A TOTEM OF NARRATORS: The Autobiographical Voices of Emily Carr

by

Richard William Pickard
B.A., University of Victoria, 1992

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

[redacted]
Dr. B.N.S. Gooch, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]
Dr. P.J. Köster, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]
Dr. E. Tumasonis, Outside Member (Department of History in Art)

[redacted]
Dr. P. Roy, External Examiner (Department of History)

University of Victoria

Supervisor: Dr. Bryan N.S. Gooch

ABSTRACT

The two main areas of debate in autobiographical theory revolve around the problem of truth -- especially the relevance of facts to autobiography -- and around the notion of the self. Emily Carr's published books, especially Klee Wyck, The Book of Small, and Growing Pains, offer a unique window onto both these issues. Carr's biographers have demonstrated her divergence from objective reporting of factual information; it is the purpose of this thesis to link this divergence to the success of Carr's autobiographic code, and simultaneously to relate it to Carr's evolving notion of selfhood, as revealed in her paintings as well as in her autobiographies.

Carr's own concept of autobiography changed as her writing career progressed. Generally, her books reveal a shift from a unified self toward a multivocal, plural self. In Klee Wyck, the narrator's position is essentially static; although events recounted in the book are separated by up to fifty years, there is no sense that the narrator relives that development. The voice in each chapter remains the same. The unified self dominates Klee Wyck through its location in the position of narrator. For comparison, Carr's Post-Impressionist works break from her earlier realism in a conventionally Post-Impressionist fashion; the nature depicted in them is just as "conventional" as Klee Wyck's sense of self.

The Book of Small is a different case, because there are at least two narrators in the book, possibly three. In a sense, though, this book only hints at moving beyond the unified self, because it deliberately obscures the use of distinctive voices. So complete is the intermingling of narrative voices that the use of different names

for Emily and her sisters -- Small, Middle, Bigger or Emily, Alice, Lizzie -- provides the only clue to the existence of disparate narrators; all typical speech patterns and descriptive idiosyncrasies are apparent in all chapters. These intermingled voices can be linked to what Doris Shadbolt refers to as "interweaving planes" in Carr's first great forest interiors (70), those of 1927 to 1931; the apparently interlaced trees actually represent an indivisible forest, not trees as such.

Growing Pains, Carr's posthumously published book bearing the title-page designation An Autobiography, moves nearer the dissolution of the falsely unified self than does The Book of Small. Dissimilar narrators fill this book; Small, Klee Wyck, Miss Carr the Artist, young Emily, and many other selves participate in an increasingly multivocal text. Carr's late paintings depict natural objects as similarly multivalent beings, movement sweeping through individual figures to express the totality of the scene; here, though, individual components are not subsumed into the single scene.

However, the autobiography, as Philippe Lejeune recognizes, is tied to the single name of the autobiographer. Lejeune asserts that autobiography exists primarily by virtue of "the autobiographical pact," or "the affirmation in the text of this identity [of author and protagonist], referring back in the final analysis to the **name** of the author on the cover" ("Pact" 14). Barthes' notion of the death of the author is, for Lejeune, beside the point; of course there is no author within the text, but the author is at the same time

> not a person. He is a person who writes and publishes. Straddling the world-beyond-the-text

and the text, he is the connection between the two. (11)

The autobiographer, while not fully recreated by or in the text, is however present in his or her component selves; Carr herself does not exist within Growing Pains, but her many voices and self-perceptions combine to evoke the autobiographer, a thoroughly modern fragmented but whole self.

Examiners:

[redacted]

Dr. B.N.S. Gooch, Supervisor (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. P.J. Köster, Departmental Member (Department of English)

[redacted]

Dr. E. Tumasonis, Outside Member (Department of History of Art)

[redacted]

Dr. P. Roy, External Examiner (Department of History)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii

Table of Contents v

Chapter 1 . . . Introduction 1

Chapter 2 . . . "Conventional Anti-conventionalism: Klee Wyck and Carr's 'French' Paintings" . . 20

Chapter 3 . . . "The Structured Self: The Book of Small and the Forest" 35

Chapter 4 . . . "The Multiplicity of Self: Growing Pains and Carr's Later Paintings" 57

Chapter 5 . . . Conclusion 77

Notes 86

Bibliography 91

Chapter 1

> I believe that we can promise to tell the truth;
> I believe in the transparency of language, and
> in the existence of a complete subject who
> expresses himself through it;. . . I believe
> that when I say "I," it is I who am speaking;
> I believe in the Holy Ghost of the first person.
> And who doesn't believe in it? But of course it
> also happens that I believe the contrary, or at
> least claim to believe it.
>
> (Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact (bis)," 131)

Despite the enormous influence of Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author," the classical approach to language, which regards a given person as inextricably bound to the text he or she has written, remains a popular theory. For Philippe Lejeune, as for many others, there is a powerful tension latent in the discrepancy between the "Holy Ghost of the first person" and the notion that not only is there no author in a text, but that the text is a place "where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes" (Barthes 55). The literary debate around Barthes' paper focuses on the notion of the self, and on its relevance for writing; this debate inevitably expands to take in the relevance of the entire notion of selfhood.

The current growth industry in autobiography, both popular (manifested as bestsellers like Donald Trump's The Art of the Deal)

and scholarly (such as Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes and any of the dozen or more critical and theoretical texts published within the last ten years), illustrates very clearly the centrality of autobiography for the literary community, as well as for late twentieth-century society in general, for which Barthes is simply the latest in a long tradition of influences questioning the very structures of Western culture. When Barthes claims that "the text is. . . produced and read so that the author absents himself from it at every level" (57), and when theorists and readers largely accept such a formulation, the autobiography is automatically constituted as a genre that potentially establishes, subverts, or destroys all formulations based on the theory of the absent author -- because the autobiographical text expresses, at least in the classical model, the life of the author.[1] The author, in writing the autobiography, attempts to revivify a life lived, through reference to and description of specific experiences. The mutability and instability of language (as well as of other sign systems) makes the referential text, in effect, nonreferential -- and yet when a person puts his or her name to a text proclaimed as "an autobiography" or "autobiographical," we largely accept the text's self-definition at face value, and recognize (outside the text) the life referred to in the pages of the "autobiography." Hence Lejeune's simultaneous belief in both the "Holy Ghost of the first person" as well as its contrary, and hence the burgeoning theoretical literature surrounding the genre of autobiography.

Robert Elbaz is one of those currently theorizing about

autobiography. For Elbaz, all autobiographical writings are "appropriations of selfhood through fictive voices" (14); since, as Barthes hypothesizes, there is no author within the text, any sense of identity expressed by the autobiography is a false "selfhood" created by illusory "voices" forged or falsified by the author, who nevertheless remains outside the text. Thus, in Elbaz's terms (and in Barthes'), "autobiography can only be a fiction" (1); "[a]utobiography. . . is not and cannot be the description of a finished reality, for reality itself is a process of production" (155). Just as any action, through adding to the actor's fund of experience, alters the actor's identity, so writing about one's own life creates a profound shift in one's self-perceptions. The writer is not the same person who may have existed once and is now being conjured up in the "autobiography"; the very act of writing creates the character being written about, and therefore separates in a fundamental way the author and the subject of the autobiography.

At its most basic, the problem is that the author, who "lived" the experiences referred to by the text, did not live those experiences with the knowledge that they would be written about, nor with the power to analyse and understand patterns in the life being lived; the introduction of language, which is most clearly an imposition in narratives of childhood, lends the character a consciousness or reflexivity that was not available to the person on whom the character is based. As Philippe Lejeune writes of autobiographies that reconstruct childhood from the viewpoint of the child, in order to do so, "we must abandon the code of autobiographic

verisimilitude. . . and enter the space of fiction. So it will no longer be a question of remembering, but of making up a childlike voice" ("Childhood" 53). And the case is the same for the adult in the text; an awareness is bestowed upon the autobiographical subject that was simply not possessed by the author at that point in his or her own life. The truth of the autobiographer's life is not easily transferred from the ever-flowing narrative of daily living to the static page; it is not easily grasped at all.

Emily Carr has a wide reputation in Canada, even among those with little interest in her life and work. Several of her paintings formed a series of postal stamps, and her life was condensed into a thirty second commercial for Canada Post in 1992 to celebrate Canada's one hundred and twenty-fifth year as a country. The general fact of her existence as an artist is broadly known; the direction of her artistic bent, however, is not. In her painting particularly, Carr favoured the representation of "the spirit of the thing itself rather than its surface appearance; the reality, the 'I am' of the thing, the thing that means 'you,' whether you are in your Sunday best or your workday worst" ("Fresh Seeing" 11). In comparing truth and sincerity, truth becomes more closely allied with an object's "surface appearance," sincerity with its "I am." As Carr continues,

> in your struggle to [capture the spirit of the object], the usual aspect of the thing may have to be cast aside. This leads to distortion, which is often confused with caricature, but which is really the emotional struggle of the artist to express intensely what he feels. (12)

Distorted appearances express the reality within, which is the only reality that Carr believes an artist ought to acknowledge as such.

For Carr, even the mere presence of distortion in a serious work signals the "emotional struggle of the artist" -- without distortion, there exists no feeling available to be expressed by the artist or perceived by the viewer. Not only is distortion to be excused, but it is to be valued as a sign of praiseworthy artistic achievement. Later in the same lecture, in speaking of the figure of the beaver in the native totem, she explains that there

> is all the difference in the world between their beaver and the insignificant little animal that we take for our national emblem. . . . [The Indian] expresses the thing that is the beaver, glorifying him. . . . They show the part of him that would still be beaver even if he were skinned. (20)

Throughout the lecture from which these quotations are taken, a lecture about pictorial art in general but in defense of modern art specifically, Carr emphasizes the importance of the artist's perceptions at the expense of "the usual aspect" of the world (12); so complete is her devotion to the artist's personal vision that the question of objectivity scarcely comes up, except as a simplistic notion to be categorically and unquestioningly rejected in both her art and her writing. The level of truth commonly demanded of autobiography by naive readers simply is not present in much of Carr's writing. Elbaz' comments that "autobiography can only be a fiction"

(1) certainly seem to apply to Carr, who seems at first glance to exemplify the inevitable intrusion of fiction into autobiography.

In spite of the above fictionalizing of autobiography, though, the institution of autobiography remains as an enduring literature -- and "autobiography is an 'institutional' rather than a 'brute' fact" (Bruss 5). However arbitrary the division between fiction and autobiography might seem, it is a division carefully maintained throughout the twentieth century. Extending Elbaz' theory beyond autobiographical works, at least in the light of Barthes' theorizing, one realizes that every text is, essentially, an autography, a self-created, self-sustaining object. However, the inclusion of "bio" at the center of "autobiography" means that the text is a story of a life -- of the life of the author outside the text. Truth, in any objective form, does not define autobiography, so autobiography cannot "only be a fiction," because fiction is defined in relation to truth and reality. Autobiography has its believers, who accept that an autobiography can, in fact, make the author present in his or her work. Of all the genres, the autobiography clearly presents the greatest challenge to or the most explicit proving-ground for "The Death of the Author" and its theories.

Nevertheless, the autobiography can only contain a selection of so-called facts, not the totality of them. In addition, as every theorist painstakingly explains, the "truth" about one's own life, as expressed in the autobiography, is filtered through the consciousness of the person who has learned from the experiences of that life -- or has at least developed a point of view that allows for the

assimilation of those experiences into what the consciousness, the person, the writer considers a coherent past reality (or, in the case of determinedly anti-generic texts, a self-consciously and intelligibly **in**coherent past reality). As Heather Henderson suggests, "[t]he writing of any autobiography necessarily involves a process of selection: the autobiographer chooses those events from his past which will form a story, a 'personal myth'" (3). At the same time, the autobiographer tends to submerge his or her self-mythologizing behind a cloak of alleged truth; this, says the subtitle "An Autobiography," happened to a real person, who wrote down exactly what happened to him or her.

The autobiographical writings of Emily Carr allow the problem of autobiography to be studied in great depth. Carr's writing is almost exclusively drawn from incidents from her own life, and is in that loose sense "autobiographical," but her books, often termed "collections of stories," are rendered distinct from each other by her use of variously staged versions of herself as the narrator. The point of view forced upon the reader of each story or sequence of stories springs directly from the stance taken by the narrator in each instance. Because different narrators sometimes tell the same story (in Klee Wyck and Growing Pains, for example), and because the same story can be told more than once by the same narrator (as in The House of All Sorts), the truth value of the narrative becomes relative rather than absolute, and the reader learns to rely on the narrator more than on her stories. The questionable reliability of the facts recounted by the narrator becomes more apparent as Carr develops in

her writing and as she delves deeper into her own life as a source for her writing. As she becomes more aware of the conventionality of the naive division between fiction and autobiography, she becomes more willing to question that division through utilizing the techniques conventionally assigned to one genre for her writings in the other. Through Klee Wyck, The Book of Small, The House of All Sorts, and finally Growing Pains: An Autobiography, Carr grows conscious of just what the medium of prose might allow her to express. The truth, as an autobiographer might express it, need not be what happened, so much as it needs to be the autobiographer's perceptions of how events occurred.

Carr, through her successive engagements with the problem of literary narration, learns that she does not have to approach any sort of objective "truth" to reveal the truth that she herself understands in the world, and especially in her own life -- she recognizes (and can therefore exploit) the inevitable space between event and recollection, idea and representation, object and word. In doing so, she raises questions about the nature and function of the institution we call "autobiography," questions that most closely relate to the arbitrariness of the limit placed between "autobiography" and "fiction" and to the apparent contradiction between the very notion of autobiography and that of the absent or "dead" author in Barthes' theorizing. Carr's writing can hardly be separated from her activities as an artist (especially as one of her structuring myths is that of the suffering artist), and her growing awareness of a writer's license to subvert the conventions which structure any literary work

needs to be compared and referred to the sense of individualism increasingly revealed in her paintings. As she mentions in the "Lecture on Totems" preserved at the National Archives of Canada, a photograph does not always convey the "truth" of a scene or occurrence:

> You must be absolutely honest in the depicting of a totem for meaning is attached to every line. . . . I never use the camera nor work from photos. . . . Indians I think express it well when they say to one another 'come and see the woman make pictures with her head and hands, not with a box.' ("Notebook 1913," 35-36)

Interestingly though, Carr likely did paint from photographs. Perhaps rarely, perhaps only of scenes she had already visited in person, but there is considerable evidence available to support Maria Tippett's contention that the camera "was of great assistance to her" (108). In a sense, it is irrelevant for the present discussion whether or not Emily Carr painted from photographs; the important point is really that she felt it necessary (and possible) to exceed the camera's potential.[2]

For the purposes of this paper, Klee Wyck (1941) will be related to Carr's "French" paintings (Shadbolt 36), The Book of Small (1942) to the formal works she is popularly known for (painted largely between 1929 and 1931), and Growing Pains (1946) with those painted after 1934, by which definition I include those groups of paintings Shadbolt calls "A New Liberation" (121) and "A New Integration" (137) as well as those accepted as belonging to her final period.

Klee Wyck, the first book Carr published, is perhaps her most conventional in its narrative voice. Whereas the episodic Book of Small and House of All Sorts both present a collection of stories based on events happening to or revolving around the same central character in no apparent order (though the last stories in The House of All Sorts do detail the escape from landladying, just as the first ones illustrate the building of the house), Carr explicitly acknowledges Klee Wyck's chronological sequence by numbering its chapters. That Carr presents herself as fifteen in the first story when she apparently was in reality twenty-seven (Klee Wyck 3), and that she does not ever give her age after the first page of the book, is immaterial -- the chronology is skewed from the details of Carr's own life, but is no less conventionally observed for its divergence from so-called real time. Similarly, Carr's French paintings, including the bulk of her work from 1911 to 1927, elaborate the physical forms of objects and people but do not disrupt the correspondence of painted subject to physical reality. French-influenced works, like the 1912 or 1913 Indian House Interior with Totems or the 1922 Arbutus Tree (Shadbolt nos. 26, 27),[3] illustrate a relatively conventional correspondence between the painting and its subject; the colours are more vibrant, the contours more vigourous and sweeping, the total scene more significant than its details, but together her French paintings exist "within the postimpressionist idiom" (Shadbolt 42). They are conventional within their apparent unconventionality, not really succeeding in freeing Carr's vision of the Canadian west coast from traditional, formal ways

of seeing; Klee Wyck, on the other hand, seems highly conventional but exploits that appearance to great advantage.

The problem with dividing Carr's writing into sections like this is that one imposes a chronological or developmental structure that must itself be carefully monitored and interrogated -- because it only loosely answers to Carr's pattern of composition. She began writing in the late 1920s, wrote a great deal in the mid- to late 1930s, but did not have her first book published until 1941. Her next two followed rapidly in 1942 and 1944, with her posthumous autobiography, which she refused to have printed until her death, appearing in 1946. (Carr wrote to Nan Cheney, regarding the prospect of having an autobiography published while she was still alive, "I'd feel a FOOL if I wasnt [sic] dead" [Walker 307, 13 March 1941], presumably embarrassed at the possibility of "the public" knowing intimate details of her life.) The books are essentially distinguished from each other by narrator, with the exception of the many-voiced Growing Pains, and it is this which allows the largely contemporaneous books to be separated for meaningful relation to the largely chronologically grouped paintings. There are forty years between her earliest Post-Impressionist French works and her final paintings of fluidity, circular unity, and spontaneous movement, but only fifteen, at most, between her earliest and latest stories or chapters.

However, a beginning artist normally passes through several periods of growth before full artistic maturity; just because Carr was a painter **and** writer is no reason to expect any sort of contemporaneous development in her two chosen disciplines. In fact,

the very gap in years between the beginnings of her painting and writing preclude the possibility that stories written in 1930, early in her progress as a writer, can be profitably related to paintings of the same time, her first truly mature paintings. The linkage that this thesis will identify is in fact based on the notions of self and selfhood informing the two arts, and is not intended in any significant way as an attempt to validate one art over the other, nor to argue that one book is more technically complete than another. Furthermore, that the relation between a painting and a book is, in a certain sense, "metaphoric" in no way removes the possibility of relation; both forms of art are founded on representation, and all represented objects are, in a very special way, "selves." The focus of this thesis is on Carr's evolving ideas of selfhood, and her painting and writing offer parallel (though temporally discontinuous) stages for an examination of her evolving ideas.

The stories that make up The Book of Small constitute the most palpably crafted prose that Carr wrote; it might well be to these that Ira Dilworth refers when he writes in the preface to Klee Wyck of Carr's

> "peeling" a sentence, as she called it, -- a process which involved stripping away all ambiguous or unnecessary words, replacing a vague word by a sharper, clearer one until the sentence emerged clean and precise in its meaning and strong in its impact on the reader. ([iii-iv])

And even if it is not to these that Dilworth was indeed referring, it is at least clear to us that The Book of Small's prose was carefully sculpted by its creator. The narrator attempts to make herself invisible, but her prose is so exquisitely patterned with Small's own voice that her presence in fact stands at The Book of Small's centre. The interweaving of voices is so complete that it is very difficult to separate narrative positions; indeed, Helen Buss acknowledges only an "adult narrator comment[ing] on the child. . . , without the adult voice dominating the narrative" (39-40). Similarly, the sculpted, carefully structured forests that Carr was painting between 1929 and 1931 (such as that in Indian Church [1929; no. 69]) reveal a complex layering of surfaces, the borders between objects and planes hinted at but obscured, forever hidden behind the curve of a totem or the sweep of a cedar branch; Shadbolt refers to this effect as that of "interweaving planes" (70), a technique which she relates to cubist works.

By the time of her final paintings, Carr had fully come to an awareness that she was searching to express a "unity of movement" sweeping through all nature (Hundreds and Thousands 106). Borders between objects or planes are no longer simply obscured, however tantalizingly, as in her famous woods interiors, but utterly ignored. Such canvases as A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth ([1935]) illustrate her sense of the community among living things by presenting them as a single, unified being (no. 100). Surface representation, while not entirely insignificant, does not make up the whole of an artistic work, nor should it be art's purpose to portray it; however, except in

abstract works, it must at the very least be acknowledged. With very rare exceptions, the subjects of Carr's late paintings are clear, even obvious, but her representational method tends to make them seem unfamiliar. Carr maintains sincerity at the expense of "truth," or surface appearances, although those appearances are part of every painting. In Growing Pains: An Autobiography, we find Carr at her most autobiographically sincere, though lapses in "truth" are amply documented by biographical critics of her work.[4] In Lejeune's terms, this text is her most autobiographical not simply because it calls itself "autobiography," but because it is sincere rather than true, or perhaps true to the writer rather than to the world. As in these paintings, surfaces are relatively insignificant beside the depth of meaning to be found within objects, people, cities, and the self.

The perception embodied in the painting is all, in paintings like Forest Interior in Shafts of Light or Swirl (nos. 121, 139), though its perspective and focus change from picture to picture. In Growing Pains, the autobiographer is the subject of the stories, though the narrative voice shifts and varies from story to story, moving from casual recollection (as in Klee Wyck) to childish passion (as in The Book of Small) to visionary emotion more closely akin to The Book of Small than to anything else Carr wrote, though its emotion is expressed in a voice far more mature than Small's. The narrator's voice, like the painter's vision, is in the end the single most important component of Carr's art. The ostensible subject of Growing Pains (the past of the author) is relegated to a secondary position in

her writing, because the writing itself is geared toward presenting an active consciousness, not the prosaic facts of a past existence.

The shifting nature of a person's identity, in conjunction with the simple fact that reality must always be perceived through that ever-shifting identity, make it impossible to portray fully any event, person, or incident with absolute "transparency" (Lejeune, "Pact (bis)" 131) or faithfulness to the original. Through her literary development, Emily Carr came to recognize that she could manipulate that instability to her own advantage -- as all autobiographies, and autobiographers, do. After all, as Heather Henderson suggests, every autobiography is a "personal myth," but it is a myth that is presented as a past reality by the autobiographer. No matter how "untrue" the content of the text may be, a writer who assumes the title of "autobiographer" avoids and annuls any requirement of "truth." Robert Elbaz may well claim that "autobiography is fiction and fiction is autobiography" (1), but in his syllogistic neatness he ignores the institutionality of autobiography, which associates autobiography with truth for the reader in a shadowy, almost indefinable way. Paul John Eakin, in the introduction to Lejeune's On Autobiography, claims that a reader of autobiography must believe "in the sincerity of the author's intention to present the story of 'a real person concerning his own existence'" (xiii, quoting Lejeune, "Pact" 4); truth is not precisely sincerity, though the two are interdependent.

In her literary work, Carr often deviated so far from the "truth" as to abandon it entirely. Even her editor and close friend Ira

Dilworth, in the preface to Carr's posthumous collection The Heart of a Peacock, feels compelled to acknowledge that her

> memory was, perhaps, not always absolutely accurate, particularly in situations where emotion was a prominent factor. For instance, it is quite unlikely that Emily's eldest sister ever punished her with a riding whip, as Small [in both The Book of Small and Growing Pains] tells us again and again. (xv)

The closely interrelated themes of rejection, punishment, and abuse comprise a great part of Carr's structuring myth of the suffering artist, and indeed lay the childhood foundation both for her lifelong perseverance in a path considered odious by many, and for the pattern of that perseverance, which was itself considered absurd by her family and her community. That this myth is at least potentially based on falsehoods is immaterial -- Carr the artist and author considered herself to have been severely oppressed, and felt that she needed to connect her adult renunciation of social strictures to a childhood history of rebellion against familial strictures characterized by physical abuse.

Philippe Lejeune's concept of the "autobiographical pact" defends the autobiographer's right to ignore the requirement of truth imposed by the model of the biography, which most autobiographers follow as their own. Biography differs from autobiography precisely in that it requires verifiable referents. The conventions of classical biography continually refer to truth in what Lejeune terms the "referential

pact," the statement of which pact must include "a definition of the field of the real that is involved and a statement of the modes and the degree of resemblance to which the text lays claim" ("Pact" 22). Lejeune's concept of autobiography relies paradoxically on both an introductory declaration of the pact, and the irrelevance of a subsequent observance or nonobservance of that pact:

> In autobiography, it is indispensable that the referential pact be **drawn up**, and that it be kept; but it is not necessary that the result be on the order of strict resemblance. The referential pact can be, according to the criteria of the reader, badly kept, without the referential value of the text disappearing (on the contrary). ("Pact" 22-23)

Lejeune's discussion of referentiality begins with the terse statement "Identity is not resemblance" ("Pact" 21). The same special status that Carr claims for native and modern art in "Fresh Seeing" is accorded here by Lejeune to the genre of autobiography; reality is not simply appearances. Having said that, though, there must remain certain referents in the text that are in fact reliable -- such as the forging of an identity between the protagonist and the author,[5] or the narrative voice (or voices) and the autobiographer.

In the early formulation of this particular component of the autobiographic pact, Lejeune considered it crucial for there to be an identity of name "between author, narrator, and protagonist" ("Pact" 14). The author, whose participation is confirmed by a signature in

the form of a title page, the narrator, who directs the progression of the text, and the protagonist, the allegedly unknowing character who acts as the centre of the text, must be one and the same -- the identity is crucial to prevent the interference of some other consciousness in the creation of the autobiography. However, as Doris Sommer notes, "Lejeune is still associated with this position more for convenience's sake than to accurately represent his own thinking" (114, n. 22). In Lejeune's own re-examination of "The Autobiographical Pact," which he wrote some ten years after the original publication of the article that he re-examines, he criticizes his own theories by noting his own difficulties in applying them: "What stopped me is a certain tendency toward 'nominalism,' and, in a more general way, a dogmatic attitude toward the problem of identity" in the earlier article ("Pact (bis)" 122). "I tended to fix on an 'all or nothing' attitude, when in reality many intermediary positions are possible" (125), he explains, and goes on to determine some guidelines by which he can more effectively study the genre of autobiography.

The crucial point for the discussion of Emily Carr's writing is Lejeune's first:

> What I call autobiography can be part of two different systems: a "real" referential system (in which the autobiographical agreement, even if it comes by way of the book and the writing, has the value of act), and a literary system (in which the writing no longer aspires to transparency but is able to mime perfectly, to

> mobilize the beliefs of the first system).
>
> ("Pact [bis]" 126)

Popular autobiography and classical biography rely upon the "real" referential system Lejeune identifies here; the truth is not questioned, because the text claims for itself the ability to express lived experience perfectly. Errors in factuality are carefully avoided, corrected upon detection, and even on occasion apologized for. However, the literary autobiography -- which is after all what Carr's autobiographies most closely approximate -- imitates that "real" referentiality, but achieves its special power through noncompliance with it. By miming the referentiality of the nonliterary autobiography, the literary achieves specific effects unattainable by either biography or fiction; in a very special sense, it really is the text that creates the author in this case. As Lejeune recognizes, "[t]elling the truth about the self, constituting the self as complete subject -- it is a fantasy. In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing" ("Pact (bis)" 131-32). The referential pact is mimed stylistically, but ignored in reality.

Doris Shadbolt, in writing of the factuality of Carr's texts, suggests that "[e]ven though information culled from her books of sketches and stories must be sifted and examined cautiously, it is invaluable for glimpsing her life and for seeing the face she wanted to show the world" (12). This thesis will argue that it is instead the case that the information does not need to be "sifted and examined cautiously" in order for the reader to see "the face [Carr] wanted to

show the world," but that Carr's stylistic choices additionally reveal her identity. The many voices that Carr is able to summon as her own actually confirm her work as autobiography -- they do not prohibit its classification as such, but demand it. In addition, this thesis will argue that Carr's lapses in truthful reporting only add to the intensity of her autobiographical expression; if she diverges from truth, it is for reasons of sincerity, not because, as Peter Sanger claims, she is "disingenuous, malicious, and evasive" (220). As Lejeune argues, it is inherent in the structure of autobiography both to pretend to factuality and yet to ignore it. The artistically rendered autobiography will inevitably distort -- and Carr's rendering of the facts about her own life in Klee Wyck, The Book of Small, and Growing Pains paradoxically makes those books fully autobiographical, not fictional. In the context of Emily Carr, the movement toward "sincerity" and away from "truth" is apparent in her painting as well as in her writing. The impulse called "autobiographical" by Lejeune and others seems to have affected Carr's stylistic shifts in an apparently unrelated art -- the possible "modernism" of autobiography, both as a genre and in Carr's peculiar adoption of it, must be considered in reference to Carr's decidedly modern art.

Chapter 2

The major reason that Carr's Klee Wyck is normally referred to as "autobiographical" rather than as "autobiography" is that the chronology of its chapters is skewed from that of the author's own life, the alleged model for the book.[1] Most notably, the first

chapter is explicitly narrated by "a fifteen-year-old school girl" (3), when it appears certain that Carr first visited Ucluelet in 1898 or 1899, at the age of 26 or 27 (Blanchard 291). In addition, there is no sense of traditional narrative progression in the book; the narrator (variously referred to as "Klee Wyck" [7], "Em'ly" [25], and "Sophie's Em'ly" [29], but rarely named at all) is fifteen at the beginning, and never admits her age again. The only evidence that most other chapters occur significantly later in time is extratextual or biographical; the exceptions are the chapters "Sleep" and "Wash Mary," which are explicitly set in Carr's childhood, in spite of their positions in the book as chapters eleven and fourteen respectively.

Of course, calling each section of Klee Wyck a "chapter" rather than a "story" reveals the particular stance I intend to take in the analysis of this book. Biographical evidence does clearly prove that the chronology of Carr's own life is not scrupulously followed, and, as noted above, it is this discrepancy that normally results in the classification of Klee Wyck as something other than autobiography. However, as Philippe Lejeune would argue, the strict observance of the accidents of space and time does not alone suffice to delineate autobiography; "the paradox of the literary autobiography, its essential double game, is to pretend to be at the same time a truthful discourse and a work of art" ("Pact [bis]" 128). While truth must be acknowledged in some fundamental way, the artistry of the autobiography might well obscure or even subvert that truth -- the autobiography, a function at least as much as it is a genre, has the potential to occupy many different artistic spaces. One of its

possible identities can be an attitude toward self-creation, and Klee Wyck is nothing if not Carr's own self-creation myth. As Helen M. Buss remarks, Carr's books as a coherent oeuvre stand as "a kind of serial autobiography, a way to demonstrate the multiplicity of her identity as artist and woman" (20). The temporal world exerts few demands on a person involved in such a project -- Klee Wyck's rejection of narrative progression in favour of episodic revelation signals an attempted break from the conventional modes of autobiographical expression.

Klee Wyck is a form of bildungsroman -- it is a recounting (apparently) of a young girl's journey to the coastal wilds of British Columbia, where she at long last finds subjects fit for her artistic taste and talent. Dull, conventional landscapes are no longer the only fit subjects for her art; mystic totems and ancient villages, each one with a history behind it at least as long as the entire history of the English in Canada, have provided her with new direction. Despite the structure of the bildungsroman, Klee Wyck's main thrust is its three-stage attempt to evoke native culture's inherent differences from white Canadian culture, to assimilate Carr herself into the native world, and yet to defend Carr's life within the separate domain of white Canada.

The disjunction between native and white perceptions of time occupies a central thematic role in the book, quietly but subversively justifying Carr's digressions from referential precision. The most explicit example of Carr's perception of a non-chronological sense of time in native culture is the chapter entitled "Century Time." While

searching for sketch material, Carr comes across a native cemetery so overgrown that "[y]ou would never guess it was a cemetery [because] Death had not spoiled it at all" (94). The atemporality of the instantaneous vegetation growth is remarkably like that found in the works of South American magic realists like Isabel Allende or Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the plants bursting from the very corpses:

> Just as soon as the grave boxes were covered with earth, vines and brambles began to creep over the mounds. Nobody cut them away. It was no time at all before life spread a green blanket over the Indian dead. . . [,] foliage so newly created that it did not know anything about time. (Klee Wyck 94-95)

The perceptions Carr had of nature at the time of writing Klee Wyck obviously influence her description of a unified, active nature in the cemetery; her painting style, as it developed from the mid-1930s to the time of her death, reveals a fascination with the circular unity of nature, evidenced in whorls akin to those found in Van Gogh's late works, as well as in the depiction of vast masses of bushes and trees joined in a fluid sweep of imagination. However, the problem of chronology and temporality is not evaded by raising it to the level of a literary theme, but is simply rendered more visible, as the reader consciously attempts to situate Carr within the continuum of points of view on time: how native (or how English) is she?

The temporality that influences the narrator's life among the natives is profoundly non-chronological, but Carr frequently attempts

to impose chronology on the natives. In "Tanoo," for example, she comments that "[w]e were to start off at the Indian's usual 'eight o'clock' and got off at the usual 'near noon'" (12), while in "Greenville" she sits "on the wharf from eight o'clock till noon" as she waits for her guides, whom she can see below her on their boat, to wake up (45). At the beginning of "Sailing to Yan" there are not even sleeping guides to hint at the promised voyage: "At the appointed time I sat on the beach waiting for the Indian. He did not come and there was no sign of his boat" (59). The irregular departures of Carr's natives are not confined to the ocean, because while making the overland trip to Kitwancool she "sat in front of the Hudson's Bay store [at Kitwangak] from eight to eleven o'clock, waiting" (97).

The promise of comfort offered by a conventional reliance on time seduces the narrator repeatedly, not just in the schedules she continually attempts to impose on trips to different places, but even in her sojourns at various villages. As she attempts to make herself feel at home in the virtually deserted village of Greenville, for example, almost the first thing she does is to turn "forward the almanac sheets and set the clock ticking" (48). When she leaves, she tries to obscure her brief imposition of chronology by letting "the clock run down [and flapping] the leaves of the calendar back" (53). She admits to believing that "comings and goings are as ordinary to Indians as breathing," but, in a passage noted by Kathleen Mallory as indicative of her occasionally demeaning views of natives, goes on to wonder whether or not "dogs are more domestic and more responsive than Indians" (53).[2] For all her love of and respect for native

inattention to time, Carr herself has no real choice but to attempt to impose the demands of linear time on both herself and the native world in which she is travelling -- because time is what she understands as the border between the white and native spheres of existence.

In spite of her own need for chronology, Carr's respect for native attitudes to temporality is not defeated or overwhelmed by that need; the sense of time present as a sort of theme in Klee Wyck is native, not Anglo-Saxon. There is tension between conventional realism and native non-temporality, but it is resolved in favour of the native -- even though the character in the book relies on her imposition of the clock and calendar, the book itself, although sequential, has little narrative connection between chapters and pays little attention to chronology. Still, chronology is present as an opposing force to the dominant native sense of time. It is in a manner similar to Klee Wyck's handling of time that Carr's so-called "French" paintings, those most clearly linked to the Post-Impressionists she experienced in France, relate themselves to the conventional realism of surface reproduction. They are not realistic paintings, but they are conventional; they escape realism primarily through the adoption of another school of painting, Post-Impressionism. Each attempts to escape conventional ways of seeing (or reading) by interrogating those conventions through subjecting them to the tension of a conflicting point of view. We have already noticed the non-chronological time of "Century Time"; among the paintings, the 1912 War Canoes (no. 17), for example, closely follows the original watercolour sketch, but contains brighter

colours, less distinct forms, and rough or imprecise details. The subject of the painting itself is unmistakable, but Carr consciously adopts a way of looking at that subject in order to give it meaning that another viewer might not have discovered in it; however, she has not yet found her own means to express sincerity, and fills that gap with Post-Impressionism. In the 1930s, she began to adopt more emotionally descriptive titles (Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky [1935; no. 101] being one well-known example) to reify the meanings beyond or beneath the ostensible subject of the painting itself. Carr's French works do not have the same preceptive emotionalism in their titles, but there is clearly a certain way of looking at the world that the artist is beginning to express with them.

The oil on canvas version of War Canoes (no. 17) is, in its composition, virtually identical to the 1908 watercolour of the same name (no. 16). Each group of canoes sits on a patch of grass beside a well-worn path, in front of a lone fir on the right and wooden buildings and pilings in the distance on the left. The hill behind the village is bare, its stark, branchless trees along the skyline suggesting a fairly recent forest-fire. Their composition is similar, except that the oil includes a group of natives under the lone fir, and the canoes are somewhat foreshortened and enlarged by the adoption of a slightly different perspective. The bows of the canoes, and therefore also the crests on each one, rise more sharply in the oil, but apart from these slight differences the basic composition of each work is the same. What distinguishes the oil is Carr's evolving style, in the broadness of its brushstrokes and especially in the bright clarity of its colours.

The most noticeable difference is that of colouration. The oil is, in the best sense of the word, "unnaturally" colourful, but the watercolour is heavily muted; the fir and grass look as if they are coated with dust or enveloped in a thin haze, particularly when contrasted with their counterparts in the oil. The vibrancy of the oil represents a significant advance in Carr's expressive capabilities, and also marks a clear divergence from the demands of realism; it is no accident that Carr's study in France occurred between the execution of these two versions of War Canoes. R.H. Hubbard notes that the paintings Carr brought back from France "exhibit the intense colours and abbreviated designs of Fauvism," and that on her return she rendered "the Indian villages of the West Coast and their totem poles in this same spirited and colourful manner" (103-104). In the two versions of War Canoes, we find a demonstration of the changes impressed upon Carr by her experience of what she calls the "New Art" in Growing Pains:

> Something in it stirred me, but I could not at first make head or tail of what it was all about. I saw at once that it made recent conservative painting look flavourless, little, unconvincing. (215)

The relative "littleness" of the watercolour War Canoes is almost palpable beside the later Fauvist-influenced oil; the lessons Carr learned from her French studies revolve largely around this one requirement of avoiding "flavourless, little, unconvincing" forms of art.

Paintings of urban themes exhibit even more clearly the influence of Fauvism; as Doris Shadbolt remarks, "Sawmills, Vancouver [1912 or 1913] and Vancouver Street [1912 or early 1913] are brilliant small works which would be comfortable in the company of Fauve paintings of her generation" (40). With its row of barely individualized houses, the mass of Mount Seymour behind them, and the unresolved and chaotic foreground, Vancouver Street in particular stands as a prominent indication of the extent to which Carr had internalized lessons of suggestive form learned from the Fauves. Sawmills, Vancouver, which more closely approximates an objective representation of the subject of the scene, illustrates Carr's acceptance of Fauvist uses of colour; the same building at the sawmill is unlikely to have been red, green, and blue on different sides, but such colouration allows Carr to fulfill her intentions in choosing such a scene as the subject of her work. The detailed, realistic ink sketch Rock Bay Bridge of 1895 (no. 4) allows us to recognize the tremendous step that Carr had made in her adoption of French techniques. Not only had she altered her way of seeing, but she had broadened the pool from which to choose artistic subjects; a scene from the city was now eligible for expression, whereas she had for some time focused on largely realistic representations of landscapes and native themes. Carr was no longer limited to a sharply circumscribed range of subjects, nor to realism, and it was this as much as anything that allowed her later to adopt forms from the tribal art of native culture into her own artistic style.

The paintings of Carr's best-known style, that of the very late

twenties and very early thirties, exemplify her reshaping of tribal art into her own way of seeing, but these "French" works stand as a necessary point in her progression. Klee Wyck, in its transparent departure from the truth it pretends to, is similarly a necessary stopover in her progression to the fully autobiographical manipulation and creation of the past in Growing Pains. But is such manipulation necessarily autobiographical? As Philippe Lejeune worries, it can be very difficult to determine whether a given text is "more a self-portrait than an autobiography, the thematic and analogical organization prevailing over the narration" ("Pact [bis]" 124).

In the discussion of Klee Wyck thus far, which has revolved around the issues of time and the individuation of native culture, we have focused on the book's "thematic and analogical organization," which characteristic essentially (for Lejeune) defines the self-portrait in opposition to the autobiography. Klee Wyck's narrative indirection or non-progression similarly draws the book toward the self-portrait; there are few clues in the text itself to suggest any chain of events to be traced from story to story. Jimmie and Louisa, for example, are introduced as new characters twice in the book, in the second and thirteenth chapters, and identical information is provided about them each time.

Part of the reason that the narrative is difficult to follow in Klee Wyck is that the stories were not written continuously; Maria Tippett claims that Carr's "Indian stories. . . had been written over a period of eleven years" (248). Though the book was not published until 1941, Carr herself states on June 24, 1937, that she posted to

Dr. Garnet Sedgewick "twenty stories" (Carr, Hundreds 291); sixteen of the titles she mentions were included in the published Klee Wyck. Of the other four stories in Klee Wyck, Nan Cheney mentions being read "Salt Water" on May 17, 1938 (Dear Nan 82, May 18, 1938); in Hundreds and Thousands, Carr herself mentions "rewriting" the story eventually known as "D'Sonoqua" on November 9, 1934, but seems to have finished it by September 25 of 1936, when she read it to Ruth Humphrey (155, 262). The chronology of the writing of the twenty stories that make up Klee Wyck is uncertain, but it can be definitely confirmed that various of the stories were submitted individually to Maclean's Magazine, The Saturday Evening Post, and the Atlantic Monthly (Hundreds 150, 159), and even to an institution known as the "International Correspondence Criticism Service" (171). The sketches were written one at a time at first, without being conceived of as a cohesive book, but, as Maria Tippett notes, Carr "grouped her stories thematically" (248). More precisely,

> [b]efore 1937 Emily had attempted, with the help of her listening ladies, to publish individual stories. After 1937 she made thematic collections of them -- usually no more than a hundred pages in length -- and submitted them to book (rather than magazine) publishers. (Tippett 250)

Therefore, in spite of the disparate dates of composition, and in spite of the frequent disjuncture of chronology between stories, Carr, at least after 1937, considered herself a writer of coherent books,

not discrete single stories. Questions of narrative consistency, in this light, are almost beside the point of thematic unity.

And yet without the narrative explication of the episodes that make up the book, the "thematic and analogical organization" would operate in a vacuum. As Lejeune mentions in his apologetic self-defense of classifying as autobiography one text that firmly situates itself at the border of self-portrait and autobiography,

> the majority of autobiographical texts (governed by an autobiographical pact) include, in different proportions and hierarchical organizations, part autobiography (narrative) and part self-portrait (thematic organization). And in La Règle du jeu [Michel Leiris' possible autobiography Lejeune is discussing] the articulation is inextricable. ("Pact [bis]" 124)

While this neat summary of the confluence of genres is convenient for Lejeune's project of classification, it fails to account for either the need for or the effects of such a mixing of autobiographical schemes. Lejeune's almost flippant remark that it is simply "[a]nother inadequacy with regard to vocabulary" (124) denies Leiris' text, and others like it, the immediacy and drama that originally drew Lejeune to La Règle du jeu -- and Lejeune so favours Leiris as to remark that "Leiris is, with Sartre, one of the rare autobiographers to recover the profound meaning of the genre" ("Epilogue" 236).

To conclude that different works are different is not to evolve an especially rigourous critical distinction. La Règle du jeu is not

Montaigne's Essais, nor is it Rousseau's Confessions, nor Klee Wyck, for that matter; but the question is not whether or not a text is different from another -- all texts are different, naturally -- but **how** and **why** it is different. Leiris' autobiographies are painfully modern, questioning all possible conventions and points of reference; the reader is intentionally disconcerted both by the method and by the ground of the text. Klee Wyck, on the other hand, like Carr's other books, invites the reader to live through the narrator's experiences, without questioning the details or meanings of those experiences except insofar as they relate to the formation of the artist. Experiences belong to the genre of narrative, or the autobiographical, but Carr's sequence of thematically related experiences disrupts the narrative progression of the autobiography.

It is obvious that the argument becomes circular very quickly indeed. The narrative/thematic dyad, in spite of its original appearance, is simply not a duality, in ways that Lejeune seems not to have accepted or understood. Perhaps one way to grasp the flaws of such a formulation is to examine the Fauvist use of colour. Traditionally, or at least prior to the Post-Impressionists, colour was a means of description, part of the scene depicted, as it were; however, one of the major points of diversion from tradition for the Post-Impressionists was the increasing "use of expressive rather than descriptive colour" (Denvir 82). The purpose of colour had changed -- it was no longer a component of a picture's surface reality, but a defining element in its formal structure. To describe it in the language of autobiographical theory, colour was no longer narrative, but thematic.

In this light, it is not at all surprising that Emily Carr, whose paintings from 1912 to the mid-1920s reveal so much of the Post-Impressionist, should attempt a different, less conventional pattern for her autobiographical writings. For her, the disjunction between the narrative and the thematic was outmoded; if colour had no integral relation to the subject of a painting, then surely narrative had no unquestionable claim to stand as the primary organizational tool for autobiography. Lejeune, in spite of his setting up the false duality of narrative/thematic, recognizes the fragile pre-eminence of a narrative structure, asking a question that he has already answered in the affirmative: "Can a life story be narrated other than in its unfolding?" ("Order" 71). He complains that

> the expression of singularity is generally considered a problem of **content** (exceptional character of the information provided), or a problem of **style** (work of expression, of the play of intonations, and of the attitude of the narrator toward the hero and the reader), but very rarely as a problem of the **structure** of the text. ("Order" 71)

However, he himself states that the basic structure of any autobiography must be "narrative," which carries with it the various constructions of selfhood and chronology which Lejeune spends so much time criticizing for being needlessly dependent on the outmoded model of the biography. He shuts himself off from the possibility of thematic organization when he defines the self-portrait in opposition

to autobiography as "the thematic and analogical organization prevailing over the narrative" ("Pact [bis]" 124). He has already forbidden himself the quest he sees as necessary -- the examination of the structures of autobiography.

Robert Elbaz lays the groundwork for a discussion of thematic organization when he remarks, in the context of a deconstruction of Rousseau's theories about nature and humanity, that

> [t]he closer we get to natural man, the farther we are from knowing him: knowledge and reason multiply the processes of mediation and widen the gap; the tools are cultural. This is why the return is impossible, and we must concede that history does not follow nature and that any conception of nature must of necessity be fictional -- that is, a particular arrangement of reality. (81)

If "any conception of nature" is "a particular arrangement of reality," then narrative cannot be a privileged mode of discourse for the autobiography -- chronology or order must be sought out and imposed as much as any other means of organizing the text. Narrative or chronology as such is therefore just as much a fiction as any other organizational technique. The only difference is that narrative seems to be organic, whereas most other methods of organization are obviously imposed from without. The adoption of a thematic organizational model for the autobiography offers proof of a shift in the perception of selfhood itself in the twentieth century. In part,

this shift of perception is a result of the rapidly changing theories of understanding, especially of understanding the past -- and understanding the past is, in many ways, the project of autobiography.

Emily Carr, though she never really theorized the comprehension of the past as such, still presents in Klee Wyck a thematically organized autobiography, which in Lejeune's system is something of a contradiction in terms. But as Elbaz hints, every reconstruction of the past is equally "a particular arrangement of reality." A narrative structure no more escapes the need for "arrangement" than does any other structuring principle; the problem of chronology in Klee Wyck suddenly becomes a question of biographia, absolutely without relevance to any classification of the book as either autobiographical fiction or autobiography. But, of course, this does not entirely solve the problem of defining the autobiography. In The Book of Small, for example, both the adult narrator and the very young protagonist are Emily Carr. According to Lejeune, the identity of the narrator and the primary character must be complete in order to conform fully to autobiography; in The Book of Small, however, there are chapters apparently narrated by Small herself, but there are also some narrated by an unnamed adult watcher. The consistency of the text comes into question -- and how autobiographical is an inconsistent text? How autobiographical is a text with two narrators?

Chapter 3

In The Book of Small we find Carr's clearest, most emotive recreation of her own childhood.[1] The figure of Small is one of the most appealingly individual characters to be found anywhere in Carr's

writing, or in Canadian literature more generally. Sensitive, funny, headstrong, and thoroughly idiosyncratic, she is the absolute foil for the family that the narrator (sometimes Small, sometimes an older figure[2]) sets up as a consummately Victorian Anglo-Canadian environment; she is Canada in Queen Victoria's court, to borrow a turn of phrase from Mark Twain. Paula Blanchard makes much of Small's uniqueness within the Carr family:

> Temperamentally, . . . she resembled no one else. Impulsive, volatile, quick with her tongue, prankish, affectionate, critical, often sullen and occasionally rude, she exasperated and embarrassed the other members of her family, whose own emotions were generally firmly reined in. (23)

Biographical evidence tells us that the young Emily Carr was much like the rambunctious, emotional Small, intensely individual and committed to maintaining her position of authoritative singularity.

The narrator of The Book of Small introduces her individuality into every sentence, most often through the use of unexpectedly active verbs that bestow animation on all parts of Small's world. However, the use of such verbs reveals the character's identity even more clearly than it illustrates the actions surrounding that character -- and there are innumerable actions going on throughout The Book of Small. As Blanchard notes, in Carr's books "[t]hings are flung, hurled, slammed, scrubbed, snapped, smacked, seized and pushed; people (especially children) howl, squeal, wriggle, and give and get

'terrific hugs'" (11). In The Book of Small, objects also "fling, hurl, slam, scrub,... and push"; they are active participants in Small's world, not simple objects. The scene of the Saturday night bathing ritual in The Book of Small illustrates the activity seen in objects by Small:

> [E]very Bible and prayer-book in the house was puffing itself out, looking more important every minute.
>
> Then the clothes-horse came galloping into kitchen and straddled round the stove inviting our clean clothes to mount and be aired. . . .
>
> Dede scrubbed hard. If you wriggled, the flat of the long-handled tin dipper came down spankety on your skin. (3)

The images of self-important, pompous Bibles and a galloping clothes-horse, which appear on the first page of the book, exemplify the pattern of activity recurrent throughout The Book of Small. It is present in other works as well (recall the instantaneous vegetation growth of "Century Time" in Klee Wyck), but it dominates this particular autobiography; the level of activity exhibited by other objects simply enhances the reader's perception of the tremendous energy of Small herself.

Another tactic used by Small to emphasize the independent existence of almost every object is to provide each with an unexpected adjective, not just to qualify but to expand the noun. The prayers offered up in bed after the Saturday night bath, for example, are

"steamy, brown-windsory prayers" (3); while detailing the weekly trip to Mr. Carr's Presbyterian Church, she complains that her "little Presbyterian legs ached from the long walk" (26); in expressing her surprise at her mother's bursting into song with her friend, singing songs of their youth in England, Small talks of listening to "two rusty little voices" (33), the voices of two women near fifty who had not sung their childhood songs for many years. The adjectives quoted here -- "brown- windsory," "Presbyterian," and "rusty" -- are not of themselves especially unique. However, because the narrator uses them in relatively unexpected contexts -- such as describing prayers in terms of Brown Windsor Soup [3] -- their very unexpectedness allows them to signify Small's abundantly imaginative consciousness.

The autobiographical record of childhood is a very special form of autobiography; the child is not the one writing, so his or her situation must be carefully but completely reconstructed in order to carry any semblance of autobiographical relevance. As Philippe Lejeune remarks in "The Ironic Narrative of Childhood: Vallès," the child must be recreated, not simply recalled:

> To reconstruct the spoken word of the child, and eventually delegate the function of narration to him, we must abandon the code of autobiographic verisimilitude (of the "natural") and enter the space of fiction. So it will no longer be a question of remembering, but of making up a childlike voice. (53)

The argument can be (and has been) made that any act of writing about

the self involves making up, among other things, a stable identity around which to structure that writing. Robert Elbaz' comment that "any conception of nature must of necessity be fictional -- that is, a particular arrangement of reality" (81) has already been quoted as one example of this attitude to recollections of the past. However, childhood is a special case; recollection of one's adult life can be written about in the voice commonly used by the adult writer -- a child's voice, incomplete vocabulary, unpractised syntactical structure and all, must be either mimicked entirely or ignored in favour of the adult voice. The voice must be "made up," in Lejeune's terms, because it is not available to be simply remembered.

Carr's method of "making up" this "childlike voice" revolves around her active verbs and unexpectedly descriptive adjectives. By presenting a world-view substantially different from any traditional perception, the illusion of another identity can be created; by presenting a passionately active, individualistic world, Small's identity as a passionately individualistic young girl is created. One example of the activity surrounding Small comes when she attempts to ride the family milk cow, practising for her future career; she wants to "join the circus and ride a white horse through hoops of fire" (17), although the family has no horse for her to practice on. To make up for this lack, Small climbs onto the cow from the top of the fence:

> For one still moment, while the slow mind of the Cow surmounted her astonishment, Small sat in the wide valley between horns and hip-bones. Then it seemed as though the Cow fell

> apart, and as if every part of her shot in a different direction.
>
> Small hurled through space and bumped hard.
>
> (19)

The surreal dissolution of the bucking cow into fragments flying outward marks the activity that Small experiences in the world, but, and more important, it also marks the power and depth of Small's imagination. As Elizabeth W. Bruss remarks of Boswell's journals, verbs in the autobiographical discourse reveal "identity as process" (74). Small's experience of the cow as a passive, slow-moving, slow-thinking animal is exploded by the violent reaction to her climbing on the cow's back -- it is not in body alone that Small "hurled through space and bumped hard."

Upon being shown Small's newest bruises from this adventure, Middle comments "I expect you had better marry a farmer; maybe you're not exactly suited for a circus rider" (20). Small's self-perception changes in the moment of being thrown by the cow, but the alteration is (typically) not recognized or acknowledged by her; Middle has the last word regarding the cow-riding episode, and Small never picks it up again. However, the family eventually purchases a horse, and Small immediately sees it as an impressive creature indeed. He is put in the cow yard with the old milk-cow, but Small thinks "I suppose we shall have to call it the Horse Yard now. . . . He's bigger and so much grander than the Cow" (23). However, the cow succeeds in maintaining her ascendancy. When the horse sees the cow's pile of vegetable greens, he leans over hoping to get some for himself:

> [h]e left his four feet and the tips of his

> ears just where they had been, but the roots of his ears, and his neck and lips stretched forward towards the greens until it looked as if he would fall for crookedness. The Cow's head moved ever so little; she gave him a look, and pointed one horn right at his eye. His body shot back to where it should be, square above his legs, and he sighed and turned away, with his ears and his tail pressed down tight. (23)

Once again, Middle gets the last word: "I guess it will be all right for us to call it the Cow Yard still" (23). Although it seems to be Small's imaginative perception that filters this scene, the judgements of it -- the evidence that the scene has been understood -- are given by Middle, the motherly little girl forever caring for her dolls. The individualistic rebel, though she acts as the centre for episodes like these two involving the cow, loses her voice and authority when a judgement must be made about what has just taken place.

Part of the confusion about Small (that she is an active figure who loses her agency at the end of each episode) arises from the problem of narration. During first-person narration, the narrator of the text is actually referred to as "Emily," not "Small." When Small is named in the text, she is not the narrator; in the chapter entitled "Cow Yard Child," in which the episodes of the cow occur, she is not the narrator, although her perceptions seem to be the primary concern of the chapter. Here the problem of consistency arises again -- is

the figure of Small a different character for the different narrators of The Book of Small? Does she occupy psychologically distinct states in the two distinct narrative patterns?

In fact, Small frequently loses her agency even when she, as the narrator, seems able to control the direction of the episode. The first chapter of the book, "Sunday," which is narrated in the past tense by Small/Emily, ends with a scene of all the Carr children going to bed, Lizzie by herself, Dick being tucked in by Dede, and Alice and Emily going to bed together in the same room. There is mutuality implicit in all Alice's and Emily's actions in their room, undoing each other's clothing and seeming to brush each other's hair while each sucks on hard candy, but it is a mutuality that exists only until the conclusive gesture of bedtime:

> Alice was two years older than I. She stopped brushing her long red hair, jumped into bed, leaned over the chair that the candle sat on.
>
> Pouf!. . . Out went Sunday and the candle. (14)

The togetherness that marked the entire day spent by the whole family, but especially by Alice and Emily, disintegrates into the right of the older child to control, in a small but definitive manner, the existence of the younger. Middle's control of the last word in "Cow Yard Child" is part of the same domination, because she and Alice are, after all, the same character.

The same pattern of agency denied continues throughout The Book of Small, but it receives a significant challenge in "White Currants,"

the penultimate story in "The Book of Small." "White Currants" uses a variety of approaches to dramatize a character's striving to escape from the demands of time, space, and narrative structure. The story is organized thematically around a sort of Wordsworthian moment out of time, but one that is interrupted by the world. The narrative proceeds in the second person in "White Currants," for almost the only time in the book:

> It happened many times, and it always happened just in that corner of the old garden.
>
> When it was going to happen, the dance in your feet took you there without your doing anything about it. You danced through the flower garden and the vegetable garden till you came to the row of currant bushes, and then you danced down it. (53)

The narrator describes the black, red, and white currant bushes, focusing on the transparency of the ripest white currants, saying that each one "hung there like an almost-told secret." There is no specific time in this story; it is a repeated incident, one that happened "many times" to "you," not to any character contained by the text.

Near the white currant bush is the compost pile, out of which grows "a half-wild mauvy-pink flower. The leaves and the blossoms were not much to look at, because it poured every drop of its glory into its smell. When you went there the colour and the smell took you and wrapped you up in themselves" (53). Once again, the world of <u>The</u>

Book of Small proves itself to be tremendously active, "the colour and the smell" of these flowers not only wrapping "you up in themselves," but inducing a dream of a boy on a white horse, who has brought you a white horse to ride as well. As the ride continues, details become abstracted from objects to form an atmosphere of sensation rather than reality. The ride becomes a transcendental moment of absolute ecstasy, that is roughly interrupted by an adult:

> Everything was going so fast -- the butterflies' wings, the pink flowers, the hum and the smell, that they stopped being four things and became one most lovely thing, and the little boy and the white horses and I were in the middle of it, like the seeds that you saw dimly inside the white currants. In fact, the beautiful thing **was** like the white currants, like a big splendid secret getting clearer and clearer every moment -- just a second more and --.
>
> "Come and gather the white currants," a grown-up voice called from the vegetable garden. (54)

The moment of ecstasy is even more beautiful for its revealed fragility, easily destroyed by a simple "grown-up voice." Upon beginning to write this story, Carr noted in her journal "I want it to be so dainty, so ephemeral that it just melts as you look at it like a snowflake" -- like the experience itself (Hundreds 262, September 25, 1936). In the above quotation from "White Currants," the strands of

first- and second-person narration coincide; "I" and "you" are both used to name the character being described. The intermingling of characters makes it clear that the narrator herself is in fact the protagonist of the story, but that the reader is fully implicated in the story as well.

The "grown-up voice" seems to remove all potential agency from the narrator and protagonist in calling her to pick white currants:

> The most beautiful thing fell apart. The bees and the butterflies and the mauvy-pink flowers and the smell, stopped being one and sat down in their own four places. The boy and the horses were gone. (54)

Delaying her picking of the white currants, which would in effect remove the identity of the bush, the protagonist asks the grown-up if they could not simply allow the currants to ripen longer, if the currants would not approach absolute clarity if left alone. Brusquely, the grown-up answers "No, they would shrivel" (55). Delaying still longer, the protagonist asks the name of the mauvy-pink flowers growing in the compost heap, to be told "Rocket. . . the same as fireworks." Then, for almost the only time in The Book of Small, the protagonist gets the last word, re-entering her imaginative world by offering without commentary her thoughts on the name: "Rockets! Beautiful things that tear up into the air and explode!" (55).

The transitory nature of rockets, only beautiful while they are extinguishing themselves, prepares the narrator for the sadness of stripping the white currant bush of its load of "almost-told secrets."

All things reach an end, and the currants have reached theirs; typically, though, Carr's narrator does not include her readers in the child's mental, probably unconscious unraveling of the implications gleaned from the grown-up's naming of the flowers. Although the main character of The Book of Small seems to have at long last found an enduring agency through imagination, the book's readers are not permitted a full view of that agency. At the same time, though, there is no person specified in the final words of the story, and, given the blending of the first- and second-person narration earlier in the story, it is highly likely that the reader is meant to be implicated in that summation of "White Currants."

The thematic connections between the quotations thus far from The Book of Small are fairly clear -- a clothes-horse, a cow being used as a horse, an actual horse, and an imaginary friend bringing white horses to ride; also there is the link of whiteness in white currants, the story "ephemeral" as a "snowflake," and the white horses brought by the dream boy. There is a very real possibility that the horse image, and especially the white horse, is emblematic of the reading of romantic children's stories. Although Carr claims that "Father did not believe in fairy stories for children," he still read them At the Back of the North Wind, though it "was as fairy as anything,. . . because it was in the Sunday at Home" (13) as a serialized story. In "The Cow Yard," while the three sisters sit around a fire roasting potatoes, "Bigger told stories. . . [which] were grand and impossible, and. . . soared beyond imagining" (17). The dream world is no less real than the "actual" one, especially

considering Small's return to the dream world in spite of the adult's intrusion in "White Currants." After all, Small's world feels almost imagined anyway, so vivid is the young girl's perception. Because she endows all things with so much agency and power, she becomes a type of the storyteller prominent in fairy tales.

However, in spite of the apparent power of the protagonist of "White Currants," the primary thread of The Book of Small is of agency denied. Repeatedly, the imaginative, sensitive, bright girl of these stories loses the authority she seems to own as a right, not a privilege. However, Small herself stands as the dominant figure of the book; the book's impression is of her strength and individualism, not of the constant thwarting of her desires. And this is directly caused by the different narrative voices of the book. Stories told from distinct points of view cohere only through the inescapable similarity of the voices belonging to the different narrators; indeed, it is difficult to accept that Small herself never directly involves herself in the business of narration (again with the possible exception of "White Currants"). The back cover of the 1986 Irwin paperback edition of The Book of Small, for example, states that the book is about "life in Victoria, B.C., at the end of the last century, as seen by a little girl of intense imagination." In spite of Small's non-participation in the narrative of her story, the book-cover's claim is absolutely true, because the voice of the narrator carefully mimics the voice that the reader might imagine Small to have.

The twinning and combining of narrative voices is crucial to the development of The Book of Small, as it is for any autobiography of

long-ago childhood. Yet the problem of dual narration arises again -- how coherently autobiographical can a text be with two consciously distinct narrators, each one being a version of the author, and with the stories of two childhood versions of the author? Elizabeth Bruss, for one answer, would seem to argue that such narrative variations actually enhance the autobiographical nature of the text. In writing of Boswell's London Journal, she remarks that were Boswell's Journal to be a biography, it would not stand as a particularly admirable one:

> Self-indulgent and deliberately fantastic narrative tactics would threaten not only distortion but distraction, taking attention away from the protagonist of the biography. But the autobiographer is his own hero and his flights of narrative fancy are an index of the psychology of the subject. (76)

The adoption of various and potentially discordant voices is only "an index of the psychology of the subject," not a possible death-blow for the reliability or artistry of the finished text. Indeed, the adoption of voices might even be a requirement for the truly modern autobiography. The many voices of Carr's narrators surely allow for a study of "the psychology of the subject," especially since, as Helen Buss remarks, it is possible to read Carr's books as "a kind of serial autobiography, a way to demonstrate the multiplicity of her identity as artist and woman" (20). The Book of Small illustrates the multiplicity of the autobiographer's life as child and adult, as self-narrating figure and observed character rather than as artist and

woman, but Buss's point holds true; there is a constantly shifting sense of the identity of Carr/ the narrator/ Small/ young Emily that subverts the notion of a unified selfhood.

Whereas The Book of Small seamlessly blends the multiple voices, and multiple selves, of young Emily, Small, and the adult narrator, Carr's paintings of 1928 to 1930-31 portray the artist's world through a similar interlacing of organizational structures. In paintings such as Big Raven (1931; no. 48), Nirvana (1929-30; no. 62), and Indian Church (1929; no. 69), "land forms are restructured as a series of interweaving planes" (Shadbolt 70). Similarly, Emily Carr's life is conceived in The Book of Small through interwoven voices speaking from within the same person. The effect achieved by this interlacing of forms is very different from that achieved by the swirling, unified nature in Carr's later paintings; these earlier works "aimed at simplification, consolidation, and the creation of mass" (Shadbolt 72), not the illusion of motion that she sought in later canvasses such as A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth (1935; no.100).

Big Raven is a striking revision of the 1912 Fauvist watercolour Cumshewa (no. 47). Although Fauvist reworkings of earlier paintings had resulted in significant changes in Carr's expressive capability, her development of the style used from 1928 to 1931 provided her with an immensely rich means for expressing the sensations of a West Coast forest, something she had been seeking since before her first exposure to Fauvism. The 1909 oil on wood Giant Trees, Stanley Park (no. 5), for example, is an early attempt to convey a sense of deep wonder at and respect for the forest. The most obvious difference between

Cumshewa and Big Raven is the fluidity and sense of mass in the depiction of the undergrowth in the later work. Were it not for its mass, the undergrowth's fluidity might lead to a perception of it as water or green flame, rather than the "bursting growth" that Carr refers to in her description of the Cumshewa raven in Klee Wyck (21). The raven totem pole in Big Raven seems to be located on the side of a hill, the swirling undergrowth moving upwards past the raven to its double, a lone tree reminiscent of Lawren Harris' works from the same period. The title of the painting, as well as the totem pole's central position, make it clear that the raven is its primary subject, but the highly formalized tree, as the necessary precursor to the totem pole, occupies an important subordinate role.

The tree itself is sharply rendered as a succession of angular masses ascending a central pole, the angles at which the forms intersect the trunk indicating a strong but eddying wind. The shafts of sunlight behind the raven themselves evoke a sense of mass in their pillar-like representation; as Shadbolt notes, "pendant clouds and light shafts are given volume and density by deep modelling and tonal contrast" quite frequently in works of this period (70). But not only does the sunlight in the picture seem pillar-like, but individual shafts of sunlight seem to fold around each other, as if the sun were in more than one position to allow a multidirectional matrix of light.

The interweaving effect of such paintings is most clearly illustrated by the sunlight and the branches of the red cedar, but the undergrowth operates in the same manner. The undergrowth in Big Raven is painted with a massive simplicity lacking in Cumshewa. In Cumshewa,

Carr attempts to individualize different types of growth in the underbrush surrounding the totem pole, using a variety of colours to do so; in Big Raven, she realizes that there is no need to individualize the different plants that, after all, serve essentially as a background for the raven. Interestingly, it is by presenting the undergrowth as a single entity that she endows it with real significance -- it is a far more crucial component of Big Raven than of Cumshewa, precisely because of its unity and non-individuality. The underbrush is a solid mass, but an active one, fully involved in the existence of the totem. In discussing her memory of the raven at Cumshewa, she emphasizes the "strong young trees [that] . . . grew up around the dilapidated old raven, sheltering him from the tearing winds now that he was old and rotting" (Klee Wyck 21). The undergrowth that Carr was attempting to evoke with Big Raven was an active one, not a static tableau. And to illustrate activity in a solid object, she had to break that object down into the "interweaving planes" that Shadbolt mentions. There is no contradiction in the notion of breaking down a solid into apparently individual components; to the eye, an ocean is composed of waves, but is still a single entity.

Not all critics are agreed on Carr's thematic focus in the paintings of the years from 1929 to 1931, however. For example, Doris Shadbolt finds that "[b]rooding silence is the mood" of Nirvana (no. 62), while in similar canvases "space tends to be claustrophobically limited" by the "oppressive character of the powerful natural environment" (74). Alish Farrell concurs, in a sense, but intensifies Shadbolt's ideas:

> The underlying tone of the paintings of. . . 1929-31 is of claustrophobic anxiety: the overwhelming power of a brutal, inchoate natural world is realized in the enveloping, swallowing vegetable forms. . . . (749)

"Brooding silence" is very different from "claustrophobic anxiety," though Shadbolt and Farrell are here discussing contemporaneous paintings of highly similar themes. Whereas Farrell finds the forest interiors of this period to be "overwhelming" or even "swallowing," Shadbolt finds them "oppressive" at their extreme but more often simply "brooding." (Interestingly, Farrell finds the same activity and agency in Carr's paintings of this period that can be found in The Book of Small, though the mood of the book is far from "claustrophobic," or even "brooding" for that matter.)

On the other side of this question are Joan Murray, who finds Carr an "exultant" landscape painter (170), and Susan Crean, who emphasizes "the surging rhythms of Carr's forest interiors, which pulsate with the lush wetness of growth" (18). Indeed, it is Crean's view which most closely approximates my own; growth is in many ways neither a positive nor a negative force, however powerful, intimidating, or vital it may be. In Big Raven, there is no inescapable menace or threat given out by the subject of the painting. What there is is an overwhelming impression of uncontrolled, uncontrollable growth, the direction of which seems to turn inward so that the growth seems to be nourishing and consuming itself at one and the same time. In Nirvana, even the sense of wildness in Big Raven's

undergrowth is absent. The undergrowth at the base of each totem pole is essentially chiselled, like frozen waves, as still as Carr ever allowed her undergrowth to be in this period. The massive trees behind the totem poles in the foreground stand as a series of interwoven forms and lines, not so much trees as a naturally growing mass of natural totem poles, not so much forest as a single entity called Forest. Shadbolt is justified in discussing the "brooding silence" of the work not simply because the totems themselves appear to be deep in thought, but also because the forest behind the totems mimics the pensive, brooding posture of the two carved totems. "Brooding" also carries with it a second meaning, that of the hen on her nest; "oppressive" seems to me to overstate the case, except in some scattered examples.

The roughly contemporaneous Indian Church (1929; no. 69) is likely Carr's best-known painting. The curiously evocative juxtaposition of gigantic, stylized forest and stark, white church, together with its burial crosses, has given rise to much of the variation apparent in different descriptions of Carr's perceptions of the forest, such as that noted above in comments by Shadbolt, Farrell, Crean, and Murray. Shadbolt comments of the work that the "contrast of alien white seems to suggest the intrusion of man into nature's domain" (76), but there is no certainty that it was Carr's intent to suggest such a thing (if her intent matters in such a case). Lawren Harris apparently wrote to Carr once "I do not think you will do anything better" than Indian Church (Growing Pains 253), but his respect does not solve any of the fundamental questions posed by the

canvas. Is the church a symbol of religion, or human presence, or human invasion? Does it represent the imposition of white culture on natives? Is the church dwarfed and oppressed by the sheer power and life inherent in the surrounding trees, or does the sweeping upward movement initiated by the undergrowth and completed by the treetops far above the painting's upper frame flow through the church as well? And if the church is portrayed as an invasive (though defeated) presence in these woods, does that signify a positive or a negative idea for Carr? Her love of God, bursting from the pages of her journal, was never an uncomplicated thing:

> Alone, I have crept into many strange churches of different denominations, in San Francisco, in London, in Indian villages way up north, and was comforted by the solemnity. But at home, bribed occasionally into the Reformed Episcopal, I sat fuming. . . . I longed to get out of church and crisp up in the open air. God got so stuffy squeezed into a church. Only out in the open was there room for Him. (Hundreds 329, Dec. 28, 1940)

In the same entry, apparently a cumulative memory, Carr both fondly remembers and rejects the concept of religion inside a church. The search for God forms a major part of Carr's artistic credo, clearly, but religion occupies a more precarious position. As Carr wrote in Hundreds and Thousands on October 11, 1935, "[s]urely the woods are God's tabernacle. . . . It is God in His woods' tabernacle I long to

express" (201). How, in Indian Church, does a church building interact with God's own tabernacle?

One key to the interpretation of this problem lies in Carr's use of dimension and perspective for the twin subjects of church and forest. Whereas this forest, like that in Nirvana, Old Time Coast Village (1929; no. 67), and Western Forest (1929-30; no. 74), is a three-dimensional, essentially infinite series of interwoven and interweaving planes of green, the church itself is a largely two-dimensional surface, a contrast Shadbolt describes as "forest matrix and church facade" (76). If Carr's paintings of this period can be characterized through allusion to the presence of planes woven together into a sort of "matrix," then the church of Indian Church exists as an intrusive object. The union and continuity of the forest has been disrupted.

Taking the church as a disruptive presence within a fully self-coherent realm allows the church's role in the woods to be related to the role of Small's/Emily's sisters in The Book of Small; the sisters are inescapably part of Small's life, even bearing the related names of Middle, Bigger, and the Elder, but they are part of the relatively unified opposition to Small found in the world of the adults. As has been discussed above, in particular, Middle is the sister closest to Small in age and spirit, yet is the one most frequently to voice establishment opinions against the individualist beliefs and experiences of Small. For while there are similarities it is clear that "Middle [preferred] hugging a doll, and Small [preferred] hugging a kitten" (Small 17). The social conformity

expressed in Middle's self-training for the role of wife and mother is in direct contrast to the individualism of Small's animistic passion for animals. Similarly, because the "tabernacle of the woods" and the Indian church are so very nearly related, Indian Church provokes powerful reactions that refuse resolution into a single viewpoint-- as Middle and Small do, the woods and church clash in decided conflict.

The several voices of The Book of Small are what define it as a text. In spite of Small's apparent power and agency, judgments and decisions are largely made by other, older characters whose voices supersede her own. Small herself never narrates, but the narrator's language in stories about either Emily or Small blends almost seamlessly into the speaking voice of the young girl at the centre of this book. As Lejeune remarks, the voice of childhood must be made up, and is therefore nearly allied to the fictional, but there is no other option in recapturing childhood. Either it is a story told by an adult about someone who seems utterly removed from the narrator, or the child-protagonist verges on an adult awareness while still a child (an absurdity), or the voice of the child is mimicked and echoed by the narrator to evoke the world and perceptions of the child, not just the child herself -- which latter option Carr chose for The Book of Small.

Carr's professed autobiography, Growing Pains, exploits the potential offered by the multiplicity of narrative voices even more fully than does The Book of Small. Because the title-page quite self-consciously asserts that this is An Autobiography, all the conventional baggage accorded the genre of the autobiography is

invoked by the book's narrator. However falsely it occupies its position, realism (or veracity) plays a major role in the expectations aroused by the term "autobiography"; as many writers have shown (and many theorists have argued), truth has very little to do with autobiography. Carr's use in Growing Pains of a shifting, multivocal narrator exploits exactly this gap between the reader's preconceptions and the genre's possibilities.

Chapter 4

Even the person writing the blurb on the back cover of the Irwin paperback edition of Growing Pains was confused by Carr's manipulation of genre; there, the book is referred to as an "autobiographical collection." By defining it as a "collection," the anonymous writer opposed his or her sense of categorization to Carr's own, served by the title-page designation as An Autobiography. This anonymous author of the back cover is in many ways correct to perceive and emphasize the spaces between individually titled sections of the text, because a great deal of information is elided in Growing Pains. However, he or she fails to grasp just how greatly the cumulative significance of Carr's life stories is enhanced by the use of gaps, elision, and the telescoping of time. Indeed, the only gesture made in that direction is the comment that the book "is invaluable for revealing the face she wanted to show the world and the rich texture of her life." (Shadbolt, in a similar turn of phrase, though some years earlier, writes that all Carr's works are "invaluable for glimpsing her life and for seeing the face she wanted to show the world" [12].)

The simple fact is that Growing Pains, taken to be a

"collection" of autobiographical stories, is a very different book than it is when taken to be a complete, self-sufficient autobiography. For one thing, the notion of a collection implies that there is more to the author's life than is included within the front and back covers of the volume or volumes presented as a collection; an autobiography pretends to exhaustiveness, no matter how well the reader understands that any text can contain only a selection of facts. In a sense, it is precisely because the reader understands the need for selection that an autobiography is so different from an autobiographical collection -- an aware reader recognizes that the autobiographer, if he or she has done the job well, has included everything of relevance for summing up or otherwise presenting his or her life.[1] There is always more to be told, certainly, because no book can ever be thoroughly exhaustive, but there is nothing of true relevance omitted. That is to say, if something is omitted, it is omitted because its absence is more significant than its presence -- such as Carr's persistent denial of any critical support for her painting during the period dating from her return from France in 1912 until the exposure and acceptance of her work in Ontario in 1927, in spite of evidence to the contrary (Sanger 217, among others). Carr leaves her supporters out of Growing Pains, for the most part; by doing so, she maintains and enhances her myth of the suffering, committed artist. By including her critics as well as omitting her supporters, she magnifies the very real opposition that she faces.

Of course, the standards of relevance are very different for different people, which is why Peter Sanger's "Finding D'Sonoqua's

Child" judges Carr's "lies" so severely. As Timothy Dow Adams remarks with Sanger in mind, "the autobiographical Emily Carr, as opposed to the biographical one, has been consistently characterized as unreliable, a distorter of the truth through fictional invention, a person given to excessive concealment, and even a liar" (37). Sanger's argument is wide-ranging, but breaks down for essentially one reason -- he refuses to accept Carr's autobiographic code. When he argues that "her own usual writing convention" is "autobiographical realism" (234), he misrepresents Carr's other books -- The Book of Small's most notable resemblance to realism is to the stereotypically South American magic realism, not the realism of D.H. Lawrence, as Sanger contends (234). Sanger simply cannot accept that an autobiography can be written in an unconventional form; he therefore cannot accept Carr's departures from strict realism, and cannot see his way to an alternate valuation of Growing Pains.

To take one example, Sanger's comment regarding Carr's frequent misrepresentation of her own age is absolutely valid; what is false about it is the severe, almost self-righteous tone that Sanger takes:

> Forgetfulness alone was not at work in these adjustments of age. They are too consistent and radical to be accidental. They enabled Carr to reconstruct the past in her own favour. (221)

As Nancy Pagh comments about Sanger's paper, his attack on Carr's lack of realism "is perhaps a worst-case scenario of the failure to ask why Carr describes her life in the way she does" (74); it is enough for Sanger that the truth seems to be ignored, regardless of reasons and

justifications for doing so. It is true that Carr "reconstructed the past in her own favour," but it must be remembered that Carr's future had been radically reconstructed as well; out of humble beginnings, a portly woman, living in poverty and approaching sixty, a spinster and self-confessed "prude" (Growing Pains 29), was suddenly acclaimed as one of Canada's great artists, and one of her most modern as well. In Victoria at this time, Carr was regarded as little more than a crazy old woman who painted strange pictures.[2] The shift from mockery to respect came with little change on her part, and came very quickly. Less than ten years after breeding and selling dogs to make enough to live on, and renting out so much of her own home that she was reduced to living in the basement in the winter and in a tent on the back lawn in the summer, she was a critically acclaimed, almost self-supporting artist. Between 9 February and 30 April of 1937, Hundreds and Thousands tells us, at the peak of her sales, over three thousand dollars worth of her paintings were sold, mostly in the east. In 1944, at the Dominion Gallery in Montreal, "fifty-seven of the sixty works on display" were sold (Reid 159). Clearly, the life of a poor old woman, who looked as if she was going to decline until her death, was reconstructed into the life of a vibrant, mature artist -- and if a future is so radically reshaped, it is only natural to search the past for keys to such an alteration. The writing of such keys might indeed look like a willful reconstruction of the past.

On the other hand, a theorist like Roy Pascal defines autobiography precisely in terms of its recreation of the past as a different series of episodes than that actually experienced by the writer:

> "reconstruction of the past" is an impossible task. A single day's experience is limitless in its radiation backward and forward. So that we have to hurry to qualify the [previous] assertions by adding that autobiography is a shaping of the past. It imposes a pattern on a life, constructs out of it a coherent story. (9)

Pascal's argument here precisely opposes Sanger's implied theory of autobiography, that factual truth ought never to be abandoned for any reason. Indeed, Pascal asserts throughout Design and Truth in Autobiography that factuality has little to do in the end with the autobiographical project. Memoirs, he claims, are about persons other than the writer, and factual truth is therefore crucial to a memoir, but autobiography is the story of the writer -- facts belong to others, the story and the life belong to the autobiographer.

In order to explain her meteoric rise to national prominence as an artist at a relatively advanced age, Carr might have felt pressed to reinterpret her own past in such a way as to "reconstruct [it] in her own favour" ("reconstruct" in Sanger's terms, not Pascal's). On the other hand, such a rationalization only explains realistically Carr's departure from autobiographical realism -- an irony not to be ignored. As Nancy Pagh argues, part of the problem facing people considering Carr's books as autobiography is that the modes of autobiography traditionally accepted as such are what "feminists have called the masculine-oriented. . . model" (65). Informing and supporting such models

> is a view of the text as a mirror in which the individual's self-image is reflected; the underlying assumption is that the measure of success lies in the degree of coincidence between the "self" and the reflection. . . . [H]owever, this "mirror" approach to autobiography ignores the extent to which the self and self-image might not coincide. (65)

Pascal's notion that autobiography is the story of the self and how it came to be clearly operates in the form of the "mirror" approach that Pagh here devalidates; modern autobiography, as well as first-person narration more generally, derives much of its intensity from the conflict between self and self-image. The confessions of anorexics, increasingly available in a widening range of sources, focus almost exclusively on this disjunction; part of the unique power of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (not an autobiography, but a dramatic monologue, with the similar aim of creating a speaking self) springs from Prufrock's discomfort with his own understanding of himself and his fear that his own appearance is the only factor considered when a person judges him -- a different version of the conflict between self and self-image. The image-conscious western world, typified by eating disorders and the cult of the entertainer, will likely produce more and more autobiographies, written by both women and men, that develop along the lines of this disjunction.

But what has all this to do with Emily Carr, or with Growing Pains, the alleged subject of this chapter? In particular, what has this to do with an examination of the voices conjured up by Carr in

her autobiographical writings? It is quite simply that, according to Pagh, it is possible that "women and men might write autobiography in order to question or to melt away the protective self-images that have been built up to disguise painful realities" (78). Every voice utilized by Carr embodies a self-image, perceived most frequently by others but always to some extent internalized by Carr herself. Most of these self-images are, in some way, oppressed figures, shadows of the oppressed person Carr felt herself to be. Small is a child, by definition subservient to her parents and elder siblings; Klee Wyck is a white woman alone with the natives, respected and admired but regarded as "ignorant" about those wild things and ways about which "the Indian could speak with authority to white people" (Klee Wyck 11).

However, in both The Book of Small and Klee Wyck, that oppression is somewhat limited, in the sense that the events recounted only arise out of a certain period or phase of Carr's life. In Growing Pains, the many voices of Carr -- Small, young Emily, Klee Wyck, Miss Carr the Artist -- combine in an attempt to do two things: to present the life of Emily Carr as a lifelong, never-ending struggle against external forces, and to evade the limiting effects of a monolithic, falsely unified selfhood. A person's identity is composed of many disparate component selves, many generated through interaction with representatives of different communities. A person confined to a single, unified identity is dangerously like a caricature: the wife, the wage-earner, the pretty girl, the smart boy. All these descriptions are partial, but unified. By discussing this, I mean to

emphasize the lack of a coherent, fully self-expressive Carr present within the text of Growing Pains, and to draw attention to the multiplicity of selves apparent in Carr's writing, a multiplicity not permitted by such mainstream theorizing about autobiography as Richard Coe's comment (quoted by Nancy Pagh) that autobiography requires both narrating self and narrator's life to form "some valid, coherent, and well-proportioned shape" (65). The problem with this sort of formulation, as Robert Elbaz recognizes, is that "if the self is created in and through language [as it inescapably is in autobiography], it can never be a finished product; it can never be analysed or described since the description itself is in ceaseless movement" (153). There can never be the "valid, coherent, and well-proportioned shape" that Richard Coe, and to some extent Roy Pascal, demand in their definitions of autobiography.

The problem of the indeterminacy of language enters into the reading of autobiography, but language's greatest significance is in making difficult the deduction of a single, coherent self from a single text which might seem to encourage the notion of a monolithic self, such as Klee Wyck or The Book of Small. However, Carr never allows this problem to become a central concern for readers of these two autobiographies, because she attempts to provide a primary and dominant narrator for each text, thereby further condoning the deduction of a unified self. In Growing Pains, though, the narrator uses a variety of approaches and voices to express herself and give words to her experiences. By doing so, she approaches the very margins of conventional autobiography -- she challenges the notion of

the unified self at the same time that she writes the autobiography of that self.

The descriptiveness of Small, for example, reappears throughout the book. The birth of Emily allows Small to evoke humourously the tensions of the later Carr family dynamic, presaging later experience:

> I was born during a mid-December snow storm; the north wind howled and bit. Contrary from the start, I kept the family in suspense all day. . . . Icicles hung, wind moaned, I dallied. At three in the morning I sent Father plowing on foot through knee-deep snow to fetch Nurse Randal. (5)

She goes on to argue that it was good for her father to plow through the snow at such an hour, "seeing that he got his way in everything else" (5). This vision of the "contrary" child refusing to be born, sending her father out into the storm to search for a nurse, leads naturally into a consideration of the politics of the Carr family as a whole a few years later. More important for my purposes, though, it presents the same voice so prevalent in The Book of Small -- humourous, but intensely individualistic. The bathos of "Icicles hung, wind moaned, I dallied" amuses at the same time as it claims a certain amount of agency for the still unborn Emily.

While Emily is studying in San Francisco, her guardians there force her, at her elder sister's request, to visit a family referred to in Growing Pains as "the Roarats" (40), a suspiciously onomatopoeic last name considering their constant "roaring at" each other. She stays at the Roarats' home overnight, and shares a room with Aunt

Rodgers, who "had the shapeless up-and-downness of a sere cob of corn, old and still in its sheath of wrinkled yellow, parched right through and extremely disagreeable" (40). After this introduction, Small's voice comes to full ascendancy in the description of Aunt Rodgers after her toilette before bedtime:

> On Aunt Rodgers' pillow was a pink shininess, on the bedpost hung a cluster of brown frizz, there was a lipless grin drowning in a glass of water. Without spectacles Aunt Rodgers' eyes looked like half-cooked gooseberries. Her two cheeks sank down into her throat like a couple of heavy muffins. (43)

There is really no point to the introduction of the Roarats; at least, they have no connection to Carr's art studies in San Francisco, as most of the vignettes from this period do. Their only purpose seems to be to demonstrate the extent to which Emily's life in San Francisco is controlled by others. The visit itself is enforced by the threat to Emily that if she will not see the Roarats, "In place of [her] monthly check [she] will receive a boat ticket for home" (40). Only the intensely imaginative Small can provide Emily with lightness or diversion in such an occasion -- so Small takes over the description.

The most frequent targets of Small's description in Growing Pains are places, which are normally unfamiliar but personalized by Small, and unsympathetic characters, who are turned into objects of at best dubious worth by Small's sense of humour. One location that benefits from Small's approbation is the cemetery of an unnamed English vicarage:

> Through a squeaky, hinged gate you could pass from vicarage garden to churchyard, from overgrown, shady green to sunny, close-clipped graves. Some of these had gay posies snuggled up to the tombstones. Some stones staggered and tipped, almost as if they were dancing on the emerald turf. Everything was so sombre about the vicarage and church it made the graves seem almost hilarious. (121)

The contrast between sun and shade is a common structural concern in Carr's painting, visible as early as the 1909 Giant Trees, Stanley Park already referred to (no. 5). However, the flowers snuggling up to grave markers and the dancing tombstones illustrate perfectly Small's ability to describe her emotional response to an object by embedding that response in the object itself.

While unsympathetic characters, such as Aunt Rodgers, do not fare so well as the sunny, cheerful cemetery, they are no less evocatively described. A pushy shoe-salesman, bent on forcing Carr's badly injured foot into an uncomfortable shoe, is treated harshly indeed, by Emily as well as by Small:

> [A]fter he had forced about seven squeals out of me, I struck with the well foot giving the princely creature such a kick square amidships that he sprawled flat and backwards, hitting his head against a pile of shoe boxes which came clattering down on him spreading him like a starfish. (123)

The transformation of the "princely creature" into a "starfish" is effected instantaneously by Small. The kick and insult are well-deserved, no doubt, but it is the image of the starfish, and not the kick itself, that guarantees Emily's individuality; any woman may kick a shoe-salesman causing her pain, but very few would describe the sprawling man as a "starfish." An offensively religious man in the next chapter is described similarly -- or at least his hands are. On bidding farewell to Brother Simon, Small's voice can be recognized in Carr's complaint that "One of his hands below mine, the other on top, was like being folded between raw kippers" (130). Coming as it does after Brother Simon's decidedly negative description of her in the family prayer ("He told God mean things about me" [129]), the final portrait of him reclaims Carr's spirit from Brother Simon's religious insults by emphasizing the extreme individuality and intensity of its imagining -- of the imagining that The Book of Small taught Carr's reader to associate with Small.

Of course, Small is just one of the voices of Growing Pains. There is also the mystic[3] -- who writes of San Francisco's Geary Street Anglican Church choir that

> [s]uddenly high up under the roof, where incense and the smell of flowers had met, sounded a loveliness that caught your breath. . . . Either the church or I was trembling. . . . The church hushed to. . . a stillness like that of the live flowers which, like us, seemed to be waiting for the Bishop's words. (44-45)

There is also the innocent, needing in her late teens to be told about prostitution (36), drugs (37), and drunkenness (39).[4] Maria Tippett questions the possibility that Carr could have maintained this naivety even in Victoria, but, if Philippe Lejeune's separation of the biographical and autobiographical models is to believed at all, strict truth is essentially irrelevant in relation to an autobiography -- again contrary to Peter Sanger's opinions in the matter. Carr evidently felt it appropriate to depict her coming to a state of experience in San Francisco, away from her family. Whether or not she became aware of these vices in San Francisco is beside the point; at one time, Carr was an innocent forced to learn about such things. That she transferred her learning to her time in California only reveals the naivety that she felt she was bringing to the study of art.

There is also in Growing Pains the voice of the old woman, unwell and so disbelieving of her success that she can barely comprehend the magnificence of the guests (both present and apologetically absent) at her combination seventieth birthday and Klee Wyck publication party (272-75). There is also the painter, learning her craft gradually from fellow students, from teachers, from more experienced students, and most often, most notably, from herself:

> In my dream I saw a wooded hillside, an ordinary slope such as one might see along any Western roadside, tree-covered, normal, no particular pattern or design to catch an artist's eye were he seeking subject-matter. But, in my dream that hillside suddenly lived -- weighted with sap, burning green

> in every leaf, every scrap of it vital!
>
> Woods, that had always meant so much to me, from that moment meant just so much more. (262)

There is no date given for this dream, not even a general indication, though it is spatially located just nineteen pages from the end of Growing Pains. The only sense of place to be drawn from it is that it appeared "Western," a very vague location in Carr's lexicon. All that is clear in the description of the dream is that any sense of time or place is irrelevant. The only definitive presence in the dream is the perception of the painter; the dream's significance is in its effect on the dreamer.

Without presuming to argue that some dream once experienced by Emily Carr controlled the development of her painting, it is clear enough that during late 1931, the solid, architectural forms of her totem and forest studies began to give way, shifting gradually to what Carr was to describe in her journal in 1934 as "unity of movement" (Hundreds 106). The titles of many paintings of this period illustrate her focus without requiring a spectator to refer to the paintings themselves: A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth (1935; no. 100), Study in Movement (1935-36; no. 104), Dancing Sunlight (c. 1937-40; no. 119), Laughing Forest (c. 1939; no. 138), Swirl (1937; no. 139), and Swaying (c. 1935-36; no. 156) are examples from Shadbolt's The Art of Emily Carr, and there are others.

Swirl is an excellent example of the differences between Carr's best-known works (of the 1927 to 1931 period) and her later flowing works, those actively seeking "unity of movement." Few objects in it

are individually painted out, none fully fleshed out; most trees either are themselves sweeps of paint or possess sweeps for their branches. The stump in the lower right corner is solidly rendered, as is the large tree trunk leading out of the top right corner of the painting, but most of the trees are suggested by variations in the swirl of movement revolving around the tree at the centre of the painting's movement. That is not to suggest that the tree is a static component in any way anchoring the work; instead, it provides the impetus to maintain the flow that runs through all parts of Swirl. There are no static objects in this painting, only active, mobile ones. Swirl gives the impression that it is a frozen moment, like a cell of a cartoon, with movement on either side of the moment somewhat arbitrarily chosen by the artist for representation; in this very specific sense, the location of the artist, outside the painting, is the single point at which the components of the painting are in fact still.

These later works are very different in technique from the work of the late 1920s. In the earlier paintings, she individualized most trees, but would reduce several branches at a time to a single large plane, almost solid in its sculpted appearance, often linked to or interwoven with other planes, frequently of other trees. Here, in the later paintings, trees and branches are fully intermingled, their points of merging highly uncertain. There are individual objects and beings in works such as Swirl, but they participate in a movement larger than themselves, expressing the artist's perceptions as much as the natural world. Paintings like Indian Church (1929; no. 69) are

filled with a single entity that looks like several individuals; those such as Swirl are populated with innumerable individuals that combine to form a single entity, but do not lose their unique personalities.

Swaying (c. 1935-36; no. 156) and Sombreness Sunlit (c. 1937-40; 108) provide an even clearer indication of the compositional changes Carr made in the 1930s; whereas Swirl at least has a central figure to act as anchor or focus for the work, neither of these paintings has a focal point as such. There is a relatively static foreground in Swaying, but it is limited to the bottom quarter of the canvas, and few details in it are more than roughed in. The visual emphasis of the painting is on the wave-like arching movement of light and shade that flows through and encompasses the branches of the larger trees, however much or little detail each tree is rendered in. Sombreness Sunlit, similarly, represents above anything else the shafts of light bursting through the gaps between the trees, seeming almost to burst through the very trees themselves. There is a remarkable interpenetration of sunlight and trees in this painting, almost a dissolution of individual identities.

The numerous paintings of sky from the late 1930s represent a further shift in Carr's artistic sensibilities. From a decade-long emphasis on forest interiors, often brooding or even foreboding, she moved into a series of paintings not conventionally representational, but not purely abstract either. About Swaying, and other canvases like it, Doris Shadbolt comments that

> [the] long sweeps of pigment, the gestural hatchings and ripples that relate to trees and growth, the tone reversals and sensitivity to positive and negative

> space. . . demand an abstract reading. Of course their origin in nature remains clear, but a new and powerful tension results from the degree and kind of abstraction in their statement. (144)

The same can be said for sky paintings like Strait of Juan de Fuca (c. 1936; no. 166) and a related untitled work (c. 1934-36; no. 167). In Strait of Juan de Fuca, the only recognizable presence is the Olympic peninsula visible across the water, as well as some outlined fragments of shore jutting into the bottom edge of the painting. The peninsula itself, however, is a very small component of the painting -- the subject is the sky, and its reflection in the water. The peninsula's primary purpose is to act as the focus at which the reflected angular striations of light and cloud meet, not to be in any way the subject of the painting, as it might have been in earlier works. These two landscapes "demand an abstract reading," as Shadbolt asserts, but they are landscapes; their abstraction is unlike anything that Lawren Harris, her influence and supporter, would have sought after in his own abstract paintings. Carr's sky paintings are filled with a sense of movement and change, of transience; Harris' landscapes, in contrast, are frozen, essentially immobile.

In Strait of Juan de Fuca, there is at least the illusion that the Olympic peninsula offers a solid point of departure or emphasis for the viewer, in spite of its diminutive size in relation to the huge, reaching sky above it. In the untitled, similar landscape of the scene along the near coast (rather than looking across the water to the Olympics), the movement and unity of sea and sky flows directly

through the headland, beach, brush, and driftwood (no. 167). The centre of this painting is the sun; that it is impossible to look directly at the sun in reality makes its position as the organizing focus of the work very interesting, implying as it does the necessity of total inclusion in a work of art close to abstraction in its organization of form. The whirling sky makes clear the reason for the frequent allusions to Van Gogh in criticism of Carr's painting,[5] but the circular motion extends through the sandbank on the left of the painting and the headland directly beneath the sun. Plants are hinted at near the base of the sandbank, and houses perch atop the headland at some distance from the edge, but they are merely parts of the general movement enveloping the total scene. As in the earlier forest paintings, whatever the ostensible subject of the painting, and however fully realized the component subjects are as individual forms and objects, the aim of the painting is to portray the "unity of movement" throughout all nature.

In Growing Pains, the same can be said of the collection of voices comprising the figure of the autobiographer, as opposed to the main persona within the book. No matter how clearly the individual voices of the autobiography -- Small, young Emily, Klee Wyck, Miss Carr the Artist, among others -- are rendered, each one is nothing more than a component of the greater, encompassing voice of the autobiographer, though that voice can itself be broken down into the voices mentioned above. In no sense do I claim any sort of unified selfhood for the figure of the autobiographer, or even for Carr herself, and neither do I posit it to be a crucial factor in the

definition or examination of an autobiography. The voices of Carr in Growing Pains, like the component trees of Swirl (no. 139) and Swaying (no. 156), are complete in and of themselves, but are part of a larger scheme. The paintings are not just about the trees, just as they are not simply about the sunlight in them; however, the interplay is nothing without the individual existence of both tree and sunlight. Likewise, two of the voices in Growing Pains comprise the narrative positions of Klee Wyck and The Book of Small respectively, which are themselves autobiographies. In Growing Pains, though, the voices come together, affirming the multiplicity of Carr's identity in a single work. Helen Buss' comment that the works of Carr comprise a "serial autobiography" (20) is true, certainly, but she does not recognize that Growing Pains alone bears much of the seriality of the other books within one volume.

It is interesting to note that Growing Pains has attracted the least critical interest of all Carr's books, and only recently has it become seriously considered as a book to be studied and worked through. The 1965 Literary History of Canada, for example, is especially uncomplimentary toward it, claiming that

> this book unlike the others offers as much embarrassment as pleasure. . . . Her diction, though expressive, teeters between innocence and affectation, at worst developing a squirming coyness that fits ill with either the forthrightness of her painting or the brooding and sibylline Miss Carr of a late photograph. (MacPherson 622)

The diction is essentially the same as in Klee Wyck and The Book of Small; in particular, the "teetering between innocence and affectation" about Growing Pains that offends Jay MacPherson has in fact been transposed almost directly from The Book of Small, where it is part of the characteristic voice of the narrators. Is MacPherson's complaint derived from the problem that Carr does not use an "adult" voice throughout her official autobiography, and therefore does not present any sort of indivisible self? As I hope I have demonstrated, Growing Pains is not to be taken as in any way a "typical" autobiography, but as a multivoiced experience of Carr's internal life. If this is indeed MacPherson's disagreement with the text, it arises from MacPherson's misunderstanding of modernist autobiographic practice. The history of a person's life can be written in many different ways -- the competing biographies of Carr, as of any other major figure, ought to prove this -- but an autobiography, though it could have been written differently, is in the end the definitive portrait.

This is not, of course, to say that every autobiography is ground-breaking or beyond criticism on the basis of fact, genre, or diction. The commercially successful autobiographies of recent years are, almost without exception, thoroughly unoriginal in terms of genre, mimicking the biography in all respects. However, the case is different for Growing Pains. Here, a series of voices, apparently signifying different ages but actually representative of different states of mind, combine to narrate Emily Carr's perception of her own life. This is a powerfully anti-generic move on Carr's part, and one

that ought to have made Growing Pains something of a darling among Canadian literary theorists -- but the theorists seem not to have discovered its use of voices.

Chapter 5

In essence, the problem of the autobiographicality of Emily Carr's published writings is one of definition, because, as Nancy Pagh notes, Carr's books offer a highly original "contribution to the current feminist revisioning of the dynamics of self-inscription" (65), so original a contribution indeed that some of those engaged in the "revisioning" are uncertain what to do with them. The models of autobiography have been violently shaken, and the act of classifying any given text as an autobiography, especially a text written by a woman, implicates the classifier in a scholarly dance of traditionalism and "revisioning," feminist or otherwise.

Growing Pains: An Autobiography has long been regarded as Carr's most autobiographical book, often as her only true autobiography, but rarely accepted as her best work. Pagh's arguments supporting her perception of its canonicity, that it is deemed the definitive autobiography because "it connects most closely with the traditionally masculine esthetic of autobiography" (70), are powerfully stated, but ignore the many voices of Growing Pains. After all, both Klee Wyck and The Book of Small are books revolving around an apparently single and indivisible character who seems to have changed very little by the end of the events recounted, and who speaks from an essentially static voice or identity: much like the "sovereign self" that Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck find at the

core of the traditional autobiography (14). In Growing Pains, rather than simply duplicating in an attractive way the masculine pattern of represented selfhood, the many voices of Emily Carr participate in presenting the multiplicity of her identity as old woman, artist, writer, child, as well as many other selves.

Carr's paintings, while they do not enter into the realm of autobiography as such, contribute to an understanding of Carr's notions of the self. In particular, they offer a clear window into her perception of nature, its individual beings as well as its totality as forest, but a window entirely composed of Carr's artistic vision. In her early Post-Impressionist works, nature is a collection of individual entities, represented with relatively careful attention to form, but rendered more artistic, or less conventional, by her use of colour. In Cumshewa, for example (no. 47), the brush surrounding the base of the raven totem is individualized, the waving tips of innumerable branches painted in along the top edge of the undergrowth. Realism has no firm control on the use of colours in this painting, but does force Carr into using the forms that she does. In addition, her painting in this period belongs to the Post-Impressionist movement, and as such is a way of seeing imposed on her by her European studies, not learned from direct experience with her Canadian subject.

In the paintings of her best-known period, from 1927 to 1931, Carr portrays a nature stuffed full with shapes. The forest interiors of this period, such as Indian Church (no. 69), are densely packed with massive interweaving planes of almost abstracted trees; there are

trees, but they tend to be overwhelmed by the solidity and unity of the forest. As crucial to the works as they are, the trees are part of a larger collective, almost totally subordinated to the needs of the forest, as well as of the painting. Only in Carr's late, flowing works does she manage fully to evoke the unified spirit of the woods at the same time as she gives individual character to each component of the forest, in paintings such as Swirl (no. 139) or A Rushing Sea of Undergrowth (no. 100). There, the many identities of the forest come together as a whole, without renouncing their individual selves by doing so; the central tree of Swirl leads naturally into the others, and plays an integral role in the compositional whole, but still exists first and foremost as a single tree. In relation to Carr's writing, the single narrating self of Klee Wyck gives way to the multiple, but essentially indistinguishable, voices of The Book of Small, which in turn leads to the autonomous individual voices that form the autobiographer's position in Growing Pains. The autobiographer is the central point of stability around which the book revolves, but the many voices of the book are not subsumed into that primary identity -- Small's descriptive uniqueness loses no validity for being one autobiographic mode among several co-existing modes. Still, in spite of this multivocity, Growing Pains goes on being considered as Carr's most conventional, and least interesting, autobiography.

Nancy Pagh is not the only writer to consider Growing Pains a "masculine" autobiography, though she does the most to rehabilitate its reputation as something other than simply conventional. Helen

Buss, for example, in her catalogue of Canadian women's autobiographies in English, refers disparagingly to it, claiming only that

> [i]t is theoretically instructive for the critic of women's autobiography to note the restrictions of tone, of persona, and of content that the public (and male) form of autobiography imposes on Carr, through her acceptance of its conventions. (40)

Naturally, the situation is not so simple as Buss makes it seem in her brief summary of an approach to Growing Pains. There is a unified "persona" at the heart of the book, in the sense that the autobiographer herself guides its movement, but the autobiographer accomplishes her goals through the introduction of many other subsidiary personae, all framed in the past tense -- thus making it clear that each separate voice is a version of the adult Carr writing her autobiography, not simply past selves that she has outgrown. There is no falsely unified self portrayed in the book, but a fully formed multiplicity of selves that combine in the person of the autobiographer. Leaving Barthes and "The Death of the Author" aside for a moment, it seems that Carr has here achieved autobiography.

And this is the point at which the image of the totem pole, from the title of this thesis, enters the consideration of Carr's autobiographic code. A totem pole is a single sculpture, in the sense that it is usually carved out of a single tree-trunk, but it is normally composed of several interlocking individual figures posed as if standing on top of one another. While a totem pole is only

complete with all its component figures intact, there is an almost infinite variety of totem poles available to be carved within any one tradition -- the totemic figures may be transferred between poles without any sense of loss or divorce. And so it is with the voices of Carr's autobiographies. Both Klee Wyck and The Book of Small belong to the body of works deserving of the appellation of "autobiography." Both fulfil all conventional obligations of the autobiographical act, the former being written in a falsely unified voice and the latter in at least two voices so interwoven as to be almost indistinguishable. These two earlier texts, in spite of their almost conventional narrative positions, are perceived by Helen Buss to be far superior to Growing Pains; Buss discusses Klee Wyck in terms of a "radical othering of self," and The Book of Small as revealing Carr's "increasingly mature writing style" (39), a style apparently comparable to that of such an established critical favourite as Margaret Laurence (40). A first reading of these two earlier texts does leave the reader with a perception similar to Buss's, but further examination reveals their hidden conventionality. In spite of Buss's obvious lack of respect, however, Growing Pains alone of Carr's books operates as a fully functional multiplicity of voices and selves tied to a single identity of "the autobiographer," without the problem of a falsely unified self at the heart of the actual text.

Pagh argues that "Carr does not solidify her experiences into one 'myth' in her autobiographies, . . . [but] shows us how she continues to reappraise aspects of her life" (78). Growing Pains, uniquely among Carr's autobiographies, strives to accumulate all those

aspects into a community of one, into a non-singular but individual identity. The only reason that the many diverse events recounted in Growing Pains are linked lies in their attachment to the extratextual signature of "the autobiographer"; the intentions of the writer, another very questionable object of inquiry, require that a given text be considered as an autobiography. The concept of the autobiography itself means that the text finds itself in a very special relationship with its reader, because it is alleged to be the story of a person, not just a character, and is thereby alleged to present a textual representation of a real person, living or dead, who can be encountered in his or her autobiography. In a very real sense, the conventional reading of autobiography revolves around a notion of bringing the writer to life on the page.

But what about Roland Barthes? More specifically, what about the whole concept of the author's unavoidable absence from the text? If there is no author to be referred to by the voices of Growing Pains, then they exist not in a Bakhtinian dialogic space, but in a chaotic one. Without a stable identity to anchor the different narrative positions, those positions scatter into the vacuum of total individuality. However, Philippe Lejeune anticipates an argument such as this, commenting that "In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing" ("Pact [bis]" 131-32). Or as Elizabeth Bruss says, "autobiography is an 'institutional' rather than a 'brute' fact" (5) -- it is accepted as a genre based on the author's presence within it, the reader fully aware that an author can never be fully represented by a text, let alone present within it.

The author cannot be present within a text, both by the definition of linguistic shifts -- the words of any text (barring copy errors) remain the same, but their meanings shift over time -- and by the simple gap between thought and word, as well as signified and signifier. However, the autobiography demands a leap of faith on the part of its reader that the text can represent the autobiographer, because otherwise its cultural significance, and reality, vanishes. I distinguish between "autobiographer" and "author" quite consciously here, because the author stands outside the text as a writing mind and body; the relationship is unidirectional, author creating text. In the case of the autobiographer, the text is reciprocally involved in the complicated creation and evolution of the character of the autobiographer; the relationship is bidirectional, text creating autobiographer at the same time as autobiographer creates text.

Is this a syntactic trick, linguistically evading the letter of Barthes' theories without addressing their spirit? Or is autobiography in reality a special case, one that requires modification of Barthes' notion of the author's absence? Katherine R. Goodman believes that

> Barthes' and Foucault's analyses dissolve the very interiority of the autobiographical subject into a pose or, at best, a role and nothing more. An author/autobiographer neither exists nor possesses a history outside the presence of the text. Every text necessarily participates in the prevailing discourse, the origins of which remain unidentified and unlocalized. (308)

Goodman, unlike many writers, is not content to accept Barthes' or Foucault's theorizing as necessarily valid just because it questions long-accepted humanistic doctrines in an engaging, irreverent fashion. Foucault's allegedly subversive criticism, Goodman argues, "yields a brand of positivism, collecting artifacts of civilization and arranging them in chronological order" (309) -- and not in any way altering the philosophic structures of positivism that led to the state of civilization that Foucault (not to mention Barthes) criticises. To put it bluntly, Barthes and Foucault "cannot account for originality and innovation. Whence arise new combinations of old discourses?" (309), Goodman asks.

As Goodman goes on to explain, "Feminists. . . know that it makes a great deal of difference who is speaking. . . . Prisoners in a detention center. . . 'know' that system in a way a guard could not" (308). Experience matters; because it shapes the person writing, it shapes the writing itself. If there is no author within the text, there certainly is one surrounding the text. As much as Foucault and Barthes insist on the absence of the author, their own works provide a window onto the two writing selves named Barthes and Foucault. Having denied Foucault's conclusions, Goodman returns to his basic principles of selfhood at the end of her paper, asserting that "we [must] be able to perceive what Foucault calls the 'unstable assemblages of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers' of the self and still assert the authenticity of experience" (319). Or to put it another way, we need to be able to understand the self as something other than a fully unified whole, and yet simultaneously acknowledge that experience

affects the entire individual -- however "the entire individual" is defined, considering it as "something other than a fully unified whole." The autobiographer, even more crucially than the author, must be linked in some definitive way with her text, because to separate her denies her one of her few chances to attain, and express, subjectivity.

Growing Pains, more than either Klee Wyck or The Book of Small, reveals the self of Carr as a multi-voiced assemblage of overlapping identities, Foucault's "heterogeneous layers." Whereas Klee Wyck's only challenges to autobiographic tradition are its uses of interlocking stories rather than a continuous narrative and of a rigourously limited scope of experience, and whereas The Book of Small utilizes a variety of voices but carefully blends them together to obscure the non-unified narrative position, Growing Pains quite openly shifts narrative postures in order more fully to portray the subject of the text -- the autobiographer, Emily Carr. It is inaccurate to claim that Carr's life is the subject of her autobiography, the prosaic reason being that her departures from factuality make it unreliable, and the more theoretical being that Carr's life is the past. But the autobiography is inescapably a present act -- it is up to the biography to attempt to recall the past. And if this thesis argues nothing else, it at least argues that autobiography is not biography, not even a biography written by the subject of the book. Growing Pains, in spite of its flaws, makes use of a variety of voices to reveal a quintessentially modern, non-unified self -- which is something a biography can barely explain, let alone reveal.

Notes

Chapter 1

[1] The example cited by most theorists is Rousseau's Confessions, which is situated by many writers at the beginning of modern autobiography, as distinct from the ancient model exemplified by Augustine's own Confessions. Lejeune cites Sartre's Les Mots and Michel Leiris' L'Age d'homme and La Règle du jeu as the only truly modern autobiographies (though they are more postmodern than modern), with the possible exception of Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes.

[2] The debate on Carr's use of photographs is far from clear, and far from conclusively argued. The best summary of it is the second appendix to Paula Blanchard's The Life of Emily Carr, but Blanchard herself believes that Carr did not paint from photos, so her summary is (naturally) written to convince, not just to summarize. A fact not mentioned by Blanchard is Carr's mention in "Notebook 1913" (a lecture on totems that Carr gave in Vancouver) of being photographed while painting at Hazelton by a native who owned a camera, and her comment that she had known other natives with cameras (36). It is conceivable that the photos referred to as hers, from which she may have painted, were taken while she was there, possibly while she was painting.

[3] All paintings will be cited by the numbers assigned them by Doris Shadbolt in The Art of Emily Carr.

[4] Some of the more notable writers who have examined Carr's departures from strict veracity are Maria Tippett in Emily Carr: A Biography, Paula Blanchard in The Life of Emily Carr, and Peter Sanger in "Finding D'Sonoqua's Child: Myth, Truth, and Lies in the Prose of Emily Carr." An excellent paper explaining the basic irrelevance of truth to autobiography, as well as a summary of Carr's untruths, is Timothy Dow Adams' "Painting Above Paint: Telling Li(v)es in Emily Carr's Literary Self-Portraits."

[5] In the case of an anti-generic work like Gertrude Stein's The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, according to Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, who consider Stein's book as Stein's own autobiography, the identity may be between the author and some other character -- but this is the case only in works that challenge the conventional definition of the genre in such a direct way.

Chapter 2

[1] Timothy Dow Adams is one writer who considers Klee Wyck "autobiographical rather than autobiography" (39); Tippett and Blanchard refuse to categorize it as anything but a collection of stories. But, obviously, a collection of stories is not an autobiography.

[2] Mallory is correct in noting the disjunction between this view and Carr's normally unreserved liking for natives, but it is not so negative a depiction as she considers it. Responsiveness, in a

general sense of relating to the world and to other individuals, is clearly positive, and while Carr praises native art for this sort of characteristic, she does here find it more in evidence in natives' dogs than in natives. However, domesticity is quite another matter. She herself never wanted to be a domestic person (which is why Paula Blanchard quite rightly titles her chapter on Carr's childhood "Cow Yard Child" [37–43]), and writes repeatedly in both Heart of a Peacock and Klee Wyck of the delight she takes in the relative wildness of native living.

Chapter 3

[1] The Book of Small is actually two books, "The Book of Small" and "A Little Town and a Little Girl," the narrative voices of which are quite different. In the former, the narrator's position is occupied alternately by young Emily herself and an older person; in the latter, there is the sense that Carr is attempting to write in what might be the voice of young Emily, not Small and not the adult. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be focusing on "The Book of Small" to the virtual exclusion of "A Little Town and a Little Girl." Essentially, "A Little Town and a Little Girl" is written from a single narrative position, while "The Book of Small" pretends to such a position without in any way being limited to it.

[2] The book's narrator is, in actuality, never "Small" as such; it is either the young Emily (whose family includes Lizzie and Alice rather than Bigger and Middle), or it is an older person who watches

the lives of Small, Middle, and Bigger. The possible exception to this rule is "White Currants," discussed later in this chapter.

[3] My thanks to Professor Gooch, who referred me to recipes for Brown Windsor Soup while I was attempting to relate "steamy, brown-windsory prayers" to some sort of cloth.

Chapter 4

[1] I do not claim that summing up the history of a life is the only purpose that an autobiography can fulfil, only that it is a common intention. Many works, especially traditionally non-canonical ones, follow other patterns -- such as Roy Pascal's reading of H.G. Wells' Experiment in Autobiography as "the lively sense of his own personality evolving" (58).

[2] This is not only a myth perpetrated by Carr herself; her own friends recall it (including Ira Dilworth in the Foreword to Klee Wyck). Older people who lived in James Bay at the time (such as my wife's maternal grandmother and her sister) recall seeing her wandering through with her menagerie of pets and a baby carriage -- she was not "a crazy old woman," but was considered so.

[3] I use "mystic" rather than "religious enthusiast" or some similar term because experiences such as this one did not always happen in churches for Carr, but near the sea, in forests, and in native villages; this example is from a church, but it is not unique to the setting of the church.

[4] Carr was, as her biographers have proved, nearly nineteen when she left for San Francisco, not "sixteen, almost" (15), as she claims in Growing Pains. See the rest of the paragraph regarding truth and autobiography.

[5] Maria Tippett considers that the "comparison with van Gogh, which was made frequently [at the time of Carr's painting], was apt. The short brush strokes and shimmering light that created a unity of movement in such mid-1930s oil-on-paper sketches as Stumps and Sky called to mind van Gogh's Provençal landscapes" (238).

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Carr, Emily. The Art of Emily Carr. Ed. Doris Shadbolt. 1979. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987.

---. The Book of Small. 1942. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. "Fresh Seeing." Fresh Seeing. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Co., 1972. 2-22.

---. Growing Pains: An Autobiography. 1946. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. The Heart of a Peacock. 1953. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. The House of All Sorts. 1944. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. Hundreds and Thousands. 1966. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. Klee Wyck. 1941. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.

---. "Notebook 1913," ms. Emily Carr Papers. MG 30, D 215, Volume 11. National Archives of Canada.

---. "The Something Plus in a Work of Art." Fresh Seeing. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Co., 1972. 27-38.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Timothy Dow. "'Painting Above Paint': Telling Li(v)es in Emily Carr's Literary Self-Portraits." Journal of Canadian Studies 27.2 (1992): 37-48.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." Contemporary Critical Theory. Ed. Dan Latimer. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

Blanchard, Paula. The Life of Emily Carr. Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987.

Brodzki, Bella and Celeste Schenck. Introduction. Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography. Eds. Brodzki and Schenck. Ithaca and London, 1988. 1-15.

Bruss, Elizabeth W. Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Buss, Helen M. Canadian Women's Autobiography in English: An Introductory Guide for Researchers and Teachers. The CRIAW Papers 24. Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1991.

Crean, Susan. "Emily Carr and Georgia O'Keeffe: Painting Women's Vision of Nature." Canadian Art 5.4 (1988): 17-18.

Denvir, Bernard. Post-Impressionism. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992.

Dilworth, Ira. Foreword. Klee Wyck. By Emily Carr. Toronto: Irwin, 1986. [i-ix].

---. Preface. The Heart of a Peacock. By Emily Carr. Toronto: Irwin, 1986. xi-xv.

Eakin, John Paul. Introduction. On Autobiography. By Philippe Lejeune. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans. Katherine Leary. Theory and History of Literature 52. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. vii-xxviii.

Elbaz, Robert. The Changing Nature of the Self: A Critical Study of the Autobiographic Discourse. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987.

Farrell, Alish. "Emily Carr's Vision of the Real." Queen's Quarterly 90 (1983): 746-55.

Goodman, Katherine R. "Elisabeth to Meta: Epistolary Autobiography and the Postulation of the Self." Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography. Eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca and London, 1988. 306-19.

Hendersen, Heather. The Victorian Self: Autobiography and Biblical Narrative. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Hubbard, R.H. The Development of Canadian Art. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1963.

Lejeune, Philippe. On Autobiography. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans. Katherine Leary. Theory and History of Literature 52. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. "The Autobiographical Pact," 3-30. "The Autobiographical Pact (bis)," 119-37. Epilogue, 232-40. "The Ironic Narrative of Childhood: Vallès," 53-69. "The Order of Narrative in Sartre's Les Mots," 70-107.

MacPherson, Jay. "Autobiography." Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Ed. Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965. 616-23.

Mallory, Catharine E. "Victorian and Canadian Worlds of Emily Carr: The Study of a Divided Imagination." M.A. thesis. Dalhousie University, 1979.

Murray, Joan. "The Passion of Emily Carr." Journal of Canadian Studies 25.3 (1990): 167-70.

Pagh, Nancy. "Passing Through the Jungle: Emily Carr and Theories of Women's Autobiography." Mosaic 25.4 (1992): 63-79.

Pascal, Roy. Design and Truth in Autobiography. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

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

Sanger, Peter. "Finding D'Sonoqua's Child: Myth, Truth, and Lies in the Prose of Emily Carr." Antigonish Review 70 (1987): 210-39.

Shadbolt, Doris. The Art of Emily Carr. 1979. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987.

Sommer, Doris. "'Not Just a Personal Story': Women's Testimonios and the Plural Self." Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography. Eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck. Ithaca and London, 1988. 107-130.

Tippett, Maria. Emily Carr: A Biography. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Walker, Doreen, ed. Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney, and Humphrey Toms. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990.

VITA

Surname: PICKARD Given Names: RICHARD WILLIAM

Place of Birth: NANAIMO, B.C. Date of Birth: OCTOBER 1, 1970

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1988 to 1993

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	University of Victoria	1992

Honours and Awards:

Spanish Government Book Prize	1992
University of Victoria Entrance Scholarship	1988

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of thesis: A TOTEM OF NARRATORS: The Autobiographical Voices of Emily Carr

Author [redacted]

RICHARD WILLIAM PICKARD

September 17, 1993