurism" of his films.<sup>261</sup> She pointed out that "despite what has been termed his technical 'crudity'," Chambers' films were noteworthy because "ideas, in the end, are more important than skill."<sup>262</sup> Lowndes also disagreed with Andrews' opinion that *R34* was not a satisfactory portrait of Curnoe; she wrote that the film, which had "all the raw vitality, the outrageous brashness of Curnoe's Nihil [sic] Spasm Band," provided the audience with "all we need to know about his work and life style."<sup>263</sup>

Perhaps the most mundane of Chambers' films was *Circle*, which he made between 1968 and 1969. The film is composed of two distinct sections; the first part consists of a combination of images and sound, although the two are not always connected. Sometimes there is sound without images, in other cases images with no sound, and occasionally the two coincide. The first part of the film is ambiguous, although in the end it becomes apparent that Chambers was trying to emphasize a cyclical theme. *Circle* begins with the sound of some mechanical device (probably a film camera) being wound. We then hear a projector; a fuzzy picture appears with the sound of children talking, then the word "CIRCLE" appears, only to disappear into shadows. The camera pans over vague shapes, music is heard and then the credit "by JACK CHAMBERS" appears. A shot of the ceiling light fixture is followed by the camera panning over walls and doors; we see an image of Chambers with his film camera, while

hearing sounds in the background. The next images are of a filming table, still photographs of a house and garden, and a camera being wound (in a cyclical motion).

The second part of the film features nothing more than the humble subject of his back garden at Lombardo Avenue. Chambers set up a camera in his kitchen (he reportedly drilled a hole in his kitchen wall to install a small window for the camera<sup>264</sup>) and at 10:00 a.m. each day for an entire year he filmed “three feet of film”<sup>265</sup> of the view from his window. His exposures were approximately four seconds, and he kept a constant aperture, which resulted in some images that are very bright, while others are almost too dark to see. The viewer becomes aware of the subtle differences in each day’s weather, and the changing seasons create a cyclical aspect to the film. The occasional appearance of laundry, his son’s toys and gardening tools provides fleeting moments of interest while indicating the presence of people behind the scenes (Fig. 50).

Joan Lowndes considered *Circle* the “least successful” of Chambers’ films. She liked the sequences that showed Chambers’ back yard but objected to the addition of imagery of people arriving at a train station, and a candy factory (images that were included presumably because they featured circular motifs). In a comment that is perhaps more metaphorical than she intended, Lowndes wrote: “The idea would have been beautiful if he had stayed in his own backyard.”<sup>266</sup>

Chambers later defended the inclusion of these disjointed scenes in an interview with Dennis Young, curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Analyzing the different parts of *Circle*, he stated it was a film “which focuses on the idea that a single day is composed of seconds of time to produce an example of the difference of each day from the other.”<sup>267</sup> If we understand that each fragmentary moment of existence

(the few seconds of each day that he filmed) makes sense within a larger whole (the year), then each “commonplace manifestation [the episodes at the end of the film] reflect the characteristics of the cosmos.”<sup>268</sup>

While Chambers’ filmmaking started out as a relaxing diversion from painting it became an integral part of his oeuvre as it garnered more and more critical notice. In 1972 Walter Klepac commented, “Chambers’ contemporaneity and his rightful place among advanced artists today is immeasurably strengthened by a screening of his experimental films of the last decade. They should be shown in conjunction with any showing of his other works whenever possible.”<sup>269</sup>

Curnoe’s work also demonstrated a fascination with the mundane details of his daily surroundings. Despite an interest in history (local, regional, national and international), he was acutely aware of what was going on around him in the present. In fact, his concern for the minutiae of his daily life was almost an obsession with him, and it became the subject matter of a large body of his works. One of the recurrent themes in Curnoe’s work was the documentation of the view from his various home and studio windows. His fascination with the particulars of what lay immediately outside his window dates back to his childhood. In one of his journals he recalled his boyhood memories of what he saw through the small, diamond-shaped panes of glass in the leaded windows of his parents’ home on Langarth Street.<sup>270</sup> His memories were very precise; he recalled how, from the windows at the front of the house, he could see “Cowell’s large horse-chestnut tree on the left and the most westerly of the two large sugar maples on the far side of our lane.”<sup>271</sup> From the rear windows of the house the backyard was visible, and although not much could be seen from his upstairs bedroom window, he remembered

hearing the Salvation Army band playing on Sundays at a nearby church. The windows were steeped in memories and nostalgia: “These are the windows I am most familiar with. I have been looking through them since I was born (my youngest son is probably looking through them as I am writing this).”<sup>272</sup>

Curnoe began drawing the view from his window as far back as 1954 or 1955 when he created a pencil drawing of the view from the back room of the Langarth Street house.<sup>273</sup> His interest in this theme continued throughout his career. During the 1960s he created works of the view from his windows that were textual, mimetic, and combinations of the two.

One of Curnoe’s early textual works featuring the view from his window is *Cityscape* (Fig. 51) from May 6<sup>th</sup> 1961, a rubber-stamped work of marking ink on blue drafting linen. The content of the work is disjunctive and dense; it appears to document several different strands of Curnoe’s meandering thought processes as he looked out the window of his studio at 432 Richmond Street. “It is a description,” he recalled, “of the view out of the front windows before the new court house was built and ruined the view (in more ways than one.)”<sup>274</sup> The work reads:

I SEE THE TRAIN GOING THROUGH THE  
TREES PAST THE END OF CARLING STR-  
EET IN THE NEW LEAVES I THINK OF  
FRANCE WE HAVE NO MUSIC I THINK OF  
LALANDE THE COLOUR AT THE END OF TH  
E STREET YELLOW GREEN TURQUOISE  
NOSTALGIA MAY 6 DEEPLY WHAT IS SEEN  
DOWN THE STREET THE FRENCH MUSIC  
KOMOKA LALANDE COUPERIN RAMEAU  
LULLY.

Although *Cityscape* was visually unassuming, the work was nevertheless considered significant and it was featured in several exhibitions, among them the São

Paulo Biennial in 1969, *Greg Curnoe: Some Lettered Works, 1961-1969* at the London Art Gallery in 1975, and the *Greg Curnoe Retrospective* at the National Gallery of Canada in 1982. Curnoe was always aware of the pragmatic and the ideological in his work; in the catalogue essay for *Some Lettered Works* Curnoe described both the technique and the content of *Cityscape*. He noted how he had acquired the drafting linen from his job at the City of London's Surveys Department and stamped it with his first rubber stamp set (which he bought at the Met department store when he was a teenager). He commented that the set had disintegrated over the years.<sup>275</sup> Curnoe linked the artwork with one of his other major preoccupations—his chronicling of his life in journals—“The text on the linen is identical to my journal writing of the time except it is self-contained.”<sup>276</sup> As far as the references to French music went, Curnoe acknowledged “a habit of listening to French orchestral music (particularly ‘Les Fontaines de Versailles’ by M.R. de Lalande) in the spring—I also remember the sun was shining on the day CITYSCAPE was made.”<sup>277</sup>

In 1963 Curnoe moved into a studio at 202 King Street where he worked until late 1967 when he moved into his house and studio at Weston Street. In 1967 he began a series of works detailing the view from the King Street studio windows. “I didn’t start to do each window,” he recollected, “it just worked out that way given the obsessive side of my personality.”<sup>278</sup> In *Cityscape: Right Windows* (Fig. 52), *Cityscapes: Middle Windows*, and *Cityscape: Right Window*, he rubber stamped what he saw through the windows in meticulous detail, breaking words when he got to the end of the canvas. Several mistakes in some of the works are stamped over with other letters, adding to the spontaneous aspect of the works. While the works are stamped in black ink on the canvases they were

often filled with colourful descriptions of what he saw. For example, in *Cityscapes*:

*Middle Window* (not illustrated) he stamped:

PAST THE GREEN CURTAINS THE  
LOADING DOOR IS AT THE END  
OF THE ALLEY BETWEEN SERVI  
CE LAMP & DOMINION HOUSE. TH  
ERE IS A ROW OF AUTOS IN THE  
ALLEY. PARKED DIAGONALLY, TH  
EIR FRONTS AGAINST THE EAST  
WALL. FROM KING STREET IN TH  
EY ARE: A TURQUOISE VOLVO, A C  
REAM METEOR, A GREEN PONTIA  
C, A BLUE RABTOP FORD, A GREEN  
OLDS, A DARK BROWN PONTIAC  
STATION WAGON, A CREAM BRITI  
SH CAR-BACK TO THE WALL, A GR  
EEN AMERICAN STATION WAGON  
AGAINST A WOODEN PORCH, A DA  
RK BLUE DODGE FACING OUT.

In 1968 Curnoe began working on another textual work describing the view from his Weston Street studio windows. This time, he focused on the Victoria Hospital, and described, from left to right, what he saw as he looked at the building. *View of Victoria Hospital, First Series, no. 1-6* (August 1968-January 1969) (Fig. 53) is a combination of the descriptive and the subjective; on one hand Curnoe documents, fairly dispassionately, the physical particulars of the scene (from left to right he describes what he sees as he scans over the view), while on the other hand he includes a number of witty asides calling attention to the textual nature of the work, and ironically poking fun at its 'anti-art' status. The aside also demonstrates his anti-Americanism, his interest in coincidences and word play, and his fascination with marginalized or persecuted figures of Canadian history. The parenthetical asides are: *This is truly great art; Are you reading or just looking?; This is truly great art because it was not made by an American!; Gordon Jeffrey, meet*

*Geoffrey Gordon*; and, *We are really Riel*. The second of these asides—*Are you reading or just looking?*—indicates Curnoe’s obvious awareness of the tension between form and content. The artist himself admitted he put the asides in “to destroy the notion of consistency or wholeness.”<sup>279</sup> Despite this intention, the work actually functions quite well as a whole, demonstrating the wide variety of things that interested Curnoe, from the mundane to the ironic to the political. He would revisit the subject of the Victoria Hospital a year later in collaboration with Jack Chambers (to be discussed later).

In an interview in 1977 Curnoe was asked why he had decided to paint the window series from his Weston Street studio. He admitted, while he did not really have any “basic overriding reason for doing things,” he was nevertheless inspired by the French Post-Impressionist artist Paul Cézanne who had obsessively painted Mont Sainte-Victoire in his native Provence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>280</sup> Curnoe stated: “I had this funny idea about Cezanne [sic] always painting that mountain. That’s why I did those views of Victoria Hospital...very obtuse connection...to depict a mundane hospital in an Ontario city and think of it as a parallel with Mont St. Victoire.”<sup>281</sup>

Curnoe began working on yet another series of works featuring the views from his Weston Street studio windows in 1969. The series eventually consisted of six works, each detailing the view from one of the windows in his studio. From the inception of the project, Curnoe imposed a mathematical structure on the works. He described what he planned to do: “I will be putting two 1 x 2’s, about 6’ high, into the ground, 2’ apart. And then tie two pieces of string between them, 2’ apart, making a 2’ square. Then I’ll describe and draw, etc. what happens in the square.”<sup>282</sup> Curnoe’s systematic approach was very similar to the way in which archaeologists grid an excavation site. However, despite his

empirical approach to these paintings, they are not strictly speaking, impartial transcriptions of the view. They are, in fact, selections and abstractions of what he saw and moments that captured his attention, combined with interesting anecdotes and contextual information. The works vary in format and size, although all are mixed media works. The support for each work differs, depending on available materials. All of the works include loudspeakers and customized audiotapes.

*View from the Most Northerly Window on the East Wall* (March 15, 1969-September 17, 1969) (Fig. 54) is a mixed media work consisting of paint, marking ink and wallpaper on plywood. The accompanying audiotape features the sounds outside his studio window at a precise date and time (19 June 1969 between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. and from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m.). The plywood support is fan-shaped, due only to the fact that Curnoe used a leftover piece of wood from another project.<sup>283</sup> Curnoe painted not only the view from the window, but also included aspects from inside his studio such as the window frame, mullions, and the objects on the windowsill. He stamped information on the painting to indicate the provenance of the various objects he included (things like Hugh McIntyre's kazoo), which added a personal specificity to the work (to be discussed in more depth below).

*View from the Left Centre Window on the North Wall* (23 June-21 August 1970) (Fig. 55) consists of painting, collage, and stamped text. The rectangular image again depicts a painted window frame complete with a representation of a broken pane of glass. Through this can be seen an abstracted landscape, painted in typically bright 'Curnoe-esque' (Pop) colours. A menu from Mackie's restaurant in Port Stanley (one of the summer haunts of the Nihilist Party) is collaged in the centre of the painting. Stamped on

a diagonal over the painting is a detailed explanation of how the window came to be broken, probably taken from a journal entry. For added verisimilitude, the audiocassette for this work consists of several sounds recorded outside the window: crows cawing, footsteps, crickets chirping, and the sound of breaking glass can be heard.<sup>284</sup>

*View from the Most Southerly Window on the East Wall* (November 10, 1969-January 1970) (Fig. 56) is a large horizontal mixed media work on wood recycled from a packing case. Curnoe liked the rough texture and visible knotholes of the packing crate and, because he thought it would be interesting to try to paint on it, deliberately left it in its raw state.<sup>285</sup> Due to the horizontal nature of the work, Curnoe was able to include more of the space inside his studio in the image in addition to the window and its view. The left hand side of the painting depicts the brick wall of his studio with a number of objects painted on it. Again, he stamped textual descriptions on the work to describe the objects: we can see that some of them are a “Sony F99S microphone,” “Len’s Brough Superior B&W photo on post-card”(the motorcycle his father-in-law used to ride), and a “letter from R. Hamilton, with handwritten directions to Highgate by me.” In the window area of the work, Curnoe stamped the word ASA, the name of the family cat, which was run over during the making of the painting. In the first part of the tape recording, Curnoe talks about Asa; the second part is a recording of a hockey game.<sup>286</sup> Ironically, he stamped “more trivia no allegory again!!” on this work.

Despite Curnoe’s claim, while each of these paintings may appear trivial, they were anything but. Not only do they depict the multitude of items Curnoe collected (which are carefully catalogued) and the connections between them, they are also a visual demonstration of his desire to understand and control his environment. Ensclosed inside

his studio as if inside a panopticon, he formed the creative centre of the London cultural scene, as he surveyed and laid claim to his city. If, as Chambers once claimed “[t]he artist is a perceptual window,”<sup>287</sup> then Curnoe was figuratively and metaphorically becoming the perceptual window, the focal point through which the city of London was increasingly seeing itself.

Works such as the *View from the Window* series did not have an obvious universal significance. Because of the extreme specificity of the references Curnoe used, only those within his group really understood them fully (those outside the group had to rely primarily on the interpretation of the artist or secondly on the opinions of curators and critics). This sense of exclusivity helped to reinforce a sense of belonging and community within Curnoe’s group, who felt privileged to be included among those who understood the works.

It is evident both Chambers and Curnoe were very concerned with detailing and transforming ephemeral moments of the present and memories of the past into tangible visible form. In fact, the desire to document their own lives and experiences can be seen as attempts to create a cultural archive or sort of ‘memory theatre’. As Kiendl points out collecting does not necessarily refer merely to material objects; it can refer to non-material or intangible things such as memories, dreams and so forth. In the case of Curnoe it certainly referred to objects, but it also referred to a vast variety of other things such as memories (both significant and mundane), lists (of pretty well anything that struck him as significant), and even personal connections and odd coincidences. Chambers, on the other hand was more circumspect in his collecting; he did not collect objects as obsessively as Curnoe (with the exception of his collection of quotations on

perception), and the memories he collected and archived (initially through the use of fragments of photographs which he incorporated into paintings, later through paintings that were entirely derived from photographs) tended to be highly significant in some way. However, there is one specific instance in which the scale of Chambers' collecting and archiving stands out.

In 1968, while he was making the film *Circle*, Chambers visited Spain, where he began shooting footage for what would become his *magnum opus*, *The Hart of London*.<sup>288</sup> He also shot footage in London, and began amassing footage from CFPL-TV, the local television station's news archives in London, which he then manipulated. The news director of CFPL-TV was reluctant to give Chambers the footage, as he believed that the footage formed a historical archive; however, the station manager gave Chambers permission to use it. The news director's reservations were justified; Curnoe recalled how, when Chambers spliced and edited the film footage he borrowed, he damaged about five years worth of original news footage.<sup>289</sup> The end result, however, is as much an archival testament to the city of London as the original footage was, albeit a much less conventional one.

As part of the film project, Chambers sent out a request to the citizens of London, asking them to send him snapshots for use in his film. Bill Webster, the entertainment writer for the *London Free Press*, publicized Chambers' request in his newspaper column: "So you've often thought you would like to have a star role in a picture? If you live in London your opportunity is now."<sup>290</sup> Chambers was not picky about what kind of photographs people sent in, as he intended to use them all; as Webster stated, "He'll accept pictures on any subject, of any vintage and any quality. He'll put them together in

a film which will take a look at London through a different pair of eyes.”<sup>291</sup> Understating his contribution to the content of the film, Chambers told Webster that “[t]he citizens of London are the stars in this film,” while he was merely “the producer and director.”<sup>292</sup> Chambers promised to send the snapshots back to their original owners after he had filmed them. The public responded generously, and he received thousands of snapshots. Chambers later called the film “a municipal team effort.”<sup>293</sup>

The title of his film, *The Hart of London*, was derived from an incident that happened in London in 1954. During his screening of the material he had acquired from the television archives, Chambers came across footage depicting the unfortunate events that occurred when a male deer—a ‘hart’—strayed into the backyards of some London homes. The animal tried vainly to escape, but ended up wounding itself on the wooden fences. The police were called in to rescue the frightened animal, but, in the end, they had to call in a marksman to finish off the unlucky deer.

*The Hart of London* is divided into several sections; it begins with the unfortunate hart’s plight and demise before shifting to a multitude of overlapping positive and negative images of historic London (in which Chambers used the snapshots and more of his ‘borrowed’ news footage) (Fig. 57). The images in this ‘city montage’ sequence move rapidly, and some are extremely hard to decipher. The images of London eventually begin to slow down and synchronize to form “clear positive pictures of the present.”<sup>294</sup> Juxtaposed among the historical and archival images is footage shot by Chambers of his family and local surroundings. The soundtrack for the first two parts does not correspond to the events depicted. The sound of harsh crashing waves eventually settles into the more calming sound of gurgling water.

The second reel of the film features the third and fourth sections: the third section of the film juxtaposes images of the slaughter of lambs (which he shot in Spain—the only part of the film to be shot in colour) with very close-up images of a human birth (Fig. 58). Crosscutting between the two scenes heightens the bloody and violent connection between birth and death. The final part of the film features a number of seemingly unconnected episodes: a boy taking a forbidden swim in the Thames River in winter as a policeman waits to arrest him, a woman searching in her early spring garden for a flower to put in her lapel, a shaken man being rescued from a mine disaster, and a man presenting a mentally disabled boy with a caged bird. This is followed by a shot of Chambers mowing his lawn (an image that he used in his paintings *Grass Box No. 1* and *Grass Box No. 2* (Figs. 35 & 36), and then a view of the Thames River and the sky. The film ends with a short segment showing Chambers' sons visiting a zoo. As the small boys approach a couple of deer and offer them food, Chambers' wife Olga can be heard cautioning them: "You have to be very careful." The caution is repeated twice more.

The film is not an easy one to watch. Avis Lang found "much of it [...] exhausting, disorienting and nerve-racking, verging at moments on the unbearable." It is, nevertheless, profoundly moving, both as a tribute to the city of London and to the nature of life itself. After watching it for the second time, Chambers remembered his sense of wonder: "I found that I was almost saying to myself, Yeah, things really are good and things really are unique, things full of wonder the way they are."<sup>295</sup>

Fred Camper contends that the film is about much more than life and death or the city of London, claiming, "Chambers tells a very Canadian tale" of wilderness coming in contact with civilization.<sup>296</sup> By intercutting snapshots of London with news footage from

other places, “and by locating the largest themes in mundane images from London itself, Chambers also finds the whole world there,” approaching a condition of universality.<sup>297</sup>

The desire to preserve history through the accumulation and archiving of its traces was one that Curnoe also wholeheartedly subscribed to. He obsessively kept textual and visual records of things that he and others did, from the mundane to the majestic. Foremost among his various collections was his large body of journals (there are 77 cm of textual records and graphic material in his archive, including 43 volumes of diaries). His practice of writing down his feelings and experiences ranged from his childhood writings to his teenaged letters to his adult journals. With the exception of his bicycling journals, his writings were not systematic or clearly organized. A good deal of Curnoe’s writing was undated, and often arbitrarily grouped (he amassed an assortment of various hard-bound journals, assorted notebooks, school scribblers, stenographer’s pads, loose leaf binders with foolscap, and scraps of paper with written chronicles).

Curnoe’s journals occasionally provided material for his paintings; in 1967 he created a rubber-stamped work, *Ruminations on an Old Urquhart* (Fig. 59) (so named because it was painted over an old painting of Tony Urquhart’s). Breaking words when he reached the end of the canvas, he stamped an excerpt from one of his journals, detailing what he was thinking about, seeing, and experiencing at the time of his son Owen’s first walk. The text reads:

BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS  
 THAT ARE REAL. I HAVE THOUGH  
 T ABOUT THAT TOO MUCH AND GOT  
 TEN MYSELF INTO TOO MANY C  
 ONVERSATIONS. A COUPLE HAV  
 E BECOME WORD GAMES WHER  
 E I LOST, PARTICULARLY WITH  
 ROYDEN WHEN IT BECAME VICI

OUS, PROBABLY BECAUSE HE FELT THREATENED, AS I DID. ALWAYS THE FEELING LATELY OF BEING A LOSER & THEN OWEN STARTS TO WALK, HE IS VERY BUSY, SHEILA HOLDS UP THE BLACK PEN & HE STAGGERS ABOUT 3 STEPS & GRABS IT. WE HAVE NO MONEY. WHAT A PISSY WAY TO LIVE.

His interest in record keeping extended beyond his immediate sphere to include the history of London and a multitude of aspects of local culture. Curnoe collected objects and items that interested him, and he was especially fond of documenting things that demonstrated cultural specificity. For example, over the years he amassed a collection of 86 bottles of locally produced soda pop (from across Canada). He claimed that “different things grow in different areas. Different plants, foods, cooking, and for that matter, different brands of pop.”<sup>298</sup> Curnoe stressed that it was very important that he had grown up drinking pink Wishing Well Cream Soda from London whereas other cities like Montreal and Regina produced clear cream soda. When Bruce Kidd asked Curnoe why it was important Curnoe replied: “They all provide a sense of our regional cultures.”<sup>299</sup>

Curnoe was fearful that, due to globalization, cultural differences were being homogenized; he was particularly discouraged that Canada was “being interpreted by the U.S.A. almost totally now.”<sup>300</sup> Curnoe believed that the incursion of American culture into Canada meant Canadians no longer saw themselves through their own eyes, but through the eyes of America. As a result, he claimed the majority of Canadians (with the exception of Quebec) no longer had any “respect for our own culture.”<sup>301</sup> He was also

distressed by the fact that large corporations were forcing small companies, that were producing “products that add to a local culture,” out of business.<sup>302</sup>

Several works from Curnoe’s *View from the Window* series demonstrate his interest in preserving culturally specific products. Along the bottom of the image in the *View from the Most Northerly Window on the West Wall* (October 22, 1970-March 10, 1971) (Fig. 60) a number of drink bottles are painted on the windowsill. These bottles came from Curnoe’s personal collection of Canadian pop bottles, and above each bottle he stamped the name of the city it came from and the date that he acquired it. To further emphasize his interest in regional specificity the paintings in this series also feature the word *Region* rubber-stamped in a red circle. The stamp was also used to mark issues of *Region* magazine.

In an interview with Robert McDonald in 1976 Curnoe discussed his *View from the Windows* series and his preoccupation with collecting and cataloguing. For example, he mentioned how, in *View from the Most Northerly Window on the East Wall* (March 15, 1969-September 17, 1969) (Fig. 54) (discussed above), he included a number of very specific references to Canadian culture and locally purchased products. The border of the work is covered with a pre-pasted wallpaper border, which Curnoe claimed was a Canadian invention.<sup>303</sup> Curnoe also pointed out that he had included very specific references to where items in the work were purchased; there is a painted depiction of a clothesline with a clothes-peg that we are told was bought at Bright’s grocery store, and the glass in the window was purchased at London Glass and Mirror. Likewise, stamped notations tell us where the wallpaper, the flowers, the bottle, and a board in the image were bought. While most of the objects were just lying around his studio, Curnoe

admitted to adding a couple of items such as a package of Zig Zag cigarette papers, a can of Dr. Thomas Eclectic Oil, and a pressed metal airplane.<sup>304</sup>

McDonald asked him why he considered it so important to label things and identify where they came from. Curnoe replied: "That's what my work is about: being as specific as possible."<sup>305</sup> When McDonald asked him, Curnoe elaborated that "[t]his work is placed in a very specific situation at my home and things are purchased from specific places and there are very specific things about them. I think as a statement becomes more general and as people become more universal, they become more boring. The only way to touch anybody is by being extremely specific." Curnoe added jokingly "It's the only thing *I'm* interested in, so it's got to suit everyone else."<sup>306</sup>

Some of the *View from the Window* works combined seemingly unconnected elements. For example, *View from the Most Easterly Window on the North Wall* (May 5-December 18, 1969) (Fig. 61), includes an excerpt from the journal of the famous Swiss physicist August Piccard describing in detail his observations on the troposphere from a hot air balloon ride.<sup>307</sup> Piccard's atmospheric observations do not bear any resemblance to the sky in Curnoe's painting. In fact, as McDonald noted, the two things seem to be merely juxtaposed. Curnoe agreed, claiming that the best way to connect things was "by juxtaposing them." When McDonald asked the artist if this meant that he was "a champion of the found and the random" Curnoe replied, "No, it's just the way things go together in the world. They always go together in juxtaposition."<sup>308</sup>

When he viewed the *View from the Windows* series at the Canada House Gallery in London, England, McDonald expressed the belief that there was no consistency in the text and subject matter of the works. Curnoe concurred, claiming this was precisely

because his work was “as much about juxtaposition as anything else, simply putting elements together to see what will happen.”<sup>309</sup>

Curnoe’s interest in archiving also included chronicling London’s history and extended into the medium of film. In 1969 he made *Sowesto*, a 30-minute film about London. The film is an assemblage of film footage, the majority of which was taken by himself and his friends, but which also includes some historical footage. In *Sowesto*, Curnoe included film footage of the opening of Region Gallery, *Celebration*, some Nihilist party events, and some footage of the Nihilist Spasm Band gatherings. For reasons known only to himself, he also included archival footage of a visit of Canadian heroine Barbara Ann Scott to St. Mary’s, a small town just north of London. Interspersed with these events are images of Curnoe’s daily life; Sheila and a pet bird (the ill-fated Percy?) are shown, the interior of his studio and some of his works are seen (the hotel sign from *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* is shown), his son is featured several times, and so is his house at Weston Street. Except for the first few minutes of the film (which show a bemused reporter asking Curnoe questions about his show at the London Public Library), *Sowesto* is a silent film. The film impressed Pierre Théberge, and it was included as one of Canada’s film offerings shown at the Paris Biennale in 1969 (the Nihilist Spasm Band was Canada’s musical entry to the Biennale).

Curnoe soon made another foray into filmmaking and in 1970 his film *Connexions* was released. This time all the footage was taken by Curnoe, although his subject matter is as wide-ranging as *Sowesto*’s had been. The film consists of a series of visual vignettes with a voice-over narration by Curnoe and is further evidence of his abiding fascination with intertwined nature of the city of London and its people.

*Connexions* features a number of images of houses and locations in London, which Curnoe identifies and contextualizes in his narration. These locations were not randomly selected, nor were they important merely as buildings or places. In fact, they gained their significance through their connection to the artist or people that he knew.

The film is a combination of facts and anecdotal information and reminiscences by Curnoe. There is a strongly nostalgic feeling to the film as Curnoe documents and details for posterity the places he knew and the events that happened there. *Connexions* begins and ends with images of the highly significant Victoria Hospital as seen from Curnoe's studio window (he and Chambers had been working on their paintings of the hospital during the filming). (Victoria Hospital's significance will be discussed below.) Inserted into the body of the film are images and incidents of interest to Curnoe; his dead pet bird, Percy on a blanket, his son Owen, and the CAR 1968 celebration party.

The multitude of images of houses and buildings provide a whirlwind tour of London. It is not a typical tourist tour of the city; instead, it is Curnoe's city that we see. While there is an interest in the historical buildings of London (which are briefly described), the emphasis is on those buildings with some connection to Curnoe. We are shown fellow Nihilist Spasm Band members Bill Exley's and Art Pratten's houses, his friend Larry Russell's second place, the Royal Alex Hotel, Curnoe's father's home on Hamilton Road and Curnoe's Richmond Street Studio. At times the images flash by too quickly for his narration and he has to rush to catch up—a technique that lends a spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness feeling to the film, and makes it appear as if Curnoe himself is seeing the footage for the first time. The memories inspired by the images are almost too numerous to be contained within the film.

By far the majority of images have to do with Jack Chambers' life and work. Curnoe showed mundane moments such as Chambers looking out of the window of his King Street Studio, and a shot of him eating a meal. Curnoe also included a number of images of Chambers working on his art: we see him working on his painting of his sons John and Diego watching TV (*Sunday Morning No. 2*), several shots of his painting-in-progress, *401 Towards London*, and Chambers painting of the Victoria Hospital (Curnoe also shows his own unfinished *View of Victoria Hospital, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series*). Curnoe narrated the images of Chambers, explaining things like how Chambers kept his paint in baby food jars. Curnoe also included a number of sites that had a connection to Chambers such as his father's house on Fairmont Avenue, the house Chambers got arrested at (for trying to climb into his girlfriend's window), Chambers' old house on Byron Avenue, his studio in the Dixon Building (which originally housed a dry cleaning manufacturer [sic]), his subsequent house on Dufferin Avenue, the Chambers' Cathcart Street house and their house and his studio on Lombardo Avenue. He shows Chambers' family and discusses where Chambers filmed *Circle*.

I believe that Curnoe's focus on Chambers was due, at least in part, to Chambers' recent diagnosis with leukaemia and the imminent threat of death. Although *Connexions* sees London through Curnoe's eyes, the film also serves as a biography of Chambers (a sort of reciprocation of Chambers' film on Curnoe, R-34). In the end, it is Curnoe's and Chambers' connection that forms the ultimate "*Connexion*."

Curnoe's films were much less concerned with the aesthetic dimension than Chambers' were. Curnoe's emphasis was on capturing historical or significant moments in his and London's past, not in experimenting with effects, moods, and images. Despite

the stylistic differences between Curnoe's and Chambers' films and art they shared a deep sensitivity to their surroundings.

In 1969 Curnoe and Chambers decided to collaborate by each painting the view of Victoria Hospital from the roof of Curnoe's Weston Street studio. The resulting works would become emblematic of the city and memorialized the hospital. Aside from visually dominating the view from Curnoe's studio, the hospital held enormous significance to the two men—they were both born there, their children were all born there, several of their family members and friends died in the hospital, and Chambers would eventually die there too. Although they had intended to work on the paintings together, due to Chambers' illness he was forced to complete the painting in his studio from photographs (which was probably easier anyway as painting in his studio from photographs was his usual working method).

The resulting works could not have been more different and each typified the style and preoccupations of its creator.<sup>310</sup> Instead of relying purely on text, as he had done in his *View of Victoria Hospital, First Series* (Fig. 53), Curnoe's mixed media work *View of Victoria Hospital, Second Series* (10 February 1969-10 March 1971) (Fig. 62) is a brightly coloured, schematized view of the hospital and landscape that is keyed with a series of numbers that correspond to a typewritten list of explanatory items. Each of the 120 items describes an event or piece of information that is in some way significant to Curnoe—it becomes a non-linear autobiographical sketch of his life. To enhance the viewer's experience further Curnoe included tape recordings of some of the noises from his studio window. Curnoe did not hide the fact that he was painting from his studio. In fact, he calls attention to this by bisecting the image with a window mullion.

Curnoe's painting of the hospital asserts the presence of the building much more forcefully than Chambers' work did. The Victoria Hospital was some distance from Curnoe's studio, separated by a quarter of a mile of undeveloped land and the Thames River. Curnoe chose to foreground the hospital by enlarging the building slightly and by depicting it in bright, flat colours, which helped to make it appear larger than life (he claimed he heightened the colours to enliven his painting in an effort to "come up with the same effect that you get when you see things"<sup>311</sup>). He also placed the building in the viewer's main line of sight, by situating it slightly above the centre point of his painting (to avoid a static rigidity he places the building very slightly to the left of centre). Not content with the pictorial representation of the hospital and surrounding landscape, Curnoe crammed as many external incidents, observations and reminiscences into the work as he possibly could.

The variety of incidents Curnoe documents is typical of his wide-ranging interests and the entries range from the impersonal and ordinary to the highly specific and personal. For the most part the notations detail a multitude of mundane events that caught his attention for some reason. When asked about his "concern with detail to the point of trivia" Curnoe claimed our lives are made up of the accumulation of "very ordinary things."<sup>312</sup> There are a number of recurrent themes in the notations, such as smoke rising from the buildings (#s 6, 11, 15, 25, 66, 67, and 116), and butterflies passing by (#s 34 and 50), others are single events such as headlights of cars going past the hospital (#2), and birds in the field (#22).

In addition to the ordinary moments of life, Curnoe also noted more significant things like the room where Jack (Chambers) was on July 15<sup>th</sup> approximately (#7), the

observation room that Curnoe's father waved from while hospitalized (#18), the room where his son Galen was born (#53), and the room where Selwyn Dewdney was hospitalized (#78). However, his references are so specific to his life, and he so seldom reveals his emotions (he documented how he was feeling only one time, when his son Owen marked the canvas with a black pen and Curnoe "got mad" [#3]), that it is difficult to know which moments are personal and which are impersonal without additional context.

Not all of the notations were factual or even true—one of them is blatantly false (although it is reflective of Curnoe's views on the United States). Notation #24 reads: "American B58A Hustler shot down by Canadian small arms fire June 18—12:30 p.m." When asked if the painting had a political message Curnoe replied: "Sure it has a political message. It has to do with the overflights of American aircraft over Canada and it has to do with the hypothetical invasion of Canada and the plane being shot down by Canadian patriots, if that's a political message."<sup>313</sup>

By contrast, Chambers' painting of *Victoria Hospital* (Fig. 7) appears, at first glance, to be a more homogeneous work, although it is, in fact, a moody and evocative work that is equally complex. Devoid of any textual or aural accompaniment, the painting is serene yet inscrutable. Victoria Hospital is seen on a dreary winter day, and depicted in Chambers' perceptual realist manner. The hospital does not loom large like it does in Curnoe's painting; instead, it is inserted into the landscape in a subtle manner. Slightly more than the top two-thirds of the painting are devoted to the sky, and Chambers took special attention to replicate the atmospheric effects. Efforts have also been made to depict the landscape around the hospital realistically, and scant covering of snow on the

ground and the small copse of leafless trees on the near side of the Thames River are rendered in detail. Relying on textures and tones, Chambers' depiction of the Victoria Hospital is a subtle and moving work.

The difference in mood between Curnoe's brightly-coloured, almost festive view of the hospital and Chambers' painting is marked. Considering Chambers worked from a photograph for this painting it is interesting that he chose to use an image taken on an overcast day, rather than a sunny one, and his choice of a sombre view of the hospital may have reflected his melancholic state-of-mind at the time. In July of 1969, Chambers was hospitalized in the Victoria Hospital and subsequently received his terminal diagnosis there. It was also where he wrote a portion of his essay *Perceptual Realism*. It is not surprising, then, that his view of the hospital was less celebratory than Curnoe's.

In their own unique ways, the views of Victoria Hospital act as historical archives of a particular time and place. The views of Victoria Hospital provided the London audience with a sense of familiarity and belonging, and they reaffirmed a sense of group identity among the artists' friends. Curnoe's notations embrace a variety of events, many of which referenced the lives of his friends, while Chambers' sombreness evokes the life and death seriousness most of us encounter with hospital environments. The majority of Chambers' and Curnoe's friends in London also had personal connections with the hospital, and all of them would have been familiar with its presence outside Curnoe's studio. The significance of the works exceeds their physical representation of a familiar landmark, however; while both paintings are strong individual works they assume a greater sense of importance when the circumstances of their creation are understood. It was common knowledge among their circle of friends in London that the two men shared

a particularly close friendship, and the fact that they had embarked on the project collaboratively was seen as significant. It was also common knowledge that their original plans had to be altered to accommodate Chambers' illness, information that added poignancy to Chambers' work and lent a sense of gravity to Curnoe's. In their individual ways, both men created lasting testimonials to their generation, their city, and their friendship in these works.

Why was there such a strong desire by the two men to preserve the mundane moments of both the past and present in their art? I believe while they were genuinely fascinated by what was happening in their day-to-day lives, they were extremely aware of the passage of time and the transient nature of life. This awareness resulted in works that were deeply nostalgic, while still appearing very topical. Although, in the past century, nostalgia has come to be viewed as an archaic sentiment that is antithetical to notions of progress, this is not necessarily the case. The nostalgic sensibility in the two artists' work was not just a regressive longing for past times; in fact, their revisiting of the past was a mechanism that allowed them to reaffirm their own personal and group identities in the present. Despite their very different stylistic approaches and visual appearance Chambers' and Curnoe's works exhibit an awareness of and longing for the (immediate) past that has become more poignant and pronounced as time passes.

Resurgences of nostalgia are particularly prevalent during times of anxiety or sudden change.<sup>314</sup> In spite of the general atmosphere of bonhomie and celebration in Canada during the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were also undercurrents of unease. Nor were these anxieties unique to Canada: throughout the decade of the 1960s, the nascent feminist revolution was unsettling traditional gender roles, racial tensions were

violently erupting in many cities in the United States, and opposition to the Vietnam War was growing. In Canada, these problems were compounded by more immediate ones—simmering tensions between Quebec and the rest of Canada came to a head in the fall of 1970 with the FLQ kidnappings of James Cross and Pierre Laporte and the subsequent invocation of the War Measures Act on October 16, 1970. In addition to this, regionalism threatened to divide the country further, Canada's population was becoming increasingly multicultural, aboriginal communities began to demand more autonomy, and Canada was becoming aware that it was more than ever in danger of being dominated economically, culturally, and intellectually by the United States. These events occurred during a time of personal change for Chambers and Curnoe: they both left home during the 1950s to further their artistic training, and returned to London in the early 1960s with the desire to become self-supporting artists (something that was almost unheard of at the time). In their 20s they began their careers as artists, married, and had children, and the pressures of adulthood and the need to support their families proved stressful. Their choice of profession was far from financially stable, and their precarious financial situations were compounded by professional uncertainty and personal circumstances (such as Chambers' illness). It is no surprise, then, that we see a concomitant current of nostalgia in the work of Chambers and Curnoe during this period (for example, Curnoe's *Ruminations on an old Urquhart* [discussed previously]).

The precursor of nostalgia was melancholy, a condition that was recognized as far back as antiquity when it was believed to create a host of symptoms such as depression, anxiety, irrational and erratic behaviour, alcoholism and an abnormal interest in sex. Melancholy did not affect all people equally; intellectuals were considered to be most at

risk.<sup>315</sup> The view of melancholy as the affliction of intellectuals persisted over the centuries; Brian S. Turner notes that in the literature and astrology of the Middle Ages “melancholy was symbolized by Saturn, who in turn was associated with intellectual activity, seclusion and the serious quest for knowledge.”<sup>316</sup> It was believed that monks and intellectuals, due to the solitary and inactive nature of their lives, were especially susceptible to melancholy. The prescribed remedy for this complaint was “increased prayer and ritual commitment.”<sup>317</sup> (The central premise of *Born Under Saturn* by the Wittkowers derives from the medieval notion of a ‘saturnine’ temperament.)

The medieval conception of melancholy lingered into the mid-twentieth century, particularly with respect to the tortured, solitary lives that artists were believed to live. It is a view that was certainly applicable to Jack Chambers, who was particularly prone to bouts of melancholy in his early adulthood, especially during his years in Spain. Chambers, never the most social of men, spent a great deal of his time in Spain engaged in solitary study. He also experienced periods of physical discomfort or deprivation, which he believed aided his studies (discussed in Chapter Two).

Chambers always believed he possessed artistic talent, but he did not know how to fulfil his potential. Indeed, he left his home in London, Ontario with a feeling of general dissatisfaction at his circumstances. Formal schooling in Canada had been a bust (his high school career was unremarkable and he dropped out of university after only one term), and the types of jobs he was getting did nothing to further his ambitions. He appears to have been unsure as to how to remedy his situation beyond escaping the confines of first London and then North America. Prior to moving to Spain, Chambers spent a period of time travelling, and it was during this unfocused time that he became

increasingly aware of his lack of structure. He soon realized he could only develop as an artist if he pursued a rigorous regime at an established academy (and the Spanish academy was noted for its adherence to tradition). Raised in a fairly non-observant Baptist environment, Chambers became intrigued with Catholicism in Spain, and converted in 1957. He claimed the devotions required by practising Catholicism helped him avoid the temptations that had been interfering with his studies (wine and women), and gave him the discipline necessary to succeed. The impression of Chambers as a highly disciplined artist pursued by melancholy and prone to nostalgia would persist throughout his life.

Although the medical world was familiar with the emotion of melancholy, it was not until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that the feeling of unwilling separation from one's normal surroundings became the object of study.<sup>318</sup> Derived from the Greek *nostos* (to return home), and *algia* (a painful condition),<sup>319</sup> the word nostalgia was created in 1688 when the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer wrote a medical treatise in which he described the feelings and symptoms experienced by Swiss mercenaries in exile.<sup>320</sup> Initially viewed as a disease brought on by homesickness, nostalgia was believed to cause physical symptoms, and even death.<sup>321</sup> The exile of these men from their normal surroundings caused symptoms such as "despondency, melancholia, lability of emotion, including profound bouts of weeping, anorexia, a generalized 'wasting away,' and not infrequently attempts at suicide."<sup>322</sup> Once codified, the disease proved to be fashionably contagious and soon spread from Switzerland to pervade the rest of Europe. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century nostalgia featured as a popular subject for writers.<sup>323</sup> On a visit to Milan in 1838 the French writer Honoré de Balzac wrote to his friend Madame Hanska that he was

suffering from such homesickness he feared he might die if his exile continued beyond two weeks.<sup>324</sup> The pathological definition of nostalgia persisted until the early twentieth century.

Nostalgia has frequently been seen in negative terms: the cultural analyst Raymond Williams claimed that it is a passive and critically unreflexive phenomenon that sustains the status quo; he saw nostalgia as a dysfunctional idealisation of the rural past that ignores historical inequities and does not address contemporary problems.<sup>325</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, members of the Frankfurt school, used nostalgia to describe feelings of loss (of such things as social status, a sense of place, loss of religion and the fragmentation of society, etc.).<sup>326</sup> Buckner cautions that while nostalgia can help people adjust to change “it can also perpetuate harmful stereotypes.”<sup>327</sup>

Nostalgia has also been seen in a more positive light. Maurice Halbwachs believed it could be liberating; in times of suffering or hardship he contended that it “made the present bearable.”<sup>328</sup> It also helped to provide stability in the face of change and its didactic function was to provide “an idealized image of the past and, thus, a sense of social continuity.”<sup>329</sup> Not only does nostalgia help formulate individual identity, but, as Suzanne Vromen notes “[n]ostalgia may also generate a collective identity by defining a specific generation as sharing a particular kind of nostalgia.”<sup>330</sup> In 1979 the sociologist Fred Davis claimed nostalgia “mediates the selection, distillation, refinement, and integration of those scenes, events, personalities, attitudes, and practices from the past that make an identifiable *generation* of what would otherwise remain a featureless demographic cohort....”<sup>331</sup> Despite being separated in age by six years, Chambers and Curnoe both belonged to the generation of young people who were born during the

Depression and came of age in the decade after the Second World War, and as a result, shared many of the same experiences and events.

There is another factor that was significant with respect to Chambers' and Curnoe's circle in London—the artists and intellectuals who made up their group were almost exclusively male. Davis contended that men, surprisingly, were more prone to nostalgia than women. This, he believed, was because men traditionally experienced more upheaval and change in their lives due to their sex roles than women did (although he contended that this was likely to change as women's roles in society changed).<sup>332</sup> He claimed that, in Western society, "it is the male who experiences the sharper transitional discontinuities of status, role, and often geographic location as well."<sup>333</sup> While this has obviously changed in the three decades since Davis wrote on the subject, it would have been particularly pertinent in the 1960s and early 1970s, the period in which Chambers and Curnoe were working.

Chase and Shaw believe there are a number of elements that must be in place in order for nostalgia to exist. The following conditions confine nostalgia to modern societies: firstly, there must be a secular and linear understanding of present and historical time (there must be a realization that there *was* a past in order to reflect back on it), rather than a cyclical or redemptive understanding of time. Cyclical ideas of time prevent nostalgia because if there is the belief that the past will eventually become the present then one need not yearn for the past. Likewise, redemptive histories, whose belief in the eventuality of a better life in some version of the future, also provide little incentive to look back. The second precondition for nostalgia is the belief that the present is, in some sense, deficient. This deficiency can be as broad as the fall of an

empire or as specific as the decline in status of a particular group or class. Those who believe that the past was a golden age harken back to perceived times of former glory. The final precondition for nostalgia is the material presence of “objects, buildings, and images from the past,” which function as “talismans that link us concretely to the past.”<sup>334</sup> The power of these objects is achieved through their “auratic patina”.<sup>335</sup>

Chase and Shaw believe humans are predisposed to nostalgia, because, as adults, we are profoundly aware of our mortality (this view is somewhat different than Halbwachs’ belief that “nostalgia makes the present bearable.”<sup>336</sup>) They also believe nostalgia is a phenomenon that is inherently linked to secularisation; for those who do not believe in resurrection after death, the knowledge of our biological destiny creates a climate of pessimism in which nostalgia flourishes: “the closer societies have comprehended the biological finality of death—or that the hereafter happens if at all, outside of historical time,” Chase and Shaw suggest, “the greater their capacity for nostalgia.”<sup>337</sup>

If our consciousness is shaped by the irrevocable knowledge of our mortality, what, then, prevents us from being perpetually pessimistic? Chase and Shaw contend it is partly the human capacity to “be surprised by joy, and [the ability to] from time to time regain a childlike (but not childish) intensity of vision,” that allows us to live optimistic lives.<sup>338</sup> I do not believe that the nostalgia or melancholy and clarified vision are necessarily opposite states of mind; in fact, as Turner points out, melancholy could lead one to “a heightened sensitivity to reality.”<sup>339</sup>

In 1969 Chambers was confronted with his mortality when he was diagnosed with terminal leukaemia and given mere months to live. It would be natural, therefore, to

conclude he would become pessimistic and nostalgic, and this would be reflected in his art. Faced with imminent death, he re-evaluated his life and approached his work with concentrated effort; he streamlined his personal commitments, dramatically increased the price for his art, and began to pursue a more photographically 'realistic' style in his art. He also finished and published his essay "Perceptual Realism." In this essay, Chambers claimed he had become aware that some moments affected him in a profound manner, which allowed him to see things as if for the first time—he referred to this moment as the 'ping' of recognition. He was aware that these same moments were lost the instant that conscious awareness of them occurred. He attempted to capture the sensation of these fleeting moments of hyper-awareness first in photography and then in painting, and the effect of these paintings was profound. Despite being based on moments of pure joy or intense vision his perceptual realist works are strongly nostalgic. It is a different type of nostalgia than his surrealist works, however; whereas works like *Messengers Juggling Seed* and *McGilvary County* were nostalgic dream-like representations of bygone days and long-dead people, his perceptual realist works dealt with the here and now. The nostalgia of works like *Sunday Morning No. 2* and *401 Towards London* is more a sense or awareness of the fragility and transitory nature of everyday life.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries most scholars acknowledge that nostalgia is no longer a single phenomenon but is actually extremely varied.<sup>340</sup> Chase and Shaw point out that its meaning has evolved from a pathological disease and "our present usage of the word is [...] distinctly modern and metaphorical. The home we miss is no longer a geographically defined place but rather a state of mind."<sup>341</sup> However, in the case of Chambers and Curnoe, the nostalgia they expressed was still inextricably tied to

place. This is evidenced in the works they created in the 1960s and 1970s, which immortalized very detailed and specific moments in a particular time and place. The powerful influence their local environment exerted is not surprising. As Lowenthal notes, “[t]he tangible past affects people most in their everyday surroundings.”<sup>342</sup> Likewise, the body of works the two artists created had a cumulative effect—the sum of the works acted as a huge ‘memory theatre’ of the city, which helped foster a sense of collective identity in London. Again Lowenthal observes that “[l]ike archives, tangible relics make the past present and ‘give a physical existence to history.’”<sup>343</sup>

In 1968 the British critic David Thompson claimed that Curnoe’s relationship to his birthplace was tinged with nostalgia, commenting that Curnoe regarded London “partly with the ironical affection which reminds one of some of the English parallels. He fill[ed] his studio with what is in effect the nostalgic bric-à-brac of small town commerce, and use[d] it for collage objects.”<sup>344</sup> The same year, Jean Sutherland Boggs, the newly appointed director of the National Gallery of Canada, noted the same thing about both Chambers’ and Curnoe’s work in her preface to the exhibition catalogue *Canada: art d’aujourd’hui* (1968). Boggs wrote that both artists were attached, “each in their own way, to the nostalgia of the objects that surround them.”<sup>345</sup> Dennis Reid, who was responsible for the biographical text accompanying Chambers’ and Curnoe’s entries in the catalogue, claimed that understanding the importance that the personal experience and the actual region of London held for the two artists was fundamental in understanding their art. He believed “Chambers’ return to the staid place of his birth [was] of utmost significance to his art. His concern [was] with the nature of experience, and the root of all experience is in our childhood.”<sup>346</sup> Reid contended that, on returning to London,

Chambers “discovered that the things of his childhood and youth carried with them a rich stock of significance,” and came to understand that the objects of his childhood memories were supplemented by the accumulation of the subsequent years’ memories.<sup>347</sup> As Reid observed, the accumulated memories inherent in the objects of his childhood were transformed into Chambers’ artworks with the effect that “[s]uch nostalgia once isolated and related to various other evocative images makes a powerful object, in which the depicted incidents assume a significance beyond their initial reality.”<sup>348</sup>

The curators’ discussions of nostalgia undoubtedly influenced some of the reviews of *Canada: art d’aujourd’hui*. The art critic for the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* also highlighted the nostalgic sensibility in Chambers’ works, commenting, “Jack Chambers creates a nostalgic universe, a strange intimacy, although his vast lawns are lost in the distance and his people only suggested.”<sup>349</sup> Harry Malcolmson, of the *Toronto Star*, after visiting the exhibition in Rome, also picked up on the idea of nostalgia, although he broadened its application to include artists other than Chambers and Curnoe. Malcolmson claimed the theme of nostalgia “not often connected with Canadian art, [was] very apparent in this show.”<sup>350</sup>

The nostalgia perceived in the works of the two artists was not the typical yearning for a long-past golden era that is often associated with the sentiment. Instead, their nostalgia was for moments so recent that they scarcely qualified as nostalgia. As Lowenthal notes, aided by a culture of obsolescence “history was being recycled as nostalgia almost as soon as it happened.”<sup>351</sup> The very particular nature of Curnoe’s nostalgia was mentioned in 1966 in the centennial publication *Great Canadian Painting*, in which the authors conclude that “there is an affection in his paintings too, and

nostalgia, not for the distant past, but for experiences as recent as last week, or yesterday.”<sup>352</sup>

Whether anything distinctive about London’s cultural scene actually existed or whether it was merely the creation of a number of interested parties is largely irrelevant. What is important is that the idea of London regionalism took root in the imagination of the Canadian art community. Like any other myth, the myth of London regionalism served several important purposes, not least of which was that it provided the artists in London with a strong sense of communal identity. By defining the cultural production of London against other metropolitan centres (particularly Toronto and New York), and by showcasing young local artists against the previous generation of artists in London (who had looked mainly to Europe for their inspiration) it implied that Canadian art had matured to the point where it no longer needed to concentrate on national issues by looking elsewhere for affirmation. Additionally, the attention garnered by newspaper reports and articles that promoted the idea of London regionalism aided in the creation of a ‘buzz’ around the work of London’s artists, which in turn, helped expand the market for their work.

The cultural climate of London was (and continues to be) strongly influenced by Chambers and Curnoe, both of whom relied extensively on their own lives and day-to-day experiences as the subject matter for their art. In addition to being records of their own lives, their works were perceived by their circle of friends, art critics, curators, and academics as important documents of a particular time and place in Canadian history. This group of people saw their own lives and times reflected back at themselves, and

consequently the highly personal works of these two artists helped to foster a sense of collective identity among the group.

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Friesen, "The Evolving Meanings of Region in Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (September 2001): 531.

<sup>2</sup> Friesen breaks down the areas of specialization into a number of sub variants: environmentalists (who believe that societies are shaped by their physical environment), neoclassical economists (who contend that political and economic differences define regional communities), spatial macroeconomics (who examine regional underdevelopment—especially popular with respect to the Atlantic provinces), Marxists (who believe that capitalist development leads to unevenly distributed economic benefits), and urban studies (who focused on regional differences between the major urban areas of Canada). *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> John Warkentin, *A Regional Geography of Canada: Life, Land, and Space* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 2000), xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Larry McCann and Angus Gunn, *Heartland and Hinterland: A Regional Geography of Canada*, Third Edition (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Canada, 1998), xvii.

<sup>5</sup> J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History." *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (1954): 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," *International Journal* XXII (Autumn 1967): 663. The six books that Cook reviewed were Gérard Bergeron's *Le Canada français Après Deux Siècles de Patience*, Richard Jones' *Community in Crisis*, John T. Saywell's *Canadian Annual Review for 1966*, Donald Smiley's *The Canadian Political Nationality*, E.C. Manning's *Political Realignment*, and Mildred Schwartz's *Public Opinion and the Canadian Identity*.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," 663. Emphasis my own.

<sup>12</sup> Phillip A. Buckner, "'Limited Identities' and Canadian Historical Scholarship: An Atlantic Provinces Perspective," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 1988): 178.

Two years later Cook went on to claim that "[n]ationalism in Canada, as elsewhere is very often the doctrine of the discontented." Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), 190; (Originally published in 1971).

<sup>13</sup> National Museums of Canada, *After Applebaum-Hébert* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1984), preceding the table of contents. Quoted in Michael Bell, "Museums and Federal Cultural Policy," *Queen's Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 553.

<sup>14</sup> Cook, *Maple Leaf Forever*, 190.

<sup>15</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Regionalism Unmasked," *Acadiensis* 13 (Autumn 1983): 137.

<sup>16</sup> J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (March 1969): 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> William Westfall, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Summer 1980): 3.

Colin D. Howell believes that nationalism was in the ascendancy in 1970, especially in English Canada: "The nation was clearly at center stage heralded by the persuasive voices and pens of the dominant cultural producers across the country." At the same though, he claims, "there was an emerging sense that Canada was a land of regions, and there was a growing recognition that much of our historical writing had failed to give hinterland regions the attention they deserved." Colin D. Howell, "Development, Deconstruction and Region: A Personal Memoir," *Acadiensis* XXX, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 22.

<sup>25</sup> Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 3.

- <sup>26</sup> The first *Acadiensis* journal was begun by Isaac Allen Jack and was published between 1901 and 1908.
- <sup>27</sup> Phillip A. Buckner, "Acadiensis II," *Acadiensis* 1 (Autumn 1971): 3.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>29</sup> Clark's article was a review of Jay Bercuson's book *Canada and the Burden of Unity*. Lovell Clark, "Regionalism? Or Irrationalism?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13, no. 2 (1978-79): 119-24.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- At the time of Clark's essay, Canada was involved in debates around the repatriation of the Constitution (which occurred in 1982). Clark viewed the writings of supporters of regionalism as unreasonable attempts to alter the country's political structures. He dismissed their opinions, writing: "any valid grievances can be redressed through normal political processes and within the framework of the present Constitution." He went on to state: "[a]ny proposed changes should have to meet the test of good old-fashioned pragmatic grounds, not the aspirations of the provincial potentates who have stalked the western and eastern landscapes of recent years, or the airy theories of a handful of professors." *Ibid.*, 124
- <sup>32</sup> J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities—Ten Years Later," *Manitoba History* 1 (1980): 3.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Although Cook felt that McCann's book as a whole was "scholarly, informative, well-organized and occasionally even evocatively written," he criticized McCann for structuring his argument around the metropolitan-hinterland thesis of regionalism. Cook, "Regionalism Unmasked," 138.
- <sup>36</sup> Cook's thesis lacks consistency; although he wrote: "Why not call a region what it really is, a province," and dismissed the concept of regionalism in favour of a more formal political division of the country, in "Regionalism Unmasked," he continued to highlight the need for more local studies, particularly those that dealt with certain aspects of history: class, sex, family, and ethnicity. With the obvious omission of 'region', these divisions were remarkably similar to the concept of 'limited identities' that Cook had helped spawn in his earlier work—the same basic ideas that Careless had gone on to expound on in his earlier essay "'Limited Identities' in Canada" (1969). So while, on one hand, Cook stated that regionalism as a discrete area of study is a passé concept, the need for other more particular areas such as class, gender, etc. studies had not disappeared. *Ibid.*, 140-42.
- <sup>37</sup> Buckner, "'Limited Identities'" (1988), 180.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 190
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> Fittingly, the essay appeared in *Acadiensis*, the journal that he had revived almost thirty years previously. Phillip A. Buckner, "'Limited Identities' Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History," *Acadiensis* XXX, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 12.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> Buckner took this reasoning further to claim that ethnicity is not a fixed entity either; he claimed: "[I]n the end, ethnicity is self-determined, *Ibid.*, 12. 14.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> Buckner, "'Limited Identities'" (1988), 194.
- <sup>50</sup> Buckner, "'Limited Identities' Revisited" (2000), 14.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup> Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 4.
- <sup>53</sup> Brown cited in Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 5.
- <sup>54</sup> Berger paraphrased in *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 5.
- <sup>56</sup> Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 11.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Colin D. Howell also believes that scholars attempting to write Canadian history from regional perspectives, often only inverted the categories of 'nation' and 'region.' Howell, "Development, Deconstruction and Region," 22.

<sup>59</sup> Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 13.

<sup>60</sup> Articulating the 1980s credo of 'unity in diversity,' Westfall stated: "It might be that the genuinely Canadian dimension of our identities is not in either their regional or national component, but in the structure that can capture both a measure of pluralism and a degree of unity at the same time." Ibid., 14.

<sup>61</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), xxi.

Although Frye's theory predates Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' theory, I believe that he shares a basic belief with Anderson that identity (and by extension nationalism) is an imagined entity (a construction).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., xxii.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

This is the Laurentian thesis—the theory developed by Harold Innis, elaborated on by Donald Creighton, and supported by J.M.S. Careless.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., xxvi.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., xxx.

<sup>68</sup> It is interesting that Frye dismissed cultural nationalism as an 'empty gesture', whereas authors like John Hutchinson (*Cultural Nationalism*) claim that artists, poets, and intellectuals are among the most important figures in cultural nationalism.

<sup>69</sup> Frye, *Bush Garden*, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Linda Hutcheon, Introduction: "The Field Notes of a Public Critic," In Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1995), xvii.

<sup>71</sup> For example: David Alexander, "New Notions of Happiness: Nationalism, Regionalism and Atlantic Canada," in *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy*, Compiled by Eric W. Sager, Lewis R. Fischer and Stuart O. Pierson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Carl Berger, "Regionalism and Federalism: The Case of Canada [on the Prairie West], in *Imperialism, Nationalism and Regionalism In Canadian and Modern Indian History*, ed. Aparna Basu (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989); Margaret Conrad, "The Politics of Place: Regionalism and Community in Atlantic Canada," in *The Constitutional Future of the Prairie and Atlantic Regions of Canada*, ed. James N. McCrorie and Martha L. MacDonald (Regina: University of Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1992); Gerald Friesen, "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea," in *Constitutional Future of the Prairie and Atlantic Regions*; James Overton, "A Newfoundland Culture?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 1988).

<sup>72</sup> Virginia Nixon, "The Concept of Regionalism in Canadian Art History," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 10, no. 1 (1978): 30-31.

<sup>73</sup> Comfert's article was published in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 25 (January 1948).

<sup>74</sup> Nixon, "Concept of Regionalism," 32.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Duval quoted in Ibid., 34.

<sup>77</sup> Nixon, "Concept of Regionalism," 35.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 38, 39.

<sup>80</sup> George Woodcock, "There are no Universal Landscapes," *artscanada* 35 (Oct./Nov. 1978): 37.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>84</sup> Chris Dewdney, "Oregionalism: Geocentrism and the Notion of Originality," *Provincial Essays* 1, no. 1, (1984): 3-14.

The inaugural issue of *Provincial Essays* was edited by Jennifer Oille. The members of the editorial board were Stan Bevington, Greg Curnoe, Chris Dewdney, Oliver Girling, Jennifer Oille, Jeanne Randolphe, and Dennis Reid. The volume included the transcript of a discussion between Curnoe and Reid

that followed a reading of Dewdney's essay. Greg Curnoe and Dennis Reid, "A Conversation Following the Reading of Christopher Dewdney's 'Oregionalism: Geocentrism and the Notion of Originality.'" *Provincial Essays* 1, no. 1, (1984): 15-32.

<sup>85</sup> Dewdney, "Oregionalism," 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Dewdney claims that American regionalism had less claim to the term because it was not intrinsically linked to the locale in the way London 'oregionalism' was. *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

Dewdney's evocation of Jung's archetype's implied that there was something inherent (or essential) in the region and its inhabitants that was shared in their collective unconscious.

<sup>100</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Region," Unpublished transcript for lecture at "Regionalism Conference," University of Western Ontario, 1 October, 1983. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Box 2, 1983 Writing, 5.

<sup>101</sup> Curnoe, "Region," 1.

<sup>102</sup> Greg Curnoe, Typescript on the history of Region Gallery submitted to the Canada Council, March 1963. Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. *Region Magazine* files.

<sup>103</sup> Greg Curnoe, Untitled poem, 15 January, *Region* 1 (January-March 1961): Unpaginated. London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>104</sup> Masthead, *Region* 2 (January 1962): 1. London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>105</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Statement," *Region* 2 (January 1962): 5. London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>106</sup> This cover was from the same year that Curnoe produced his collage *Going Home, Coming Back*. The collage featured two bus transfers—one from the Oxford South route and the other from the Richmond North route. Below each transfers he detailed whether it was "GOING HOME" or "COMING BACK" from his parent's home to his Richmond Street studio (a trip he took frequently). Bus transfers also appeared in other early collages such as *Richmond St. Papers* (1961) and *Cherry Pop VII* (1964).

<sup>107</sup> *Region* 4 (September 1962). London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>108</sup> Curnoe, History of Region Gallery, *Region*.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Untitled article on excursions with Brian Dibb, *Region* 6 (November 1963). London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>113</sup> Jack Chambers, "Fragment," Spring 1963, *Region* 7 (June 1964). London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>114</sup> *Region* 8 (June 1966). London Room Archives. London Public Library.

<sup>115</sup> When Patterson died the following year Curnoe and Jean-Paul Morisset travelled to his farm to help evaluate the sculpture. While they were there, Curnoe made a cassette recording their conversation with Patterson's niece. This was one of a series of 84 audio cassettes Curnoe made over the years. In 1970 the National Gallery of Canada acquired Patterson's sculpture. Audiocassette No. 3, 14 August 1968. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Series 23, audio cassettes.

<sup>116</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Notes—On the North Wall," March 1967, Handwritten text for *Region* 9 (Spring 1967). Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. 1967 Writing.

- <sup>117</sup> *Region 10* was published by REGION Magazine, 38 Weston St. (Curnoe's home and studio), and printed at 202 King St. third floor (1968), at the Thielsen Art Galleries and at the Atlas Press (both 1990). Masthead, *Region 10* (1990). London Room Archives. London Public Library
- <sup>118</sup> Eddie refers to Eddie Assaf, the manager of the York Hotel for three decades.
- <sup>119</sup> Greg Curnoe, "On Region and Regionalism," Handwritten text (Originally written c. 1968), *Region 10* (1990). London Room Archives. London Public Library.
- <sup>120</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Region=Regionalism," *The University of Western Ontario Gazette*, 15 March 1963.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>123</sup> "Artists Find a 'Home From Home' At London's Latest Art Gallery," *The London Free Press*, 19 January 1963.
- <sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>127</sup> Greg Curnoe, *Greg Curnoe: New Works* (Toronto: Isaacs Gallery, 15 November-5 December 1966), 1.
- <sup>128</sup> "The Weekly Interview: Greg Curnoe: Part II," *London Weekly* (23 July 1968): 14.
- <sup>129</sup> "Greg Curnoe: Part II," 14.
- <sup>130</sup> The wording was changed slightly from "am anti-american" to "an anti-American." Greg Curnoe quoted in *Canada 101*, Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh College of Art ([Ottawa]: The Canada Council, 1968).
- <sup>131</sup> David Cohen, "For Greg Curnoe This Is What Happiness Is...." *The Vancouver Province*, 1 March 1969.
- <sup>132</sup> David Thompson, "A Canadian Scene," *The Canada Council Collection: A Travelling Exhibition of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa 1969*. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), 120-21.
- <sup>133</sup> David Thompson, "A Canadian Scene: 2," *Studio International* 176, no. 905 (November 1968): 183, 185.
- <sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>135</sup> David Thompson, "A Canadian Scene: 3," *Studio International* 176, no. 906 (December 1968): 244.
- <sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>138</sup> Kay Kritzwiser, "Controversial or not, Curnoe Works Bound for Brazil," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 8 February 1969.
- <sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>141</sup> Hale, Barrie, "Stick Around and Work with What's Around You," *Saturday Night* 85, no. 1 (January 1970): 29.
- <sup>142</sup> Dingman, Elizabeth, "The Art World Beats a Path to London, Ont., Mousetrap," *The Telegram*, 28 November 1970.
- <sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>146</sup> Glen Curnoe, for many years the librarian of the London Room Archives at the London Public Library, published a pictorial history of the city of London in 1973. The book featured a number of photographs of noteworthy locations, objects and events in the London's history. The images held significance to the Curnoe family; there were several historical family photographs such as the 1900 wedding photograph of their Curnoe grandparents, the 1917 "Model T" Ford owned by Grandfather Curnoe, and a Grade 6-7 school photograph of their father Gordon Curnoe. There were also illustrations of locally made products or businesses—there was a photo of an Alfred Tune soda pop bottle, some milk bottles from local dairies, some Perrin's Candy tins, and the cover of an issue of *The Farmer's Advocate* where Gordon Curnoe worked. There was also a photograph of a 1951 Brill bus taken by Greg Curnoe. W. Glen Curnoe, *Around London 1900-1950: A Picture History* (London: W. Glen Curnoe, 1973).
- In 1976 Glen Curnoe published a second book on local history—this time on the London and Port Stanley Railway (L&PS). The L&PS operated from 1915 until 1 January 1966 when it was taken over by the Canadian National Railways (CNR). Glen and Greg's paternal grandfather worked for the railway as a painter, and several generations of the Curnoe family took the railway to the popular lake resort of Port

Stanley on Lake Erie during the summers. W. Glen Curnoe, *The London and Port Stanley Railway, 1915-1965: A Picture History* (London: W. Glen Curnoe, 1976).

<sup>147</sup> "Curnoe Assails Urban Renewal," *The London Free Press*, 12 November 1968.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> The anonymous newspaper reporter wrote: "Mr. Fuller found his discussions cut short by the squealings of the Nihilist Spasm Band..." Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Novack's was opened in 1939 by Harry Novak. The original sign painter inserted a "c" into Novak's name, and the store has gone by the name Novack's ever since.

<http://www.novacks.com/article/default.asp?aid=2>. 14 July 2006.

<sup>151</sup> Greg Curnoe. "Growth and Progress—2 Destructive Myths." Unpublished writing. Greg Curnoe fonds. E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, AGO. Journals 1970.

Curnoe's sentiments echoed those of the urbanist Jane Jacobs who condemned American urban renewal policies in the United States in her famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs believed that urban renewal policies led to the destruction of small and diverse communities which were necessary for the health of cities. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

<sup>152</sup> Curnoe, "Growth and Progress."

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, Eng.: The MIT Press, 1972), 40.

<sup>155</sup> Curnoe later went on to become one of the organizers of the "Save London" movement in the 1990s, which lobbied to prevent further urban renewal.

<sup>156</sup> Kamouraska, Quebec was the "humble" birthplace of Pierre Théberge.

<sup>157</sup> Greg Curnoe and Pierre Théberge, eds., "The St. Éleuthère Manifesto," *The Review of the Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects of Culture in Canada* 1, no. 1 (December 1974).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Chambers wrote: "There were certainly more possibilities to survive in Canada than there were for a Canadian in Spain." Jack Chambers, *Jack Chambers, 1931-1978* (London, Ont.: Nancy Poole's Studio, 1978), 93.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Jack Chambers quoted in Ross Woodman, *Chambers: John Chambers Interviewed by Ross G. Woodman* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1967), 7.

<sup>164</sup> Ross Woodman, "London (Ont.): A New Regionalism," *artscanada* 24, nos. 8/9, issues nos. 111/112 (August/September, 1967) [Pamphlet]: unpaginated.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> The quote was from James Reaney's editorial for the June 1962 edition of *Alphabet* magazine. Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Curnoe, "Region," 9.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 1.

This is very much in keeping with Woodman's and his wife's interest in Jungian psychology.

<sup>174</sup> Curnoe, "Region," 2.

<sup>175</sup> Lord, Barry, "!"Discover Canada!" *Art in America* 55, no. 3 (May/June 1969): 105.

<sup>176</sup> Greg Curnoe interviewed in Bruce Kidd and Greg Curnoe, "Interviews with Canadian Artists: Bruce Kidd Interviews Greg Curnoe," *The Canadian Forum* 53, no. 632 (August 1973): 28.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 100. See for example, *Middle I* (1966), *3 Pages in Time* (1966), and *Tap* (1967)

<sup>178</sup> Jack Chambers quoted in Woodman, *Chambers* (1967), 15.

<sup>179</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 102.

<sup>180</sup> Chambers never returned the book to the London Public Library and it presently rests in his archive at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

- <sup>181</sup> Woodman, "A New Regionalism." (The August/September 1967 issue of *artscanada* consisted of a number of parts in an envelope. It is likely that the format was influenced by *Region 4* (September 1962) which also consisted of loose items in an envelope.)
- Wordsworth, in his famous poem "Tintern Abbey" wrote about the tranquil restorative powers of nature. He penned "Tintern Abbey" during an unhappy stay in France "at the height of the French Revolution." "William Wordsworth," in *Poetry in English: An Anthology*, ed. M.L. Rosenthal (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 504.
- <sup>182</sup> Woodman, "A New Regionalism," Ibid.
- <sup>183</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 120.
- <sup>184</sup> Linda Nochlin "The New Realists," in *Realism Now* (Poughkeepsie, New York: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1968), 9.
- <sup>185</sup> Ibid., 10.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid., 11
- <sup>187</sup> Ibid., 11.
- <sup>188</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 128.
- <sup>189</sup> Ibid., 148.
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>191</sup> Walter Klepac, "The London Realists," *The Guerilla*, 20 August 1971.
- <sup>192</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>193</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>194</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>195</sup> Robert Fulford, "World of Art: Anarchy," *The Toronto Star*, 23 December 1961.
- <sup>196</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>197</sup> Robert Fulford, "Pop Art and Museum Culture," *The Tamarack Review* 30 (Winter 1964): 37.
- <sup>198</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>199</sup> Arnold Rockman, "Superman Comes to the Art Gallery," *Canadian Art* 21, no. 1, issue no. 89 (January/February 1964): 19.
- <sup>200</sup> Some of the artists in the Jerrold Morris exhibition were Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Ray Lichtenstein, Tom Wesselmann and Wayne Thiebaud. Rockman, "Superman," 18.
- <sup>201</sup> Elizabeth Kilbourn, "Art and Artists: A Look at This Season," *The Toronto Daily Star*. 21 December 1963.
- <sup>202</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>203</sup> Harry Malcolmson, "Art and Artists," *The Telegram* (Toronto), 26 September 1964).
- <sup>204</sup> Lenore Crawford, "Galleries Like Works of Londoner," *The London Free Press*, 30 September, 1964.
- <sup>205</sup> Greg Curnoe in *R34*. Jack Chambers. *R34* (16 mm, colour, sound, 30 minutes) 1967.
- <sup>206</sup> Lucy Lippard, "Introduction," *Pop Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 11.
- <sup>207</sup> Lippard, *Pop Art*, 194.
- <sup>208</sup> Paul Russell, "Paul Russell on Art: Kiki and Greg: Pop Art," *The Varsity* (University of Toronto) (September 1964): 6.
- <sup>209</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>210</sup> Curnoe, *R34*.
- <sup>211</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>212</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 238
- <sup>213</sup> Pierre Nora. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory: 7.
- <sup>214</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>215</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>216</sup> Ibid., 8.
- <sup>217</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>218</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>219</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>220</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>221</sup> Ibid., 9.
- <sup>222</sup> Ibid., 8.
- <sup>223</sup> Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country*, 194.

- <sup>224</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>225</sup> B.S. Benjamin, "Remembering," *Mind*, New Series 65, no. 259 (July 1956): 312.
- <sup>226</sup> Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country*, 197.
- <sup>227</sup> Halbwachs, "Localization of Memory," *On Collective Memory*, 53.
- <sup>228</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13.
- <sup>229</sup> Ibid., 14.
- <sup>230</sup> Ibid., 13.
- <sup>231</sup> Ibid., 13-14.
- <sup>232</sup> Ibid., 14.
- <sup>233</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting," *Illuminations*, ed. and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1979), 60.
- <sup>234</sup> Beata Frydryczak, "Walter Benjamin's Idea of Collecting as a Postmodern Way of Participation in Culture," *Información Filosófica* 2, no. 2 (2003): 180.
- <sup>235</sup> Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," 63.
- <sup>236</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>237</sup> Ibid., 63, 67.
- <sup>238</sup> Ibid., 61, 62.
- <sup>239</sup> Frydryczak, "Walter Benjamin's Idea," 183.
- <sup>240</sup> Ibid., 184.
- <sup>241</sup> Anthony Kiendl, "Toward a New Understanding of Collecting," in *Obsession, Compulsion, Collection: On Objects, Display Culture, and Interpretation*, ed. Anthony Kiendl (Banff: The Banff Centre Press, 2004), 14.
- It is noteworthy that the original meaning of curator was a person who looked after the insane.
- <sup>242</sup> Curnoe recollected that Don Vincent taught Chambers how to use his borrowed camera; Vincent also helped Chambers purchase his first camera. Greg Curnoe, "Personal Statements," Originally presented at the Toronto International Experimental Film Congress, 28 May 1989, in Kathryn Elder, ed., *The Films of Jack Chambers* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 184.
- <sup>243</sup> Chambers quoted in Joan Lowndes, "Just a Kind of Relaxation," *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 October 1970.
- <sup>244</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>245</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>246</sup> Chambers identified *Mosaic* as his first film, presumably because he began working on it in 1964 (although it was not finished until 1966). The film title index in Kathryn Elder's *The Films of Jack Chambers* lists *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965) as his first film. *Little Red Riding Hood*, a collaboration with Curnoe and James Reaney, was a 25 minute long, 16mm colour film featuring puppets enacting the fairy tale. Curnoe helped make the puppets for the production. Kathryn Elder, ed., *The Films of Jack Chambers* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 222.
- <sup>247</sup> Jack Chambers, Video cover notes, *Mosaic*, 1964.
- <sup>248</sup> Curnoe, "Personal Statements," *Films of Jack Chambers*, 184.
- <sup>249</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>250</sup> For a more detailed description of the images used in the film see Woodman, "Jack Chambers as Film-Maker," 22-23.
- <sup>251</sup> Ibid., 23.
- <sup>252</sup> Kathryn Elder, "Introduction," in Kathryn Elder, ed. *The Films of Jack Chambers* (Toronto: Cinematheque Ontario, 2002), 4.
- <sup>253</sup> Barrie Hale, "Chambers: Loss of Wonder," *The Telegram* (Toronto), 7 October 1967.
- <sup>254</sup> Greg Curnoe in *R34*.
- <sup>255</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 105.
- <sup>256</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>257</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>258</sup> *Lust for Life* was Vincente Minnelli's 1956 film adaptation of Irving Stone's 1939 biography of Vincent Van Gogh.
- <sup>259</sup> Bernadette Andrews, "Portrait of the Artist as a Winner," *The Telegram* (Toronto), 30 November 1968.
- <sup>260</sup> Andrews, "Portrait."
- <sup>261</sup> Lowndes, "Kind of Relaxation."

- <sup>262</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>263</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>264</sup> Chris Kennedy, "The Films of Jack Chambers," *LIFT* 22, no. 6 (November/December 2002): 14.
- <sup>265</sup> Andrews, "Portrait."
- <sup>266</sup> Lowndes, "Kind of Relaxation."
- <sup>267</sup> Jack Chambers, quoted in *Jack Chambers: A Retrospective* (Vancouver and Toronto: Vancouver Art Gallery/Art Gallery of Ontario, 1970), unpaginated.
- <sup>268</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>269</sup> Walter Klepac, "Jack Chambers—Yves Gaucher." *Guerilla* (Toronto), 3 May 1972.
- <sup>270</sup> Curnoe's parents' moved into 75 Langarth Street in 1936. The house was built for them by his maternal grandfather, William Porter as a wedding present for the couple. They subsequently raised their three children in the house which was expanded with a second storey in 1949. Nellie Curnoe continued to live in the house until her death in November 1999.
- <sup>271</sup> Greg Curnoe, "From Journals Written on the CNR on the Way to Toronto...." in Ross Mendes, "The Language of the Eyes—Windows and Mirrors," *artscanada* 26, no. 5, issue no.136/137 (October 1969): 25.
- <sup>272</sup> Curnoe, "Journals Written on the CNR," 25.
- <sup>273</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>274</sup> Greg Curnoe, *Greg Curnoe: Some Lettered Works, 1961-1969* (London: London Art Gallery, 1975), 1.
- <sup>275</sup> Ibid.  
Curnoe worked for the City of London's Surveys Department from May-August 1960 and May-August 1961.
- <sup>276</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>277</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>278</sup> Ibid., 2.
- <sup>279</sup> Ibid., 3.
- <sup>280</sup> Cézanne painted Montagne Sainte-Victoire over 80 times. Curnoe may have identified with Cézanne, an artist who was isolated from Paris, which, at the time was the centre of the French world.
- <sup>281</sup> Curnoe quoted in Merike Weiler, "London: An Interview with Greg Curnoe Viewing What Comes Naturally," *Artmagazine* 8, no. 33 (May-June 1977): 12.
- <sup>282</sup> Curnoe, "Journals Written on the CNR," 25.
- <sup>283</sup> The fan-shaped piece of plywood was leftover from his pyramidal shaped construction *Kamikaze* from 1967-68. Pierre Théberge, *Canada: Greg Curnoe XXXVII Biennale di Venezia 1976* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976), 145.
- <sup>284</sup> Pierre Théberge notes that Curnoe broke a pane of glass especially during the recording. Théberge, *Greg Curnoe* (1976), 151.
- <sup>285</sup> Curnoe quoted in Robert McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," *Descant* 9, nos. 1-2 (1978) issue nos. 20-21: 217.
- <sup>286</sup> Ibid., 149.
- <sup>287</sup> Jack Chambers, "John Chambers" in Mendes, "The Language of the Eyes," 25.
- <sup>288</sup> For a variety of interpretations of *The Hart of London* see: Stan Brakhage, "*The Hart of London: A Document of the City*"; Avis Lang, "*The Hart of London: A Film by Jack Chambers*"; Fred Camper, "*The Hart of London: Jack Chambers' Absolute Film*"; Bart Testa, "Chambers' Epic: *The Hart of London*, History's Protagonist"; and Peter Tscherkassky, "At the Heart of London: Jack Chambers' *The Hart of London*," in Elder, *Films of Jack Chambers*.
- <sup>289</sup> Curnoe, in Elder, *Films of Jack Chambers*, 184.
- <sup>290</sup> Bill Webster, "Underground Film on London Planned," *London Free Press*. 20 January 1968.
- <sup>291</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>292</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>293</sup> Chambers, *Jack Chambers*, 107.
- <sup>294</sup> Ibid., 108.
- <sup>295</sup> Jack Chambers interviewed by Avis Lang, 19 October 1972. Quoted in Lang, "*Hart of London*," *Films of Jack Chambers*, 130.
- <sup>296</sup> Camper, "*The Hart of London*," Ibid., 136.
- <sup>297</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>298</sup> Curnoe in Kidd and Curnoe, "Interviews with Canadian Artists," 23.

- <sup>299</sup> Curnoe in Kidd and Curnoe, "Interviews with Canadian Artists," 23.
- <sup>300</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>301</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>302</sup> Ibid., 28.
- <sup>303</sup> Curnoe quoted in McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," 209.
- <sup>304</sup> Ibid. 210.
- <sup>305</sup> Ibid., 211.
- <sup>306</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>307</sup> The quote was from Piccard's book "Between Earth and Sky" published in 1950. August Piccard along with his associate Paul Kipfer made the first manned balloon flight into the stratosphere on 27 May 1931. [www.centuryofflight.gov/essay/Dictionary/Piccard/D138.htm](http://www.centuryofflight.gov/essay/Dictionary/Piccard/D138.htm). 15 July 2006.
- <sup>308</sup> McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," 214.
- <sup>309</sup> Ibid., 221.
- <sup>310</sup> Chambers' work was also significantly smaller than Curnoe's—Curnoe's measures 243.8 x 487 cm while Chambers' measures 121.9 x 243.8 cm.
- <sup>311</sup> Curnoe quoted in McDonald, "Pictures at an Exhibition," 207.
- <sup>312</sup> Ibid., 204.
- <sup>313</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>314</sup> Ibid., 176.
- <sup>315</sup> Turner describes how the Ancient Greeks believed that melancholy resulted from the presence of black bile in the body. He notes that the Stoics believed melancholy to be "an occupational condition of the intellectual class." Brian S. Turner, "A Note on Nostalgia," *Theory, Culture & Society* (London, Newbury Park, Beverly Hills and New Delhi: SAGE, 1987) Vol. 4: 148.
- <sup>316</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>317</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>318</sup> Starobinski notes that Hofer's thesis coincides with the attempts by doctors of the time at rational inquiry through the classification and inventory of diseases. Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 54 (1966): 84.
- <sup>319</sup> Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 1.
- <sup>320</sup> Starobinski points out that Hofer, in an attempt to give more credence to his theory, gave the condition a Greek name. Starobinski, "Idea of Nostalgia," 85.
- <sup>321</sup> Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*. (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1989), 1; Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country*, 10.
- <sup>322</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>323</sup> Anthony Brandt. "A Short Natural History of Nostalgia." *Atlantic Monthly* 242, no. 6 (1978), 58.
- <sup>324</sup> Balzac quoted in Starobinski, "Idea of Nostalgia," 86.
- <sup>325</sup> Williams paraphrased in Suzanne Vromen, "The Ambiguity of Nostalgia," *Yivo Annual* 21 ("Going Home") (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993): 71-72.
- <sup>326</sup> Vromen, "Ambiguity of Nostalgia," 72.
- <sup>327</sup> Buckner, "Limited Identities" (1988), 193.
- <sup>328</sup> Vromen, "Ambiguity of Nostalgia," 77.
- <sup>329</sup> Ibid., 77.
- <sup>330</sup> Ibid., 79.
- <sup>331</sup> Davis believed that recent generations of Americans fit into "a symbolic span of approximately ten years. Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 111, 113.
- <sup>332</sup> Ibid., 52-56.
- <sup>333</sup> Ibid., 55.
- <sup>334</sup> Chase and Shaw, "Dimensions of Nostalgia," 4.
- <sup>335</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>336</sup> Vromen, "Ambiguity of Nostalgia," 76.
- <sup>337</sup> Chase and Shaw, "Dimensions of Nostalgia," 1, 5-6.
- <sup>338</sup> Ibid., 6.
- <sup>339</sup> Turner, "Note on Nostalgia," 149.

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- <sup>340</sup> See: Chase and Shaw, "Dimensions of Nostalgia"; Starobinski, "Idea of Nostalgia"; and, Vromen, "Ambiguity of Nostalgia."
- <sup>341</sup> Chase and Shaw. "Dimensions of Nostalgia," 1.
- <sup>342</sup> David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *The Geographical Review* LXV, no. 1 (January 1975): 8.
- <sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>344</sup> Thompson, "Canadian Scene: 3," 244.
- <sup>345</sup> Translation this author's. Jean Sutherland Boggs, "Préface," *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, 1968), unpaginated.
- <sup>346</sup> Dennis Reid, "Essay on John Chambers for the Catalogue "Canada art d'aujourd'hui" by Dennis Reid: John Chambers." Exhibition files. EX 1280. *Canada: art d'aujourd'hui*, NGC fonds, NGC Archives.
- <sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>349</sup> Quoted in Joan Lowndes, "Outside View of Art in Canada," *Vancouver Province*, 2 February 1968.
- <sup>350</sup> Harry Malcolmson, "Canada Art d'Aujourd'hui: A Courageous Show," *Toronto Star*, 3 August 1968.
- <sup>351</sup> Lowenthal quotes Bevis Hillier's *The Style of the Century: 1900-1980* (London: The Herbert Press, 1983), 216. Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, 19.
- <sup>352</sup> Elizabeth Kilbourn and Frank Newfeld, editorial contributors, paintings; text, Ken Lefolli; research, William Kilbourn (et al), *Great Canadian Painting: A Century of Art* (Toronto: Canadian Centennial Pub. Co., 1966), 65.

## Chapter 12. Conclusion

*The concepts of nation and culture are inseparable. If you talk about nation you talk about culture.*

—Frantz Fanon, quoted in Greg Curnoe, “This is a Mixture, Not a Solution.”

In the 1960s and 1970s the city of London, Ontario gained a reputation as one of the most important arts scenes in the country. The activity of those years is still considered significant in Canadian art history. How did a small, innately conservative city in south-western Ontario come to be recognized as one of the most exciting centres of artistic activity in the country? What part did Jack Chambers and Greg Curnoe play in establishing the city’s reputation as a cultural hotspot, and what were the larger effects of their efforts? The purpose of this dissertation has been to provide some of the answers to these questions.

I believe that the city’s reputation is due to the constellation of a number of historical, political and social events centred on a group of strong individuals. At the core of this group were Chambers and Curnoe. The two artists were the product of a particular time and place, and a set of personal circumstances. While the bulk of this dissertation deals with the adult lives of the artists, their formative years were extremely influential. Born in the 1930s and raised in the small city of London, the two artists enjoyed happy childhoods within their extended families. Adventurous and curious, both boys enjoyed the freedom their gender allowed them. While times were occasionally tough for both the

Chambers and the Curnoe families, their families' financial struggles instilled in both boys a strong work ethic and a lifelong preoccupation with earning a living.

Both boys were fortunate to encounter extraordinary teachers and mentors during their high school years. Selwyn Dewdney nurtured Chambers' talent and, ultimately, inspired the youth's decision to become an artist. Dewdney also encouraged the youth to attend H.B. Beal Technical School where he met 'Mackie' Cryderman and Herb Ariss. Chambers' exposure to art suddenly made school relevant for him, and he particularly enjoyed the disciplined approach to art that Ariss promoted. Ariss had an equally profound impact on Curnoe, when he attended Beal Tech seven years later. Curnoe, however, was less impressed by Ariss' disciplinary approach than he was by the informal way in which students and teachers interacted.

During the 1950s it was standard practice for anyone wishing to pursue a career as an artist to enrol in an art school or academy. Art schools of the period generally promoted a traditional curriculum that stressed European art history and an academic training. At the time London did not have any facilities for art education past the high school level. This meant both Chambers and Curnoe had to leave home in search of artistic training. The paths they chose to follow were quite different: Chambers' quest eventually led him to Europe, while Curnoe chose to move to Toronto. The effect their experiences at art school had on both artists was also different. Although Chambers appreciated the rigour and discipline of his academic training in Spain, Curnoe felt stifled by his teachers at the Ontario College of Art. Despite the different experiences the two men had at art school, their years away from London shared some similarities. Each young man set off in a heroic journey in search of knowledge, each encountered people

and experiences along the way that proved important, and each returned to London a mature adult determined to make a living as an artist.

The decision of both men to return to their birth city was extremely significant. By choosing to live and work as self-supporting artists in London, rather than in one of the large centres of art, they proclaimed their belief that the city's cultural production was worthwhile. Their actions inspired other artists to follow a similar path, and the two men rapidly formed the hub of one of the most vibrant creative communities in the country. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, while they both appreciated the security the city offered, they also rebelled against its conservative strictures.

During the 1960s a distinctive mythology developed around contemporary Canadian artists. Nurtured by several decades of action by dedicated arts' advocates, and supported by ideas of nationhood, the notion that Canadian culture was unique flourished as the country prepared to celebrate its centennial year. Central to the promotion of Canadian nationhood were artists, who were considered to be responsible for interpreting and disseminating Canadian stories and traditions (a view supported and encouraged by the 'art world'). The stories and traditions they promoted were not indigenous or innate to the country, nor were they necessarily populist. As the modernist Marxist historian E.J. Hobsbawm points out, national traditions are often invented by the political élites to serve their own ends. Benedict Anderson goes further to claim that nations must be understood as styles of imagining, not as intellectual systems.

Even if nationhood is invented by the political élites or imagined, the fact that many Canadians in the 1960s and 1970s subscribed to the idea that the country had a distinctive mythology is undeniable. What were some of the factors behind the desire of

Canadians to believe in a national identity? Ethno-symbolists like John A. Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith agree with Hobsbawm that nationalism is an invention, but they claim the origins of nations arise from older ethnic ties. Armstrong believes that myths, symbols, and communication—or ‘collective memories’ create ethnic consciousness, which in turn, contribute to a sense of nationhood. Smith agrees, and contends that rituals and ceremonies form the basis of national identity formation.

As Daniel Francis points out, myths play an important role in establishing and maintaining a national identity under times of political, economic, or social duress. This was particularly relevant during the 1960s and 1970s when Canada was struggling to articulate a sense of national identity premised neither on the country’s colonial past nor on its relationship with the United States.

The questions of Canadian identity and the continued sovereignty of the country have preoccupied historians and other scholars since Confederation, and no clear consensus has been formed. Canada’s relationship with the United States has, and continues to be, difficult and contentious. Some individuals like Goldwin Smith believed that Canada would be better off (at least economically) becoming part of the United States, others like John MacCormac were opposed to a union with the United States. (Various other impediments to Canadian unity have been put forth over the years: the vast size of the country is seen as divisive, as is the traditionally understood French-English origins of the nation.) During the 1960s and 1970s debates over Canadian sovereignty raged. Concerns over both the cultural and economic domination by the United States were voiced. These concerns were given voice by people like the historian W.L. Morton who urged Canadians to develop a clearer sense of identity if they wished

to remain an independent nation. George Parkin Grant was also concerned over Canada's increasing dependence on the United States, and his influential book *Lament for a Nation* was widely read. The economist Walter Gordon warned that the United States' desire for power and profit posed a very real threat to Canadian sovereignty if the country failed to regain control over their economy. Left wing academics like Ian Lumsden, Philip Resnick, John W. Warnock, Robin Matthews, James Steel and Gail Dexter expressed concern over the social, political, cultural, and economic influence the United States exerted over Canada and called for policies and practices to limit the effects.

There were other concerns in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only was Canada trying to redefine herself as a nation, and contending with the threat of domination from the United States, but also, increasing tensions between French and English Canada were coming to a head. Calls for recognition by the country's Aboriginal groups, immigrant populations and women's groups also needed to be addressed. Chambers and Curnoe lived and worked in tumultuous times, and, as artists, they responded to this.

As we have seen, the artist plays an important role in nation building. John Hutchinson claims, by articulating and disseminating myths, humanist intellectuals and the secular intelligentsia play an important part in redefining or regenerating national communities. The idea that high culture could help foster a sense of national identity was one Canadian artists and intellectuals had been promoting since the 1920s when the intellectual élite formed organizations (or 'public spheres') to promote the arts. The role of the artist continued to be a topic of interest, particularly at the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists. As discussed in Chapter 3, the issues debated at the Kingston Conference had a lasting impact on the Canadian art establishment. Spurred by

the debates and discussions of the Conference, in the following years, artists began to advocate for increased federal funding for the arts. The 1949-1951 Massey Commission was pivotal in achieving this goal, and, in 1957, the Canada Council for the Arts was established upon the recommendation of the Commission.

Even though there were social and political upheavals during the 1960s and 1970s, Chambers and Curnoe were fortunate to live in the time they did. When the two men returned to London at the beginning of the 1960s, many of the mechanisms for change and success were already in place. Not only was the myth of the artist as a visionary genius through whom culture was disseminated to the masses established, but changing social and economic conditions favoured their career choice. Expanded definitions of what constituted 'art' allowed for more flexibility and variety in their work. Thanks partly to the lucrative art market in the United States, the establishment of commercial Canadian galleries specializing in contemporary art exposed their work to collectors. Importantly, the rising demographic of young people, and the increasing tendency for these youth to question authority, helped young artists to mount successful challenges toward the collecting and exhibition policies of public art galleries. Governing all of this were the political conditions of the country: Canada was ripe for change, and receptive to the notion of a unique culture. Who better to provide evidence of this than Canadian artists?

Since antiquity, a distinctive mythology has surrounded artists. Although, as the Wittkowers pointed out, the myth of the artist shifts according to the historical, social, and economic conditions of a particular time, there are some constant themes. Unconventional behaviour, perseverance in the face of adversity, innate ability, and the

ability to intuit more than ordinary people are generally believed to be the traits of a true artist. The process of mythmaking depends upon the repetition of judiciously chosen facts, episodes, and anecdotes about the artist. During the 1960s, rebellious behaviour became one of the hallmarks of the artist. Although they were markedly different personalities, both Chambers and Curnoe balked against the strictures of the art establishment, and their outspokenness and activism became part of their personae. As I have demonstrated, a wide cast of characters—the ‘art world’—disseminate these ideas to the public, benefiting not only the artist, but also those who promoted them.

At the vanguard of these efforts were newspaper arts reporters and critics who played a key part in developing and publicizing the personae of Chambers and Curnoe. While the artists benefited most obviously, the discovery and promotion of new and exciting artistic talent helped establish the reputation of reporters and critics. Equally important were the contributions of academics and curators, whose writings legitimized the work of the two artists. Art dealers and patrons also had a stake in the artists’ success. Dealers, most obviously, stood to gain financially, while patrons demonstrated they had superior taste and benevolence (the acquisition of art also implied a certain status).

The central figure in the art world is undeniably the artist, without whom none of the other players would be able to function. Through their tireless self-promotion, the artists themselves were largely responsible for developing and sustaining their own personae. Chambers’ persona centred on the notion that he was a solitary and private artist with unswerving dedication to his craft and formidable technical skill. Curnoe’s persona, on the other hand, focused on his gregarious and rebellious character, his insistence that art be relevant, and his ‘ordinary’ nature. Both men’s personae however,

included the notion that each artist possessed extraordinary perceptual powers. As I have demonstrated, arts reporters and critics, intellectuals, curators, dealers, and patrons were all influenced by the two artists' own views on these matters.

Chambers and Curnoe were at the heart of London's artistic scene in the 1960s and 1970s. Their varied involvement with a number of key events and activities over the two decades helped to foster a particularly strong sense of group identity among their peers. Under the influence of the two artists some significant changes took place in London's cultural milieu in this period: younger artists succeeded the conservative 'old guard', artists began to set up studios in the city and support themselves through their art, and co-operative galleries and alternative artist-run spaces were established. There were also several well-publicized events and exhibitions that brought the city's visual artists to the attention of the Canadian public. In addition to this, the formation of the Nihilist Party and its activities contributed to the sense of male camaraderie among London's young population, while the establishment of Canadian Artists' Representation radicalized the way in which living artists interacted with the country's public art galleries.

It was not just the actual occurrences or events that were significant, but the way in which the participants experienced, interpreted, and memorialized them as a group. Communal memories, in fact, play a very important part in establishing group identity. The shared memories, or, as Pierre Nora calls them, *lieux de mémoire*, encompass a variety of events and activities, which may be remembered or immortalized in equally varied ways by members of the group. However, at the centre of these *lieux de mémoire* were the constant figures of Chambers and Curnoe.

Upon their return to London, first Curnoe, and then Chambers, set up studios. Their example inspired other young artists and Curnoe's studio, in particular, became the social and artistic hub of activity in the city. Over the next decades artists and friends gathered at his various studios to discuss anything from sports and politics to music and art. Curnoe's studios formed an arena of debate for a subaltern counterpublic of London's young disenfranchised artists. Why were London's young artists feeling disenfranchised?

The prevalent belief among young artists in London in the 1960s was that the city's art establishment (by which they meant mainly the London Art Gallery and its director) had outdated collecting and exhibiting practices. Rebellious against what they considered to be the status quo, artists like Curnoe and Chambers were determined to change the manner in which the city's public gallery interacted with young, local artists. United in their opposition to the mainstream, and inspired by Curnoe's oppositional stance, by the middle of the decade London's young artists had pledged allegiance to Curnoe as the new "Mr. Art London."<sup>1</sup>

Under the leadership of Chambers and Curnoe, London's young artists set up a number of alternative exhibition spaces in the 1960s and 1970s. Curnoe's previous involvement with cooperative galleries in Toronto inspired him to co-found London's Region Gallery in 1962. Four years later, Curnoe and Chambers were among the founding members of the 20/20 Gallery. In 1968 Chambers founded the London Film Co-op, which helped with the distribution and screening of experimental films, and in 1973 Curnoe co-founded the Forest City Gallery. While some of these galleries were short-lived, they nevertheless contributed to a sense of solidarity in the face of authority among London's young set.

Ironically, a good part of the publicity generated around London was due to the efforts of curators from Canada's premier art institution. During the 1960s both Chambers and Curnoe came to the attention of young curators at the National Gallery of Canada, chief among them Pierre Théberge and Dennis Reid. Théberge's now legendary expedition to London resulted in *The Heart of London* exhibition in 1968. This exhibition, more than any other, raised London's profile in the Canadian art world and defined the city as a 'hip and happening' place.

In addition to being a centre of artistic activity in the 1960s, London became known for anarchy and activism. Again, the two artists were at the core of these activities, although in different ways. Curnoe was fun loving and highly social, and he indulged his irreverent sense of humour through his fraternal antics with the Nihilist Party of London and the Nihilist Spasm Band. Both of these loosely affiliated organizations became legendary in the artistic community. The anarchistic Nihilist Spasm Band was given official sanction when they were selected by Théberge as Canada's official musical entry at the Paris *Biennale des Jeunes* exhibition in 1969. Chambers was a much less sociable man than Curnoe, and his activism had a more serious purpose. As I have discussed in this dissertation, Chambers' involvement in the establishment of the Canadian Artists' Representation organization (and Curnoe's participation in the organization) had profound implications for the Canadian art world.

A strong climate of anti-Americanism existed during the 1960s and 1970s. Opposition to the Vietnam War and fear of cultural and economic domination by the United States manifested itself in all manner of protests and debates. Artists like Chambers and Curnoe felt compelled to express their opposition to various American

policies and actions in their artworks, their writings, and in their general behaviour. Curnoe became vehemently anti-American, took every opportunity to voice his opinions, and refused to exhibit in the United States (even going so far as to turn down the cover of *Time Magazine*). Chambers was less vocally opposed to the United States; however, he was motivated by his pity for the victims of the Vietnam War to make his anti-war film *Hybrid*. Both men protested the hiring of non-Canadians for curatorial and academic positions in Canadian institutions.

While there was a good deal of variety among the activities and events two artists were involved in, and the cast of characters was not constant, the many *lieux de mémoire* helped to form a communal consciousness and strong sense of collective identity among a group of artists and intellectuals in London (and beyond) during the 1960s and 1970s.

Important though they were, it was not simply assorted *lieux de mémoire* that helped bond London's cultural community together. A strong sense of pride was also engendered by what was seen as the region's unique cultural production. During the 1960s and 1970s the notion of regionalism took a position in the forefront of political, economic, and social debates. Posited by historians J.M.S. Careless and Ramsay Cook as an alternative way of writing Canadian history and articulating Canadian identity, the idea of regionalism became widespread by the early 1970s.

Regionalism is a difficult concept to define. It means different things to different disciplines, and can be seen as either a negative or a positive force. Regionalism is particularly troublesome with respect to Canadian art, and art historians have been wrestling with how to define it for decades. Some saw it in reference to American regionalism, while others saw it as relating to nationalism, or as simply a response to a

particular location. Despite its multitude of meanings, regionalism rapidly became the main way London's cultural production was understood. The idea that London was culturally unique was assiduously promoted by Curnoe who advocated the importance of preserving his regional culture from the time he returned to London in 1960. Curnoe expounded on the notion of regionalism at every opportunity, and persuaded critics and writers regionalism was *the* way to analyze the art of London. He also took pains to defend regionalism against accusations that it was backward or provincial.

Curnoe believed so strongly in the idea of London regionalism that he coined a new word for it—"Oregionalism." He supported the ideas of the literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye who claimed, "[c]ulture like wine, seems to need a specific locality...."<sup>2</sup> Curnoe decried the need for external artistic influences and affirmation. As far as artistic inspiration went, he believed "[y]ou either go to the source of the main influences or to the roots of your own experience."<sup>3</sup> Convinced that one need look no further than one's own backyard for inspiration, he embarked on activities such as the establishment of *Region* magazine in 1961 (followed by Region Gallery in 1962), and the collecting of locally produced pop bottles. This was not to say that Curnoe necessarily privileged his region over any other region in Canada. In fact, he and Pierre Théberge set up the Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects of Culture in Canada for the express purpose of preserving cultural distinctiveness in other parts of the country.

Curnoe associated himself very strongly with his native environment, and he took pains to ensure his artwork reflected his everyday experiences and local surroundings. As I have shown in this dissertation, a large number of his paintings deal with his immediate surroundings and day-to-day life. His films *Connexions* and *Sowesto* are also firmly

rooted in his region. Not surprisingly, Curnoe's interest in regionalism extended beyond his art practice. During the late 1960s the city of London started to undergo a program of urban renewal. Passionately attached to the city of his childhood, Curnoe advocated for the preservation of London's heritage buildings. This was a cause he would remain involved in for the next three decades (with limited success).

Although Curnoe is the artist most usually associated with regionalism, Chambers was also profoundly influenced by his region. Despite the fact that he could hardly wait to leave London as a young man, after eight years in Spain he returned with a newfound appreciation for the city. Chambers admitted that, while he loved Spain, he had never felt entirely comfortable in the country. When he returned to the city of his birth, his latent childhood memories awakened an interest in his family history. The nature of Chambers' engagement with his region was very different than Curnoe's. Whereas Curnoe's works were generally thought to be spontaneous and highly personal depictions of the here-and-now that were devoid of metaphorical content, Chambers' works, in particular his film *The Hart of London*, were considered to be metaphysical explorations of universal themes.

During the 1960s, the artists and their allies tirelessly promoted London regionalism. Arts critics and reporters, intellectuals, and curators jumped on the regional bandwagon, and regionalism became another tool for Canada to assert her sovereignty. It was generally believed that one of the hallmarks of an independent and mature nation was a fully developed indigenous style of art. Therefore, it was important to downplay any similarities between Chambers' and Curnoe's works and international art movements such as the New Realism and Pop art, and to stress their stylistic innovation. By using

their particular environment as their inspiration and subject matter, critics and writers believed Chambers and Curnoe were creating a new, distinctively Canadian art.

Scholars generally agree on the importance of memory in the formation of collective identity. As we have seen, there is often more emphasis placed on the importance of momentous or historic events than on everyday events. Over the years, the two men collected and archived a myriad of historical memories, which they incorporated into their works in the hope of preserving evidence of their culture. However, historical events and memories were not always the memories Chambers and Curnoe chose to immortalize. Consistent with the 1960s desire to 'get real', many of the memories Chambers and Curnoe included in their works were often mundane, highly personal, and immediate. By incorporating memories of the present into their artworks, the two artists produced lasting testimonies or relics of a particular time and place. These relics formed fragments of a 'memory atlas,' which strengthened the collective memory of their interpretive community.

A number of people have commented on the presence of nostalgia in Chambers' and Curnoe's work. This is not surprising, considering the fact that nostalgia tends to swell during times of sudden change or anxiety. There were many unsettling events in the 1960s and 1970s: the feminist revolution, racial tension, and the Vietnam War affected people worldwide. In Canada, the Quebec crisis, aboriginal demands for more autonomy and uneasiness over the increasing dominance of the United States also had an impact on many people. During the same time period, Chambers and Curnoe entered adulthood, were raising families, and had decided upon a financially uncertain career path. In addition, Chambers' diagnosis with leukaemia in 1969 heightened his sense of mortality

from that point onward. The nostalgic quality of many of their works makes perfect sense in light of these circumstances.

Despite these worries there was also the realization among London's young artists that what was happening culturally in their city was extraordinary. Never before had so many young artists and intellectuals interacted with such effect. This knowledge was accompanied, however, by the understanding that nothing stayed the same forever. In the immortal words of Bob Dylan, London's young people understood, "[t]he times they are a changin'."<sup>4</sup> Chambers' and Curnoe's friends shared their sense of nostalgia, and this helped to bind the generation of loosely affiliated individuals even more closely together.<sup>5</sup>

Chambers and Curnoe were at the centre of an exciting group of creative people in a particular place at an interesting moment in history. Through their personal connections, their activism, and their art, they absorbed information and experiences and immortalized them in their work. In doing so they acted as custodians of their culture and helped strengthen a sense of collective identity among London's artistic community. The importance of the two artists' contributions was not limited to the 1960s and 1970s, nor was it extinguished with their deaths. Their actions and works were, and continue to be understood within the interpretive community of their peers who saw their own lives and realities reflected back at themselves. Their memories of the present have become true memories of the past.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Urquhart quoted in Nancy Poole, *The Art of London 1830-1980* (London, Ont.: Blackpool Press, 1984), 131.

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi 1971), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Curnoe, "Ten Artists in Search of Canadian Art," *Canadian Art* 23, no. 1, issue #100 (January 1966): 64.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Dylan, *The Times they are a Changin'*, Recorded 24 October 1963 at Columbia Studios, New York, Released 1964, Columbia Records.

<sup>5</sup> Suzanne Vromen, "The Ambiguity of Nostalgia," *Yivo Annual* 21 ("Going Home") (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993): 72; See also: Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 111, 113.

## Appendix A: Selected Canada Council Funding<sup>1</sup>

### 1964-65

Chambers receives his first award from the Canada Council—an Arts Scholarship (Category 4b).

Vancouver Art Gallery purchases Chambers' painting *Olga Visiting Graham* with the help of a Special Purchase Award to Art Galleries.

### 1966-67

Chambers and Curnoe each receive Arts Bursaries “[f]or artists of exceptional promise to work or study freely in the earlier stages of their career.”

Canada Council Art Collection buys Chambers' print, *Multiple*, and Curnoe's painting.

Chambers receives an Individual Grant for \$64 to allow him to attend the opening of his exhibition in Montreal.

### 1967-68

Chambers receives an Award (to \$7,000), and a Grant for \$1,807 to complete his experimental film on Curnoe (*R34*).

Curnoe receives a Bursary (up to \$3,500).

The 20/20 Gallery in London receives the substantial amount of \$68,500.

### 1968-69

Curnoe receives a Bursary (up to \$3,500).

Chambers given a Travel Grant (amount unspecified).

The 20/20 Gallery receives \$3,500 for its exhibition schedule

Filmmaker Fraser E. Boa gets \$1,500 “to defray some of the expenses of making a film about Jack Chambers.”<sup>2</sup>

*Alphabet*, James Reaney's magazine, receives a grant of \$400.

### 1969-70

Curnoe receives a Bursary (up to \$3,500).

Chambers receives \$7,000 “to complete drawings and a sculpture.”<sup>3</sup>

The 20/20 Gallery receives two grants—an operating one for \$4,000, and one for \$1,124 “to enable Margaret Atwood, Bill Bissett, George Bowering, Victor Coleman, Eli Mandel and Alden Nowlan to give poetry readings.”<sup>4</sup>

### 1970-71

Curnoe is chosen by the Council to sit on the Visual Arts Bursaries Jury.

Curnoe receives an award (up to \$7,000) and a Short Term Grant (to \$1,350).

20/20 Gallery given \$100 for poetry readings by David McFadden and bp nichol.

Coach House Press receives \$850 to help publish *The Great Canadian Sonnet* (text by David McFadden, illustrations by Curnoe.).

Chambers does not receive any funding from the Council in 1970-71.

**1971-72**

The amount of funding for the Visual Arts rises slightly in 1971-72 to \$2,240,000.

The Canada Council provides \$5,432 in funding for the first annual meeting of the Canadian Artists Representation. They note that "the Council assisted in the creation of an organization that lost no time in coming to grips with many real problems of visual artists." The Canada Council predicts that "much more can be expected from C.A.R. in the future."<sup>5</sup>

**1972-73**

Funding to the visual arts dips again in 1972-73 to \$2,059,000 (although this does not include a \$1 million expenditure on the Art Bank.

Chambers selected as one of the regional jurors for the Visual Arts.

Curnoe is awarded a Senior Arts Grant and a Short Term Grant (amounts unspecified).

Both artists have work purchased by the Art Bank.

C.A.R. receives \$9,000.

The artists also benefit indirectly from the continuing support of the London Public Library and Art Museum, which regularly receives funding from the Canada Council for its activities. With the exception of 4 years, the LPLAM receives generous funding every year from 1957 until 1972/73 (the amounts reaches 12,000 in the latter instance).

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<sup>1</sup> The following information is taken from The Canada Council's Annual Reports from 1964-65 through 1972-73. These were the years that saw the Council's greatest financial support for Chambers and Curnoe.

<sup>2</sup> *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*. (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1968-69), 37, 38.

<sup>3</sup> *12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*. (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1969-70), 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

## Appendix B: Questions by Greg Curnoe<sup>1</sup>

1. Canadians are more and more concerned with America and less and less concerned with the state in which they live. Will this lead to Canada becoming a free geographical area where all things are possible except the expression of anti-American sentiments, an anarchist society except...?

2. My consciousness of regionalism is breaking down still further to my basic consciousness which is 75 Langarth St. E. and most recently 38 Weston St. And only after that: street, block, neighbourhood, city, township, country, province, dominion, world, solar system, cosmos, all of which become larger and more complicated. But because of mass media, I can sit in my house and an image of Egypt is on T.V., Cuba is on the radio, and Edinburgh is on the 'phone. Are we always in balance between the macrocosm and the microcosm?

3. Will the constant and accelerating addition of facts and connections to our cultures lead to Dr. Bucke's "Cosmic Consciousness"?

4. Why did Jack rent the second floor above Carlyle Trebilcock, Optometrists, in 1963?

5. The University of Western Ontario has recently purchased several manuscripts by John Milton for around \$250,000; at the same time urban renewal schemes are in effect which will replace the centre of London (which dates from around 1830-60) with parking lots and large office buildings. Can a sense of place survive the physical destruction of that place?

6. Can my culture survive the constant destruction of its parts in favour of a "better" (American, British) culture? Or is that what my culture is?

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Curnoe quoted in Dennis Reid. *Greg Curnoe Canada*. X Bienal São Paulo. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), 67.

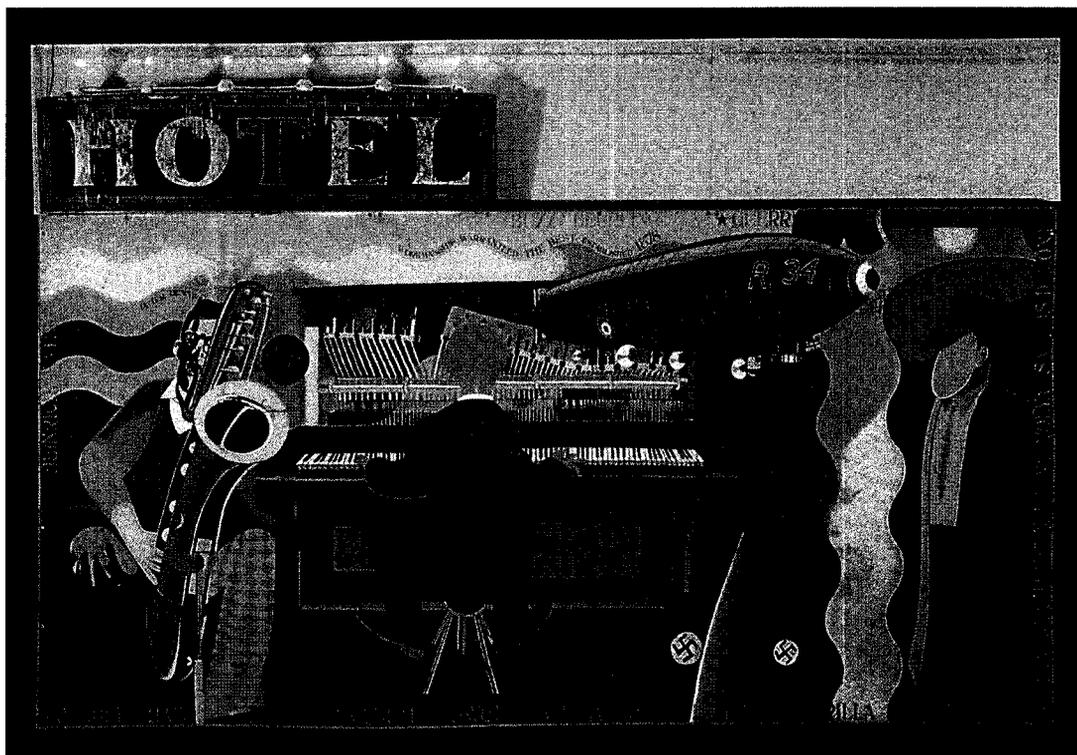


Fig. 1. Greg Curnoe. *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* (1965-66). Oil on plywood with hotel sign and incandescent lights. National Gallery of Canada.

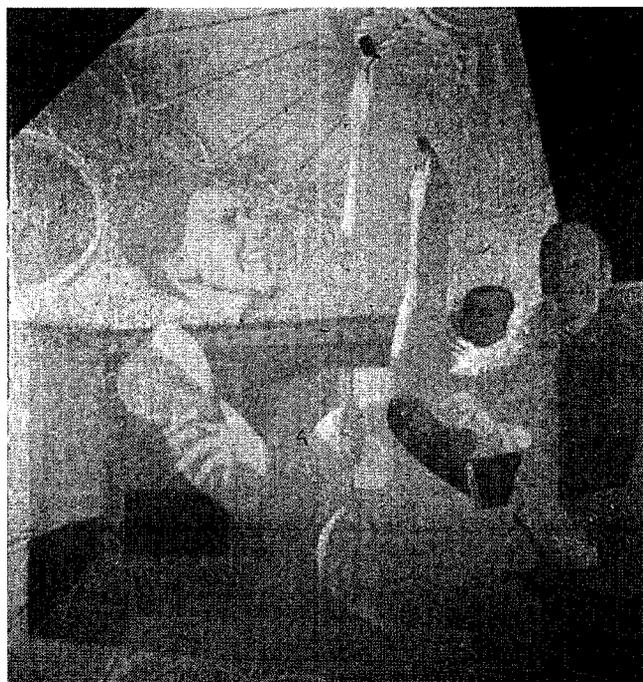


Fig. 2. Jack Chambers. *Antonio and Miguel in the U.S.A.* (1965). Oil on wood. Art Gallery of Ontario.

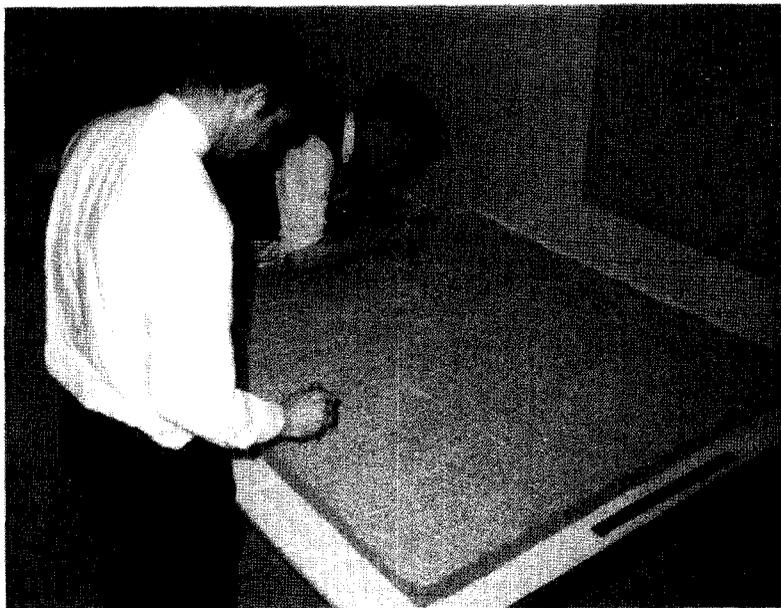


Fig. 3. Greg Curnoe decorating his winning cake design for *300 Years of Canadian Art* with the help of a pastry chef. National Gallery of Canada (1967).



Fig. 4. The ceremonial cutting of the cake at *300 Years of Canadian Art*. From left: Curnoe, Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh, Pierre Théberge and Jean Sutherland Boggs. Photograph by John Evans.



Fig. 5. Jack Chambers. *Lake Huron No. 1* (1970-71). Oil on wood. Private collection.



Fig. 6. Jack Chambers. *Sunday Morning, No. 2* (1968-69). Oil on wood. Private collection.

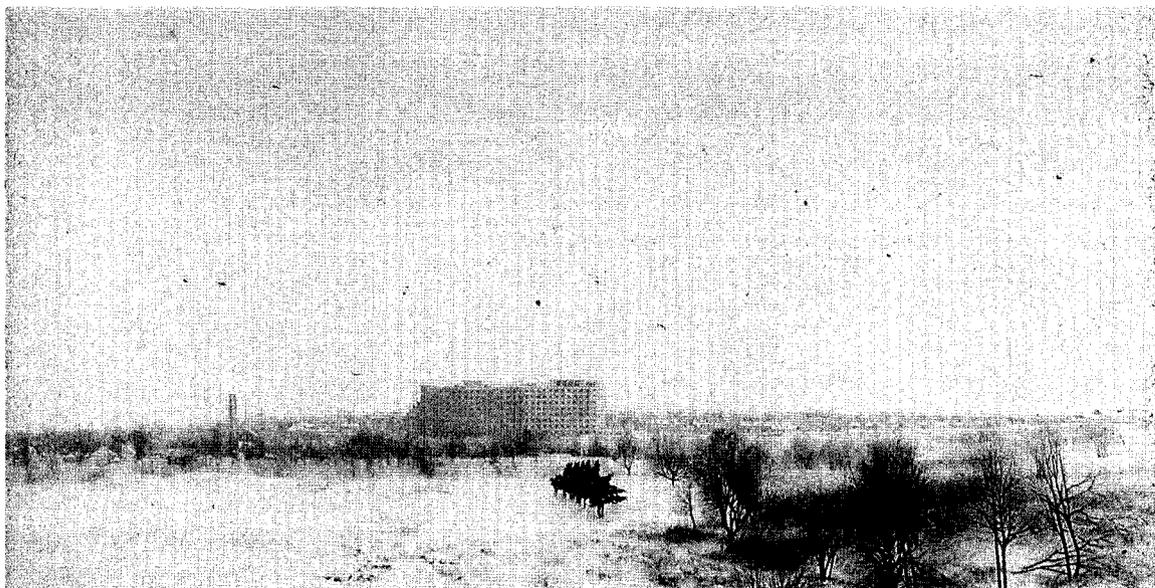


Fig. 7. Jack Chambers. *Victoria Hospital* (1969-70). Oil on wood. Private collection.

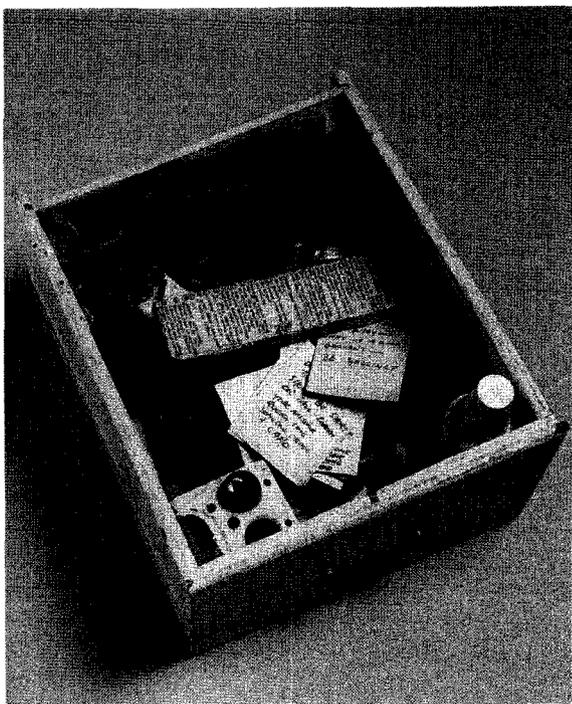


Fig. 8. Greg Curnoe. *Drawer Full of Stuff* (1961). Assemblage (found items in a drawer) on wood (painted wooden drawer). Art Gallery of Ontario.



Fig. 9. Neo-Dada exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery. January 1962. Photograph by Michel Lambeth.



Fig. 10. *Greg Curnoe*. Publicity shot for *The Celebration* 1962. Photographed by Michel Lambeth in 1961.

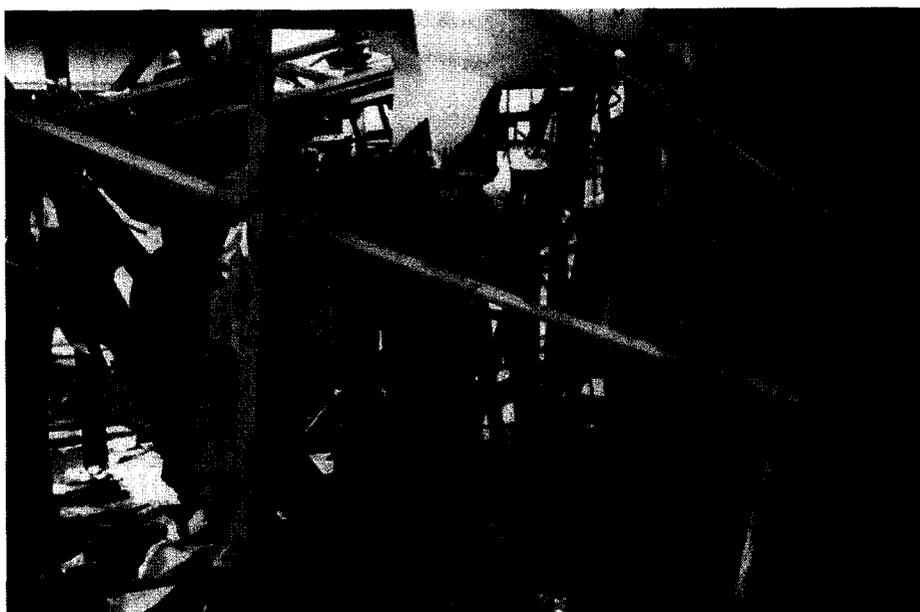


Fig. 11. *The Celebration*, London Public Library and Art Museum, 3 February 1962. Michael Snow (right) with two unknown performers. Photograph by Don Vincent.

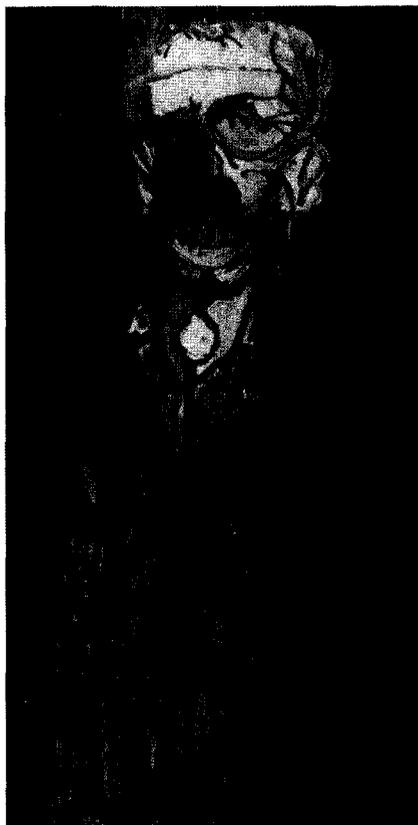


Fig. 12. Greg Curnoe. *Selfchildfool* (c. 1959). Oil and graphite on masonite. Art Gallery of Ontario

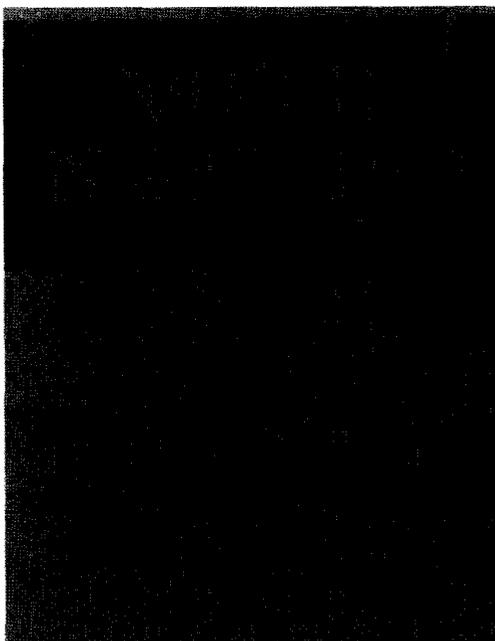


Fig. 13. Greg Curnoe. *Vote Nihilist, Destroy Your Ballot* (1963). Woodcut in black on red paper. Art Gallery of Ontario.

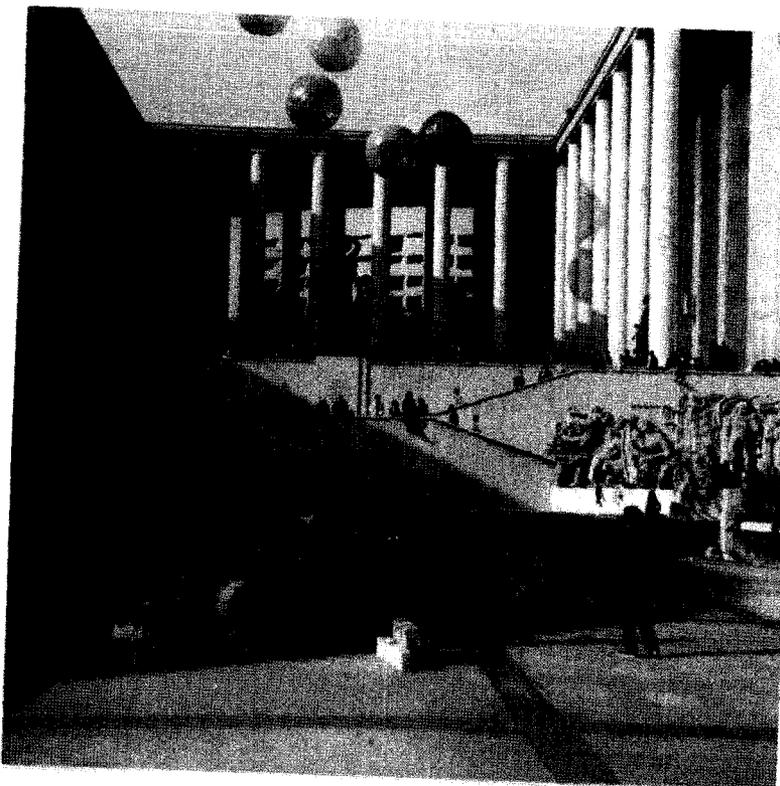


Fig. 14. *Biennale des Jeunes*, Paris, 1969. Nihilist Spasm Band playing in the basin of the Musée National d'Art Moderne.



Fig. 15. Reception for the *Biennale des Jeunes* at the Canadian Embassy in Paris.

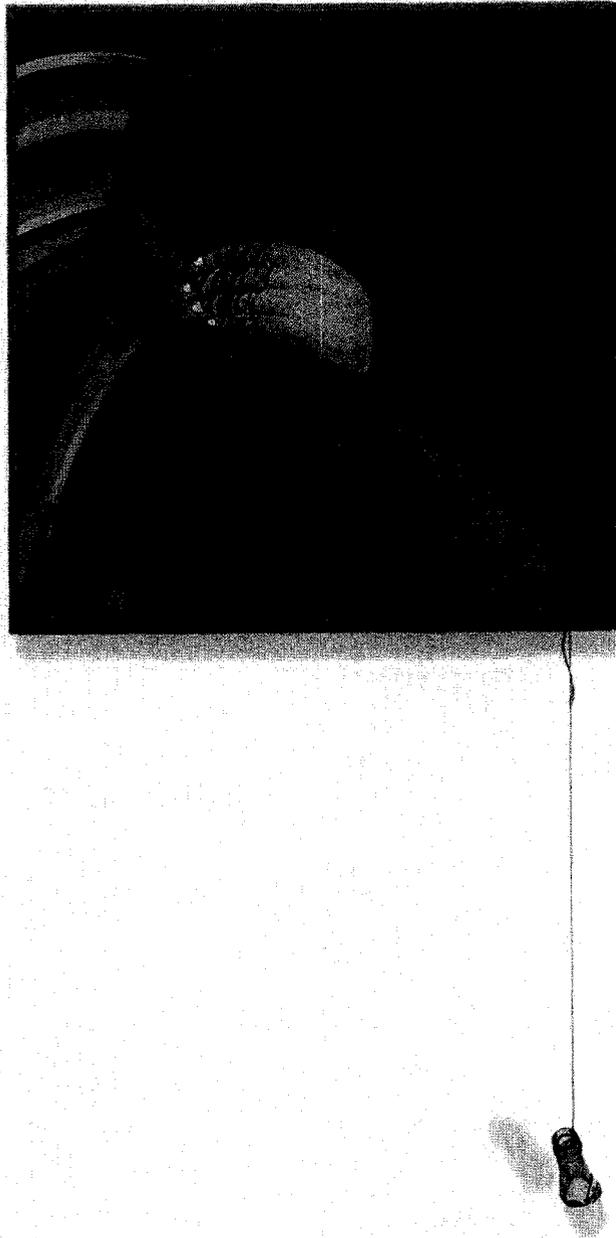


Fig. 16. Greg Curnoe. *les levine on Canal Street* (1965). Oil, enamel, stamp-pad ink, Plexiglas, string and found objects on plywood. Art Gallery of Ontario.

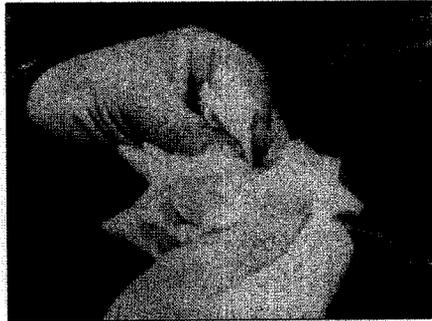


Fig. 17. Jack Chambers. Stills from *Hybrid* (1967).

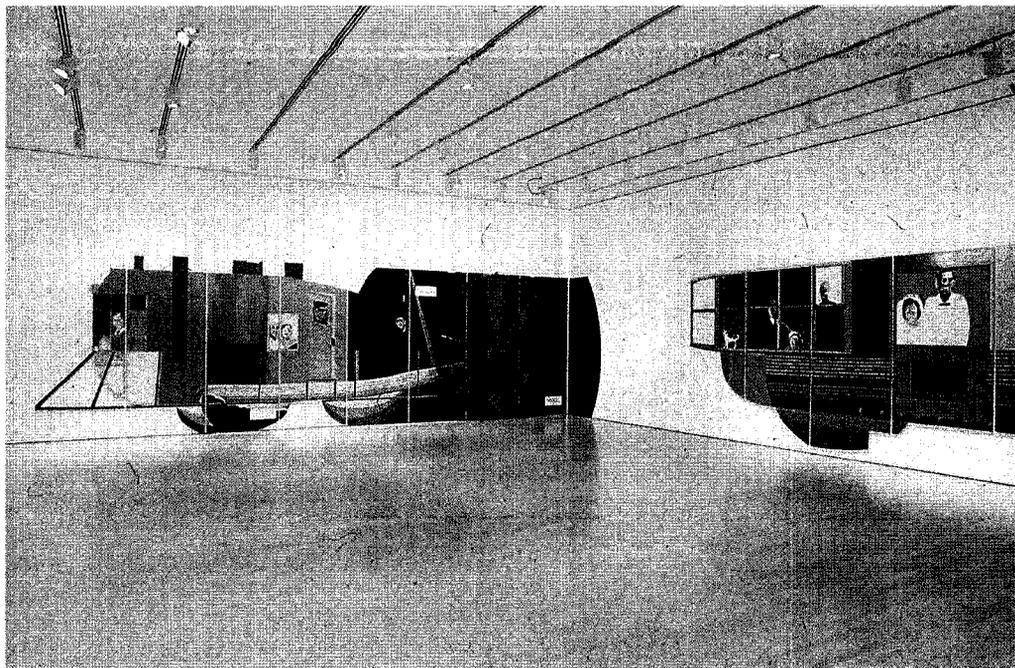


Fig. 18. Greg Curnoe. *Homage to the R-34* (1967-68). Enamel paint on plywood and steel. National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 19. Greg Curnoe. *Front Left Windows* (1 April 1967). Acrylic and stamp-pad ink on canvas. Art Gallery of Ontario.

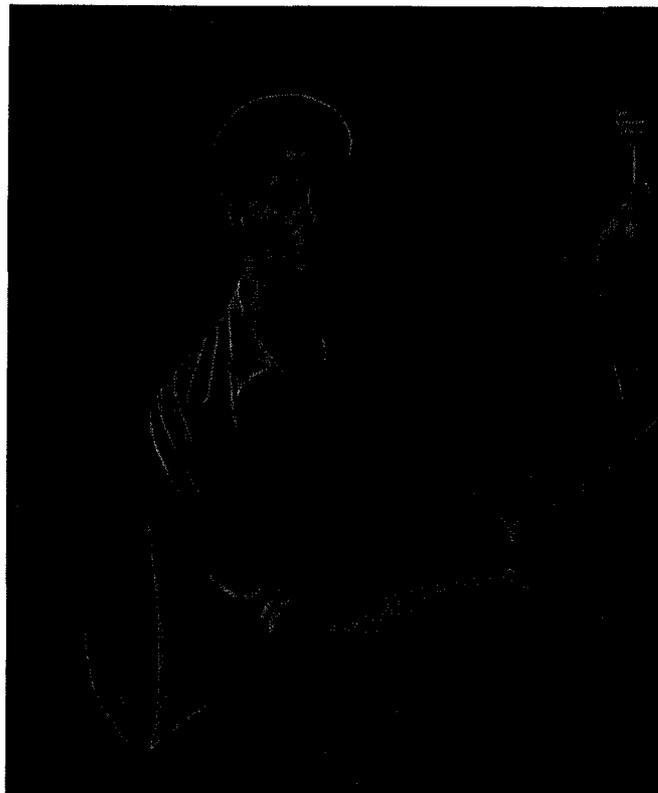


Fig. 20. Jack Chambers. *Self Portrait, No. 2* (1952). Oil on canvas. Nancy Poole's Studio.



Fig. 21. Jack Chambers. *The Farewell* (1958-59). Oil on canvas. Collection of J. Reaney.



Fig. 22. Jack Chambers. *Man and Dog* (1959). Oil on canvas. Collection of the artist's estate.



Fig. 23. Jack Chambers. *Man and Landscape* (1960). Oil on canvas. Nancy Poole's Studio.



Fig. 24. Jack Chambers. *The Unravished Bride* (1961). Oil on wood. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Rans.

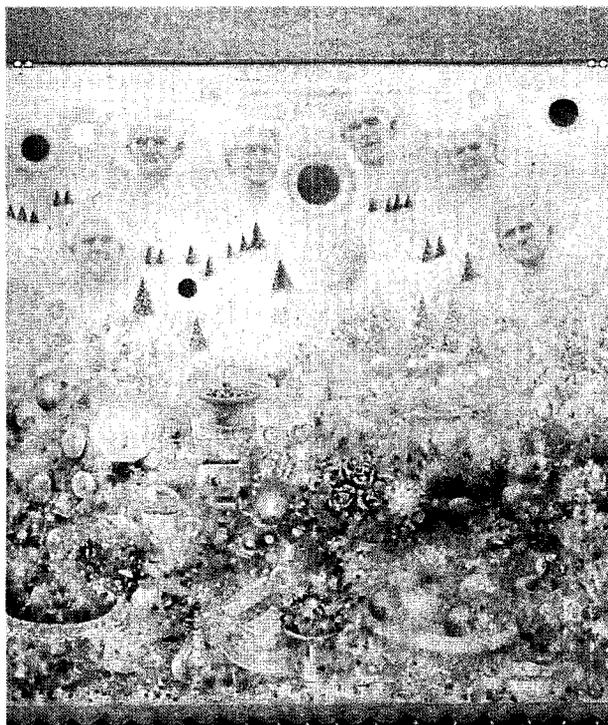


Fig. 25. Jack Chambers. *McGilvary County* (1962). Oil on wood. Nancy Poole's Studio.



Fig. 26. Jack Chambers. *Messengers Juggling Seed* (1962). Oil on plywood. National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 27. Jack Chambers. *All Things Fall* (1963). Oil on panel. Isaacs Gallery.



Fig. 28. Jack Chambers. *Olga Near Arva*. Oil on wood. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

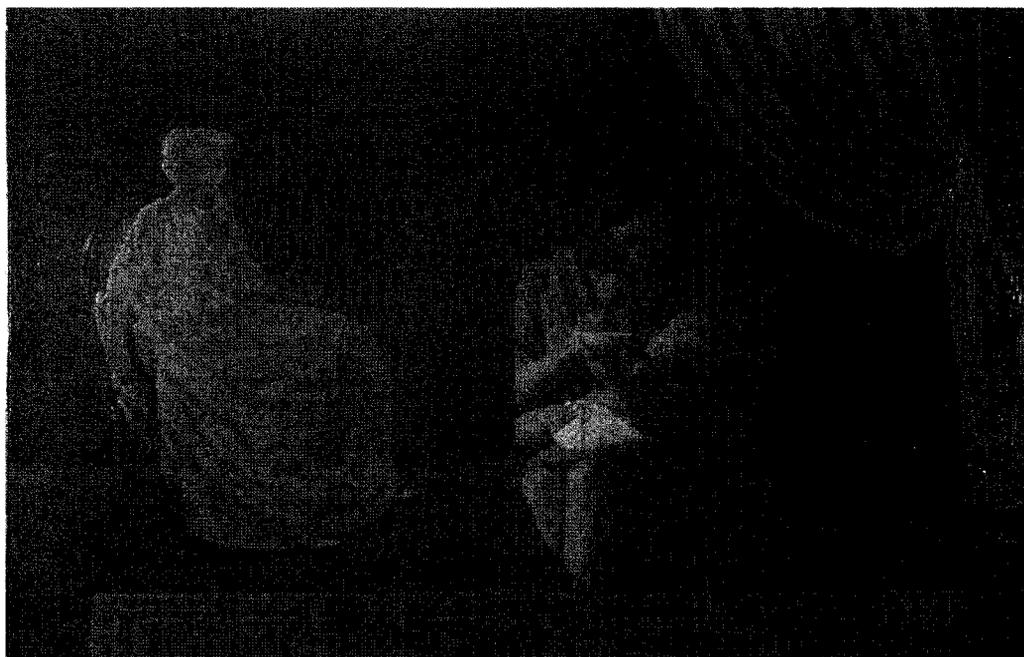


Fig. 29. Jack Chambers. *Olga Visiting Mrs. V* (1964). Oil on wood. Collection of E.G. Spence.

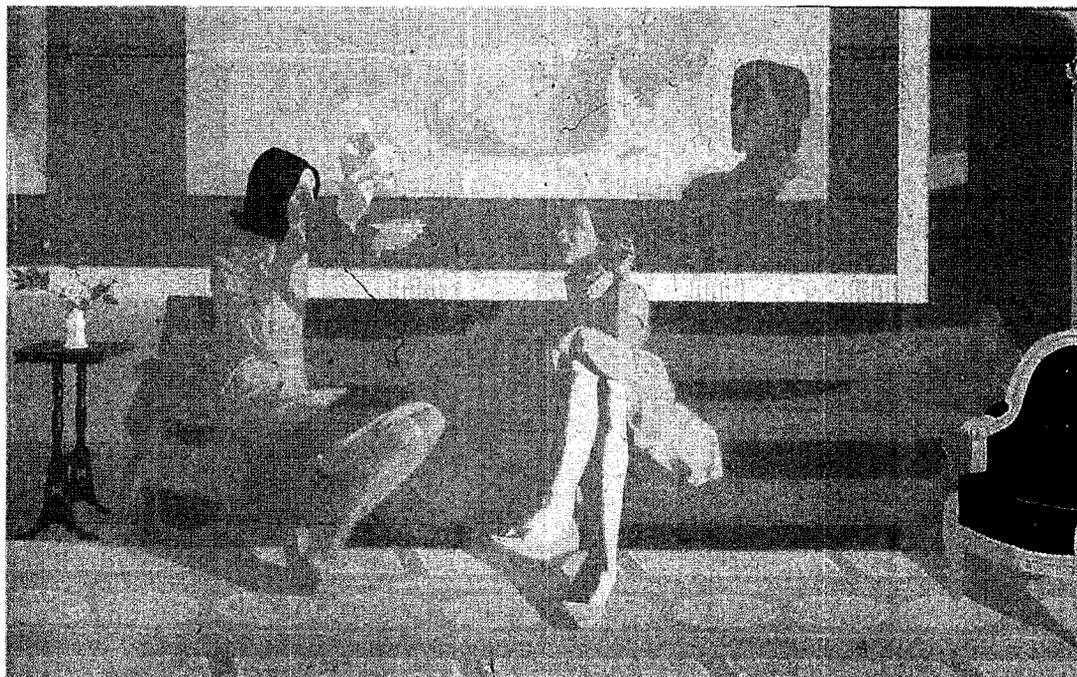


Fig. 30. Jack Chambers. *Olga and Mary Visiting* (1964-65). Oil on wood. Museum London.



Fig. 31. Jack Chambers. *Olga Visiting Graham* (1964-65). Oil on wood. Vancouver Art Gallery.

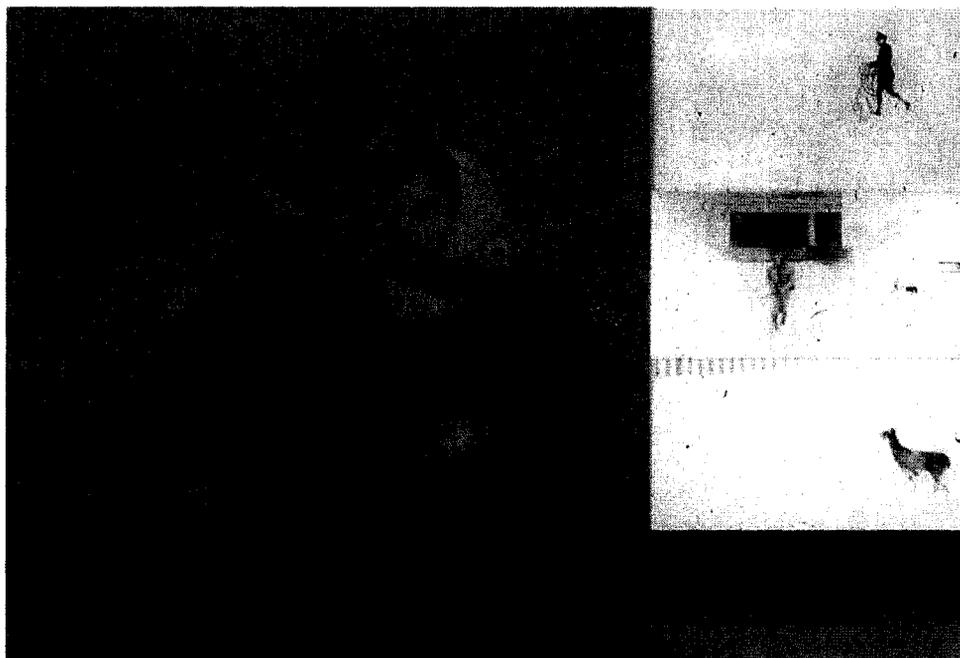


Fig. 32. Jack Chambers. *The Hart of London* (1968). Graphite and oil on paper within 4 sheets of Plexiglas. National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 33. Jack Chambers. *Moving Side and Forward* (1967). Graphite and acrylic on board. Art Gallery of York University.



Fig. 34. Jack Chambers. *Regatta No. 1* (1968). Oil and pencil on paper with Plexiglas. Museum London.

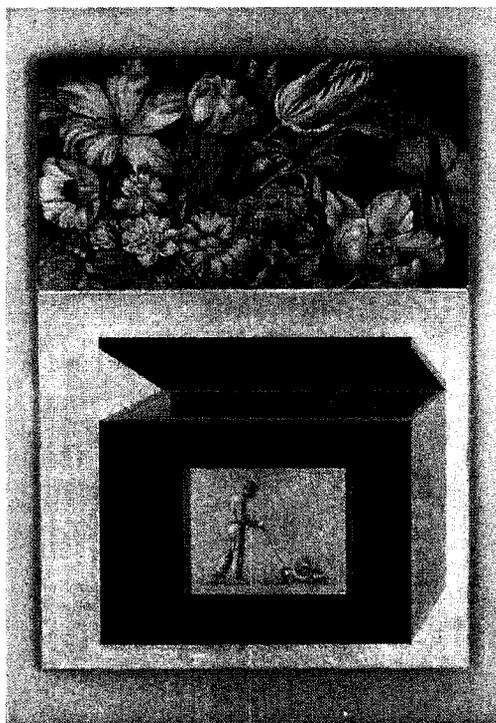


Fig. 35. Jack Chambers. *Grass Box No. 1* (1968-70). Graphite and oil on paper with Plexiglas. Canada Council Art Bank.

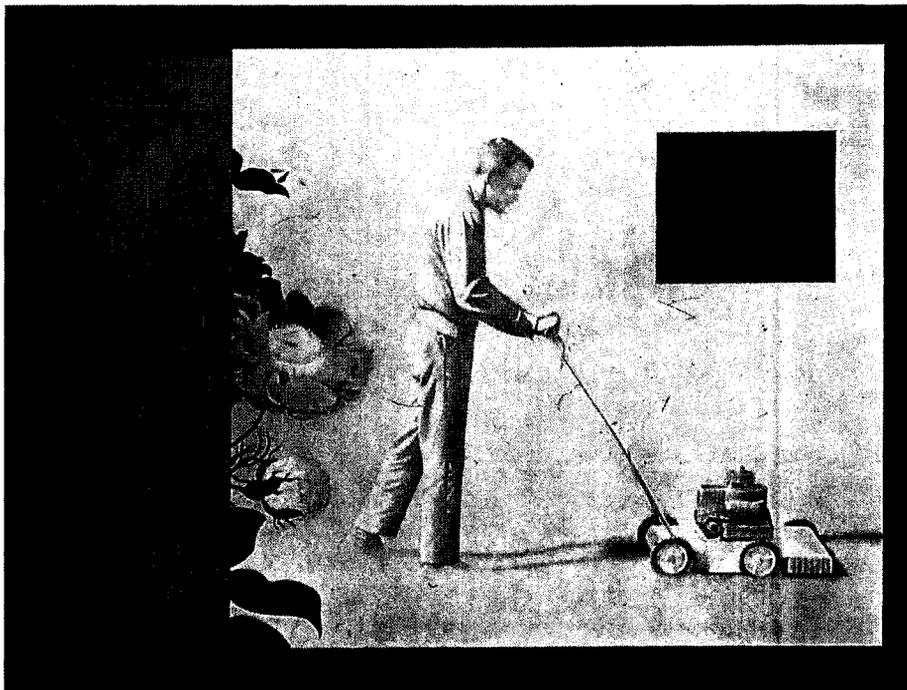


Fig. 36. Jack Chambers. *Grass Box No. 2* (1968-70). Oil and graphite on paper with Plexiglas. Nancy Poole's Studio.



Fig. 37. Jack Chambers. *Madrid Window, No. 1* (1968). Oil and graphite on paper with Plexiglas. Collection of E. Harris.

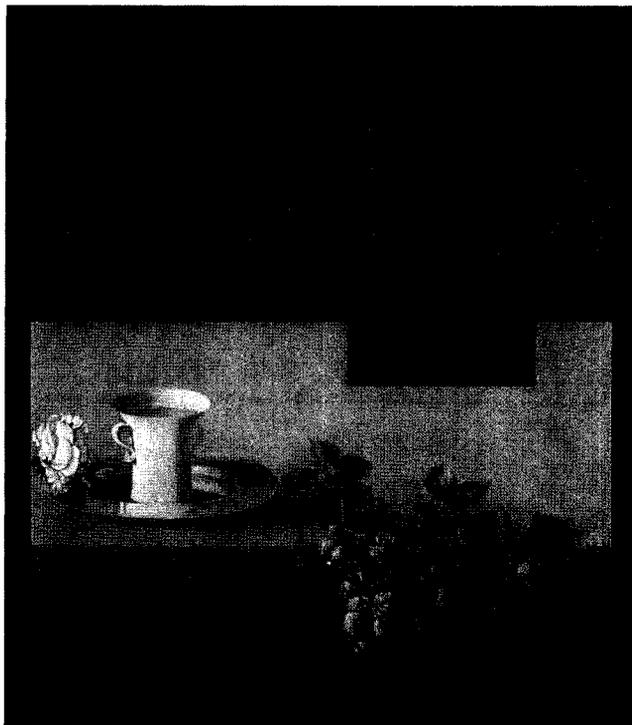


Fig. 38. Jack Chambers. *Madrid Window, No. 2* (1968-69). Oil and graphite on paper with Plexiglas. Private collection.

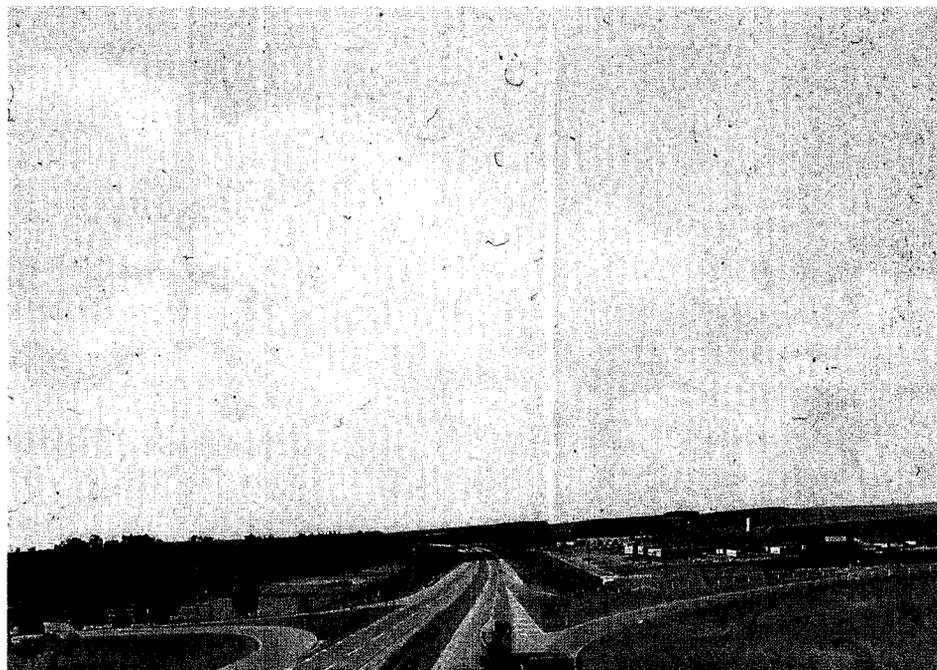


Fig. 39. Jack Chambers. *401 Towards London, No. 1* (1968-69). Oil on mahogany. Art Gallery of Ontario.



Fig. 40. Jack Chambers. *Sunday Morning, No. 4* (1975-76). Oil on wood. Museum London.

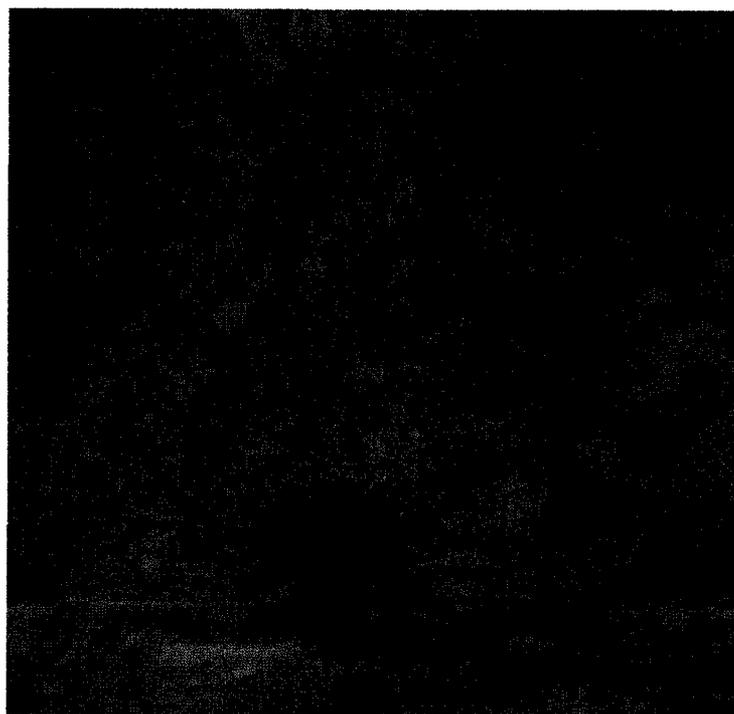


Fig. 41. Jack Chambers. *Lake Huron, No. 4* (1972-76). Oil on wood. Private collection.



Fig. 42. Jack Chambers. *Lombardo Ave.* (1972-73). Oil on canvas. Canada Council Art Bank.



Fig. 43. Greg Curnoe. *Hurdle for Art Lovers* (1962). Assemblage: mixed media. National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 44 (left). Greg Curnoe. *Dada* (late 1964). Oil and pastel on newsprint. Private collection.

Fig. 45 (right). Greg Curnoe. *Mother* (late 1964). Oil and pastel on newsprint. Private collection.



Fig. 46. Greg Curnoe. *On the Bed* (1963). Oil and stamp pad ink on masonite. University of British Columbia Students' Union.



Fig. 47. Greg Curnoe. *Spring on the Ridgeway* (1964). Oil and plywood and masonite, paper, string, rayon/nylon, metal and wood. Art Gallery of Ontario.

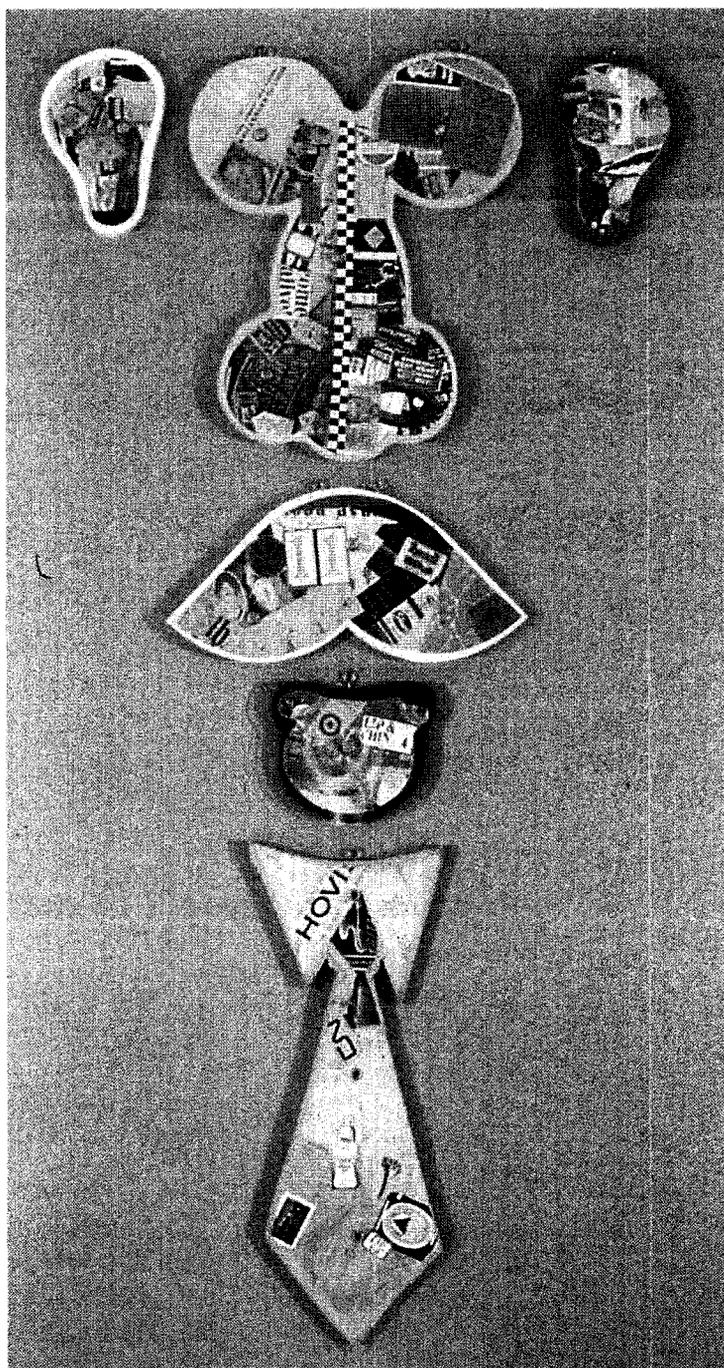


Fig. 48. Greg Curnoe. *Six Piece Set: Moustache No. 11; Nose, No. D; Tie No. 2; Lip and Chin No. 4; Ears No. 1 and No. 2* (1965-67). Collage on painted wood under Plexiglas. National Gallery of Canada.



Fig. 49. Jack Chambers. Still from *Mosaic* (1966).

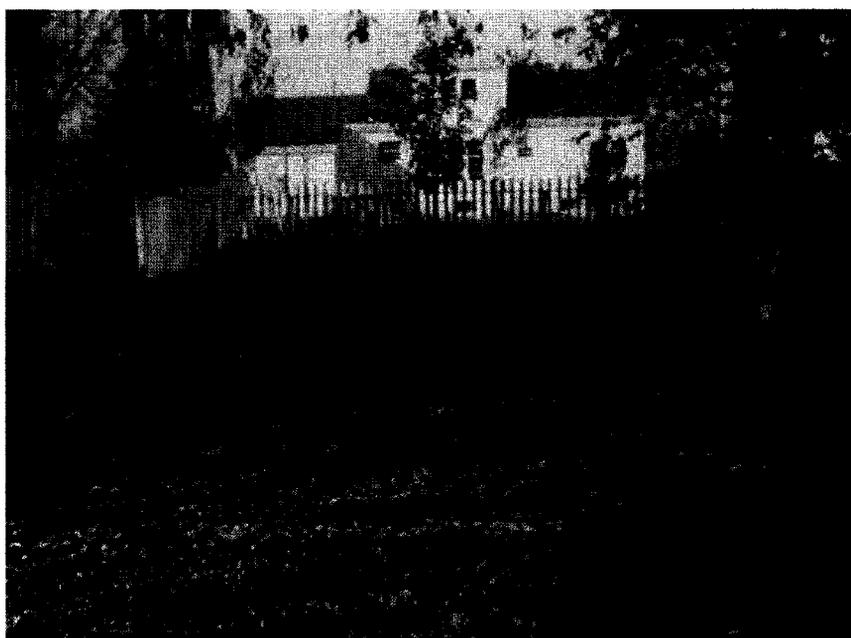


Fig. 50. Jack Chambers. Still from *Circle* (1968-69).

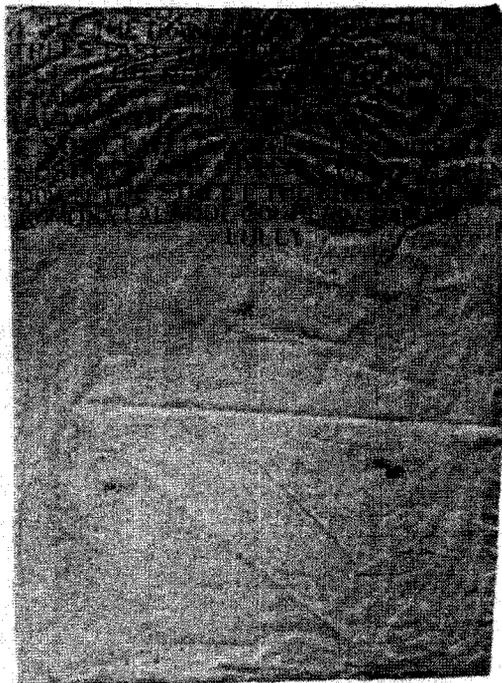


Fig. 51. Greg Curnoe. *Cityscape* (6 May 1961). Stamp pad ink on blue drafting linen. Collection of Mr. David P. Silcox.

AN ORANGE BORDER BELOW THAT "RV  
 EE L MP" WHITE LETTERING BODONI F  
 OLLOWED BY A WHITE DIAMOND BEFO  
 BEAT ON DARK BLUE BELOW THAT SMA  
 L ER LETTERING SAME STYLE DARK BU  
 JE "CO. LIMITED" ON WHITE UNDER THA  
 T IS A THIN ORANGE LINE. THE SIGN IS  
 LIT FROM ABOVE BY 4 LAMPS WITH GR  
 EEN SHADES ABOVE IT. 5 WINDOWS 2  
 PAIRS WITH WHITE FRAMES AN ORA  
 NGE FLAG FLAPS OVER 2 OF THEM ABOVE  
 THE RIGHT HAND PAIR ARE GREY SIL  
 LS & ABOVE THEM A CIRCULAR DEPRES  
 SION IN THE RED BRICK WITH GREY CO  
 NCRETE BLOCKS SET IN THE CIRCLE A  
 T 12.36 3:9 O'CLOCK TO THE RIGHT IS A  
 GREY DIAMOND & ABOVE -- THE ORNATE  
 ROOF LINE PAINTED WHITE TO RIGHT  
 THE LEFT WALL OF GUILD HOME EO  
 UPMENT RECEDES -- THE SKY IS OVER  
 CAST BELOW THE SIGN 197 ON THE GL  
 ASS ABOVE THE DOUBLE DOORS.

Fig. 52. Greg Curnoe. *Cityscape: Right Windows* (1967). Acrylic and opaque marking ink on canvas. Art Gallery of Ontario.

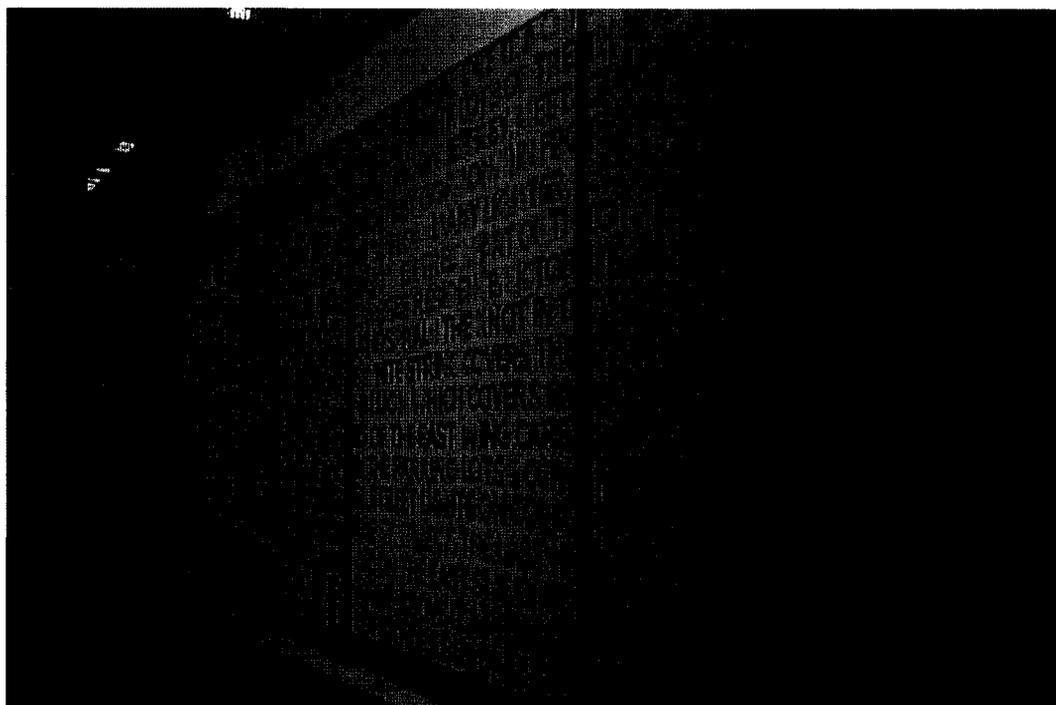


Fig. 53. Greg Curnoe. *View of Victoria Hospital, First Series (Nos. 1-6)*. (1968-69). Ink and latex ground on canvas. National Gallery of Canada.

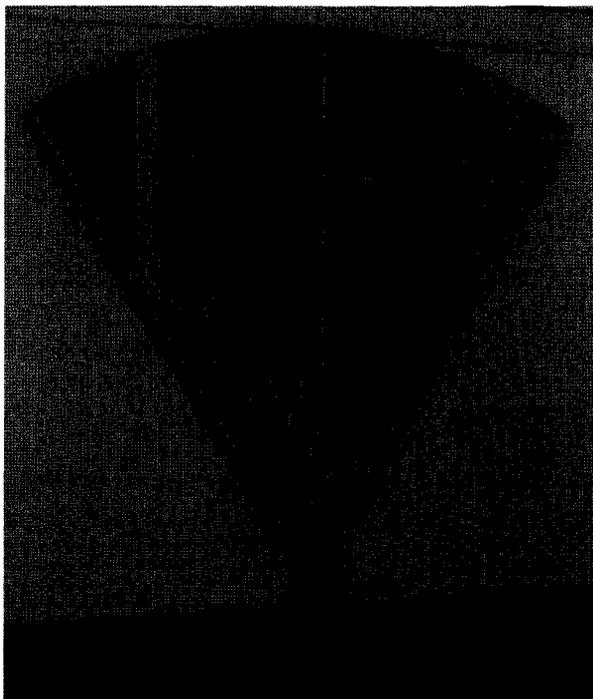


Fig. 54. Greg Curnoe. *View from the Most Northerly Window on the East Wall* (1969). Mixed media on wood. Museum London.

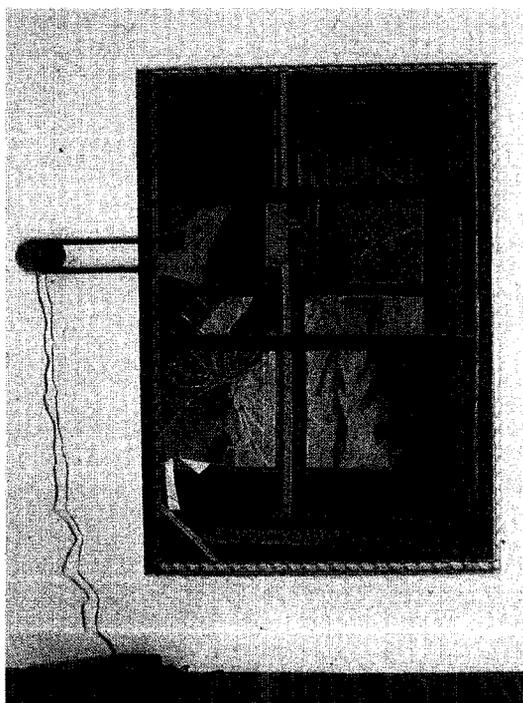


Fig. 55. Greg Curnoe. *View from the Left Centre Window in the North Wall* (1970). Mixed media on wood. University of Western Ontario.



Fig. 56. Greg Curnoe. *View from the Most Southerly Window in the East Wall* (1970). Mixed media on wood. Collection of E. Escaf.



Fig. 57. Jack Chambers. Still from *The Hart of London* (1968-70). Archival news footage.



Fig. 58. Jack Chambers. Still from *The Hart of London* (1968-70). Slaughter of the lamb.

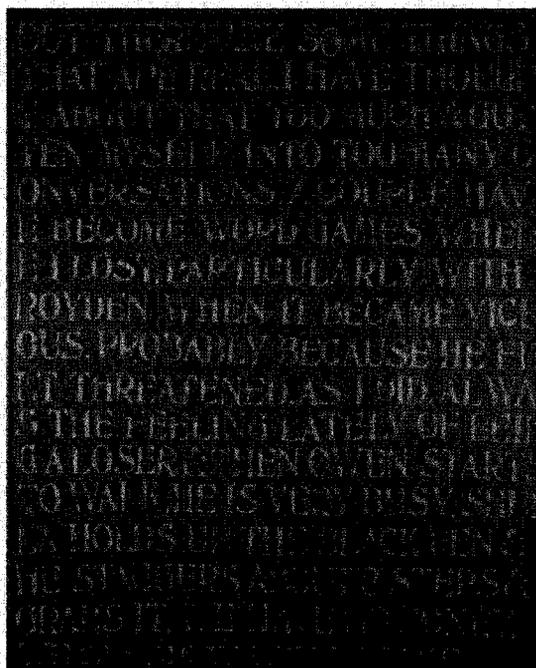


Fig. 59. Greg Curnoe. *Ruminations on an Old Urquhart* (1967). Stamp pad ink and enamel on canvas. Carleton University Art Gallery.

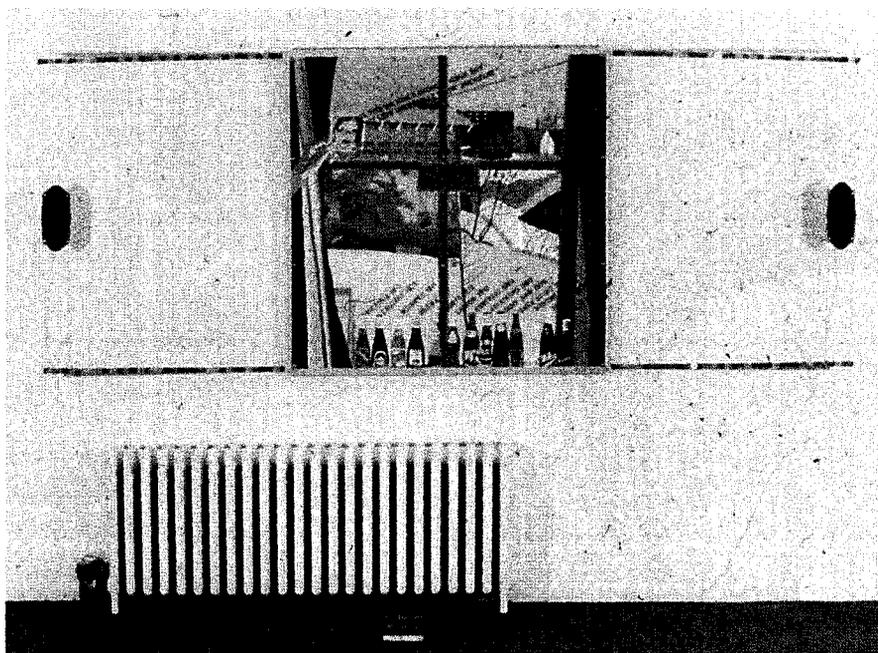


Fig. 60. Greg Curnoe. *View from the Most Northerly Window on the West Wall* (1970). Mixed media on wood. Art Gallery of Ontario.



Fig. 61. Greg Curnoe. *View from the Most Easterly Window on the North Wall* (1969). Mixed media on wood. Art Gallery of Ontario.

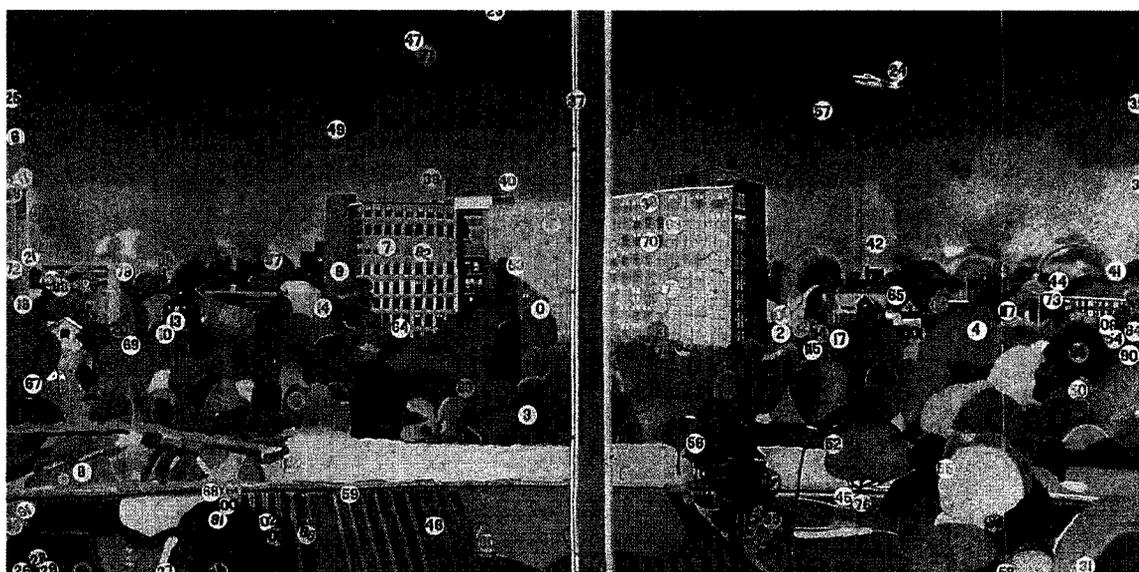


Fig. 62. Greg Curnoe. *View of Victoria Hospital, Second Series* (1969-71). Oil on plywood with 8 sheets of paper, tape recorder, speakers and cassette tape. National Gallery of Canada.

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