

KLEE WYCK

The Eye of the Other

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ENOUGH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT *Klee Wyck*, especially the sketches entitled "Sophie," "D'Sonoqua," and "Kitwancool," to valorize what some have called Emily Carr's feminist outlook. At the conclusion of "Kitwancool" the narrator stubbornly declares, "Perhaps it is because I am a woman that they were so good to me" (107), and in a journal entry in 1937 Carr writes, "I am . . . glad that I am showing these men that women can hold up their end. . . . I have decided to stop squirming, to throw any honour in with Canada and women" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 287). It is also because she is a woman who writes, as she must be read, in a way that affirms womanhood "as another, equally valid paradigm of human existence" (Schweichart 36) that Carr has been acclaimed by feminist critics such as Roxanne Rimstead and Catherine Sheldrick Ross. There is a real danger, however, of romanticizing Carr's attitude towards both the native peoples and women, of appropriating her text by means of insufficiently grounded notions of "the goddess," or unsubstantiated dreams of matriarchal power. If feminist criticism is to be taken seriously, it must also hew to what Annette Kolodny insists is "a principle of feminist criticism: a literary work cannot be understood apart from the social, historical, and cultural context within which it was written" (31). It needs, then, to be emphasized that Carr, while she frequently expressed her irritation at the arrogance and egotism of men, did not question the basic assumptions of patriarchy, and she often turned to male authority figures for validation in both her painting and her writing. Had she lived to see it, Carr would probably have been neither surprised nor offended by Chief Justice Allan McEachern's *Reasons for Judgement in Delgam Uukw et al v. The Queen* (March 8, 1991) in which he characterizes life in a native village as "nasty, brutish and short," and suggests that the Gitksan-Wet'Suwet'en (the Northwest people with whom Mrs. Douse is identified) have no legal claim to their lands. Like most of her contemporaries, Carr undoubtedly believed that native culture was doomed to extinction, and that the aboriginal peoples must either adapt to modern ways or die out entirely. In a public lecture which she gave in Vancouver in 1913, Carr spoke of "the move of the Songhees from Victoria Harbour and of one small

canvas of the former reserve that showed 'a phase of Indian life which has now passed into history.'" In a letter from the same period she refers to the totems as "'real art treasures of a passing race'" (Tippett 114).

Nonetheless, although she regards them as 'last peoples,' Carr draws the reader into the world of these first peoples, and she does so by means of techniques that are today singled out as characteristic of feminist writing. *Klee Wyck* resists what Christa Wolf calls the "blood-red thread" of narrative — "the narrative of the struggle and victory of the heroes, or their doom" (Kuhn 190). Carr calls this simply her "rebellion against mechanics" [*Hundreds and Thousands* 171]. In "Kitwancool," for example, the "hero" and his deeds are not identified until the very end of the story. In "Sophie," on the other hand, the whole 'story' is told in a few paragraphs at the outset, "By the time she was in her early fifties every child was dead and Sophie had cried her eyes dry. Then she took to drink" (23). End of story, but the beginning of Carr's empathetic study of Sophie. In style, too, Carr's writing is marked by what have been called "female metaphors": "Male metaphors intensify difference and collision, while female metaphors enhance sameness and collusion" (Friedman 93) ; or to put it another way, "men define themselves through individuation and separation," while women "define and experience themselves in terms of their affiliation and relationships with others" (Schweickart 38). What I am referring to as "female metaphors" in Carr are not the frequent similes such as the comparison of Sophie's twins to "potatoes baked in their jackets" (25) or the young pine trees at Cha-atl to "multitudes of little ladies in crinolines" (63), but rather those submerged metaphors of engulfment, absorption, assimilation in which the boundaries between inside and outside are nearly obliterated. The third encounter with D'Sonoqua, for example, occurs after a dark journey by land and sea: "Black pine-covered mountains jagged up on both sides of the inlet like teeth. . . . the edge of the boat lay level with the black slithering horror below. It was like being swallowed again and again by some terrible monster, but never going down" (37).

Closely linked to a certain feminist reading of *Klee Wyck*, and in fact inseparable from it, is the tendency to find homologies between women and nature, and to rewrite aboriginal culture in terms of newly constructed codes. In such readings, words like "wilderness," "primitive," "pantheist," "natural" (or, in Rimstead, "naturist"), and "innocent" proliferate. Unfortunately, they are frequently used in a way that lacks conceptual clarity. Carr was undoubtedly drawn to aboriginal culture because of her own strong love of nature and her belief that the Indians had a "special relationship" with it. "She thought that Indians imbued the forest with spiritual significance and drew virtues from it, believing themselves to be part of nature under one supernatural being" (Tippett 167). While this was, as Tippett adds, "both an oversimplification and an exaggeration" (167), Carr rightly sensed in aboriginal art and culture the presence of what Bateson calls a

"pattern that connects all living things" (8). Carr herself refers to it as "that connect-up that unifies all things" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 190).

But *Klee Wyck* is not the record of an encounter with an 'innocent' or 'primitive' people, nor do her journeys take Klee Wyck into the wilderness. Moreover, such readings can lead to what are mere reversals of the habitual ethical categories in which western civilization is perceived as "good" and aboriginal cultures as "bad" or inferior. The historically privileged master code of patriarchy or capitalism is then replaced with an equally undialectical one marked "feminism" or "pantheism." In fact, as Rimstead affirms in her quotation of Chief Luther Standing Bear, "Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness'" (39) : and, it must be added, only to ethnocentric Europeans could the complex, sophisticated, and varied social organizations of the aboriginal peoples of the Northwest appear uncivilized, primitive, or natural.

In fact, from the outset Carr is at pains to show the relationship between whites and "Indians" as a clash between two different cultures—two "integrated patterns of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depend upon man's [sic] capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations" (Merriam-Webster). The conflict is fully elaborated in the first scene of *Klee Wyck*. In Ucluelet there are three separate sites — the Mission House, the schoolhouse *cum* church, and the village. As in most Northwest Coast villages, everything is oriented to the sea, "pinched between sea and forest" (4), for the forest is a dangerous place. But the Mission House and the village are "a mile apart" (4) both physically and culturally. The Mission House stands "above hightide water," its windows "stuffed with black" (3). With extraordinary economy, Carr conveys the assumption of the exotic missionaries that culture stands above and apart from nature, and that the function of dwellings is to separate and protect people from nature and from human intruders. The "Greater Missionary" and the "Lesser Missionary" can be viewed as comic figures, hiking up their skirts as they make their way over the slug-infested trail between the mission and the school, the Greater Missionary blowing loud blasts on her cow horn to call the children. But comedy rapidly gives way to irony once the missionaries reach the school. In this "half-way" house (4) which is meant to mediate between mission and village, the "hand-picked" children are exposed to the doctrines of empire and the values of a literate, as opposed to an oral culture, just as the people were earlier exposed to the virulent diseases of the first European intruders.

Escaping to the village, Klee Wyck has her first encounter with a world profoundly different from her own, collective in organization, and imbued with an animistic spirit which assumes a close connection between nature and human society. Here "Houses and people were alike. Wind, rain, forest and sea had done the same things to both — both were soaked through and through with sunshine" (6). Here, too, she learns what can happen as a result of misunderstanding and

miscommunication. The village house is open to her ("Indians did not knock before entering" [6]), but her failure to understand that sketching the old people might be offensive or even threatening to them leads to her being ejected by the old man, who "thought the spirit of a person got caught in a picture of him, trapped there so that, after the person died, it had to stay in the picture" (8). In Klee Wyck's response to this explanation, Carr defines the role that her narrator will continue to play throughout *Klee Wyck*—the role of sensitive observer. Klee Wyck does not *identify* with aboriginal people, but she does empathize with them, and through her Carr is able to convey with subtlety and clarity the impasse which results when one group appropriates to itself the very concept of culture.

At the end of "Ucluelet" when Tanook, clad only in his shirt, enters the room and strides to the front, he is aggressively asserting his own customs in opposition to the Christian code of the Missionaries. Far from posing this as a "liberating gesture," as Rimstead suggests, Carr uses it to display the crux of the problem. In order to show respect for the Christian mores which are proper to the church, Tanook's wife removes her shawl and passes it back to him. In doing so, she violates the code of her own culture in which it "is considered more indecent for a woman to go shawl-less than for an Indian man to go bare-legged. The woman's heroic gesture had saved her husband's dignity before the Missionaries but had shamed her before her own people" (10). Tanook's wife is placed in an insoluble contradiction — what might be described as a cultural chiasmus. Only at the end of "Ucluelet," when Klee Wyck and the semi-nude "old man" converse without words in a "place belonging neither to sea nor to land" (10), a "nowhere place" claimed by neither culture, where sea and forest play a wordless game of see-saw with the "purr of the saw" (10) is communication possible. In this space before Babel, before the fall into language and cultural difference, a possible resolution is suggested, but as the final words of "Ucluelet" suggest, a precondition must be the recognition of the right of the native peoples to speak with authority in their own world.

To read "Ucluelet" in this way is by no means to devalue a feminist interpretation. On the contrary, by exploring the relationship between gender and genre, between the 'form of the content and the content of the form' (Jameson 242), a feminist perspective can help to locate the work in its social and historical context, and contribute to a dialectical analysis of the text. What follows will be an attempt at such a reading, taking full account of the multiple layers of perception that give *Klee Wyck* its enduring power.

KLEE WYCK" has been variously described as autobiography, documentary and as a series of unconnected stories or sketches. None of these descriptions is adequate. Only when the double vision of the text is read dialecti-

cally, its interweaving of the themes of cultural transformation and personal growth seen as interlocking strands in a closely woven fabric, can the generic discontinuities of the work be understood. "To think dialectically," writes Jameson, "is to invent a space from which to think . . . two identical yet antagonistic features together all at once" (*The Political Unconscious* 235). Moreover, it may also be the case that "The subject [the writer] inhabits one psychic space consciously, but another unconsciously. The division between those spaces permits the subject to enter into two discourses which are often in startling opposition to each other" (Silverman 51). Both the production and the reading of the text involve a process of translation in the sense used by Vance; he asks, "Isn't the colonization of the New World basically a form of translation?" — adding that "Through translation, one lived experience is translated into another" (Derrida 137-38). In *Klee Wyck* Carr is translating aboriginal culture into a language that can be understood by the colonizer. At the same time, she is translating her own search for integration into expressive form, seeking in the old Indian villages and their people a "life space" that can offer "a Utopian compensation for everything lost" in an "increasingly quantified world" (Jameson 237).

If the first of these villages, Ucluelet, is 'a mile apart' from the white settlement, Tanoo, Skedans, and Cumshewa are a century apart. These abandoned settlements are gradually vanishing, covered by the "Bursting growth" of the forest, "smothered now under a green tangle" (21, 18) :

Above the beach it was all luxuriant growth; the earth was so full of vitality that every seed which blew across her surface germinated and burst. The growing things jumbled themselves together into a dense thicket; so tensely earnest were things about growing in Skedans that everything linked with everything else, hurrying to grow to the limit of its own capacity." (17-18)

Still, in these silent and lonesome places the trace of Haida civilization unchanged by European contact remains. In Tanoo, Jimmie and Louisa speak in the Haida language — "pure Indian words" (9), not Chinook (the trade language which is the *lingua franca* of Ucluelet), and Louisa tells the story of her grandmother's pole — a flood story — albeit "in a loose sort of way as if she had half forgotten it" (13). Here, through Klee Wyck's 'fresh seeing,' Carr explores the aesthetic that informs both the art of the Northwest peoples and her own painting — an aesthetic defined by "*recognition*" and "*empathy*," and "responsive to the pattern which connects all living creatures" (Bateson 8). Through the poles of the Haida villages with their stylized, repetitive forms and their bilateral symmetry Klee Wyck penetrates to the heart of totemism, "the sense of parallelism between man's [sic] organization and that of the animals and plants" (Bateson 19). Here too, Carr displays the sensibility behind both her writing and her painting, what Bateson describes as "a sense of unity of biosphere and humanity which could bind

and reassure us all with an affirmation of beauty" (19), or in Carr's own words, "a recognition of the oneness of all things (*Hundreds and Thousands* 215).

In Carr's journal this apprehension is expressed in the language of a Wordsworthian and Christian pantheism. *Klee Wyck* is more subtle; through both form and imagery it affirms Bateson's claim that "it is the context that fixes meaning" (17). Thus in their originary settings, the old village sites of the Charlottes and the Nass, the undiminished expressive power of the totems is recognised by Klee Wyck:

Once they, too, had been forest trees, till the Indian mutilated and turned them into bare poles. Then he enriched the shorn things with carvings. He wanted some way of showing people things that were in his mind, things about the creatures and about himself and their relation to each other. He cut forms to fit the thoughts that the birds and animals and fish suggested to him, and to these he added something of himself. When they were all linked together they made very strong talk for the people. He grafted this new language on to the great cedar trunks and called diem totem poles and stuck them up in the villages with great ceremony. Then the cedar and the creatures and the man all talked together through the totem poles to the people. (51)

The aboriginal aesthetic is neither "naturist" (Rimstead) nor pantheist: it is animistic. Before the trees can be "enriched" by the thoughts of the carver, and thus made to speak of the relationship between human and natural worlds, they must be "mutilated," "shorn" ; a "new language" — the language of a particular culture — is then "grafted" on to the cedar trunk. The process is one of imaginative transformation, the poles deriving their strength not from nature, but from culture. Removed from their context, however, the poles can no longer speak:

Then the missionaries came and took the Indians away from their old villages and the totem poles and put them into new places where life was easier, where they bought things from a store instead of taking them from nature. . . . the poles were left standing in the old places. But now there was no one to listen to their talk any more. By and by they would rot and topple to the earth, unless white men came and carried them away to museums. There they would be labelled as exhibits, dumb before the crowds who gaped and laughed and said, "This is the distorted foolishness of an uncivilized people." And the poor poles could not talk back because the white man did not understand their language. (52-53)

At the time of her visit to Greenville, Carr "was witnessing a more advanced stage of the acculturation of the Indian she had noted in 1912. . . . The Indians were absorbing the white man's way of life, partly out of emulation, partly for survival" (Tippett 158). After "Greenville" there are only two moments in *Klee Wyck* in which the art of the Northwest is pictured in its own space, uncontaminated by modern influences. One is "Cha-atl," but here the predominant impression is of the terrific roar of the ocean: "It was as if you were coming into the jaws of something too big and awful even to have a name" (64). This name-

less something is nature in its most elemental form; it is the "crashing, pounding sea" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 200), beyond any human power to shape or control. In "Salt Water" Klee Wyck sets out to revisit the three abandoned villages, Skedans, Tanoo, and Cumshewa, but the trip is a failure. It is as if the elements, the sea especially, are determined to reclaim these sites for themselves, or to seal them away from human contact. They are "like something that had not quite happened" (21).

What does happen is the inevitable result of the collision between the archaic indigenous societies and a technically advanced culture insensitive to all values but its own; the greater part of *Klee Wyck* is devoted to showing the devastating effect of modernism on native life. At the end of "Greenville," Klee Wyck leaves the old man and his wife "leisurely busy": "I let the clock run down. Flapped the leaves of the calendar back, and shut the Greenville school house tight" (53). Here, as in the Indian cemetery, Carr shows her understanding that for the indigenous people, time is "marked by centuries"; hence, "IPOO." The modern world, in contrast, demands not tides and seasons, but clocks and calendars, and aboriginal culture cannot withstand the impact.

EMILY CARR WAS NO INTELLECTUAL. She turned her back on theosophy, even though it meant (or so she believed) the end of her close friendship with La wren Harris :

This morning's mail brought an envelope full of theosophical literature. Once it interested me, now it sends me into a rage of revolt. I burnt the whole thing. I thought they had something, . . . something I wanted. I tried to see things in their light, . . . [but] all the time, in the back of my soul, I was sore at their attitude to Christ, their jeering at some parts of the Bible. . . . I hurled H. P. Blavatsky across the room. . . . I wrote to those in the East, told them I'd gone back to the beliefs of childhood. . . . Now there is a great yawn — unbridgeable . . . ; the gap is filled with silence. (*Hundreds and Thousands* 208-09)

Carr's grasp of the culture and the feelings of aboriginal peoples was not analytical; it rose from her own lived experience. In her painting she translated that understanding into a form appropriate to her own time, pursuing in her work what Jameson styles the "vocation of the perceptual" (237). Jameson's definition of modernism is worth quoting at some length, for it sheds light not only on Carr's painting, but on her extraordinary insights into the richness and the pathos of figures like Sophie and Mrs. Green :

modernism can be seen . . . as a final and extremely specialized phase of that immense process of superstructural transformation whereby the inhabitants of older social formations are culturally and psychologically retrained for life in the market system.

Yet modernism can at one and the same time be read as a Utopian compensation for everything reification brings with it . . . the semi-autonomy of the fragmented senses, the new autonomy and intrinsic logic of their henceforth abstract objects such as color or pure sound ; . . . this new semi-autonomy [of the senses] . . . open[s] up a life space in which the opposite and the negation of such rationalizations can be, at least imaginatively, experienced. The increasing abstraction of visual art thus proves not only to express the abstraction of daily life and to presuppose fragmentation and reification ; it also constitutes a Utopian compensation for everything lost in the process of the development of capitalism — the place of quality in an increasingly quantified world, the place of the archaic, and of feeling amid the desiccation of the market system, the place of sheer color and intensity within the grayness of measurable extension and geometrical abstraction. (236-37)

Parts four and five of *Klee Wyck* — "Sophie" and "D'Sonoqua" — juxtapose two figures who can be taken as illustrations of Jameson's thesis, and of Carr's intuitive understanding that through her art she could find a symbolic resolution to the contradictions of modern life.

Sophie is one of the 'inhabitants of an older social formation' who is being 'retrained for life in the market system.' In accordance with her own customs, Sophie "always wore her great shawl," but "wore her shoes . . . if she remembered" (24). She is cheated by the coffin-maker, kept waiting by the priest, and exploited by the stone carver, who gives her a special price for grave stones because she buys so many of them. Unlike Mrs. Johnson, the "Indian widow of a white man" (29), Sophie cannot adjust to the customs of an alien culture. In her house, the floor is "chair, table and bed for the family," while the coal oil lamp 'sits' on the one chair (23). In the clean white hospital bed she is unhappy : " 'Bad bed . . . Move, move, all time shake'" (31). Her ideal is to be "nice," but in her conception of what "nice ladies" do, she is caught between two incompatible conventions. The Indian way accepts, even requires, the violent expression of deep emotion. The mourning for Sophie's twentieth child goes on for three days because "'Nobody sleep in Injun house till dead people go to cemet'ry'" (27) ; although she is "worn out," Sophie cannot rest because the "pliest" is not there to perform the burial. At the sight of Mrs. Dingle's "thriving white babies" (31), however, she refrains from touching the babies, the thing she most longs to do, because "'Nice ladies don't touch'" (31).

As has already been noted, Carr structures Sophie's story in a way that de-emphasizes the stereotype of the drunken Indian. Nonetheless, there is no denying that Sophie is a pathetic victim, unable to survive the 'immense process of transformation' that results from "the wholesale dissolution of traditional institutions and social relations . . . extending to the last vestiges of precapitalist social relations in the most seemingly insignificant backwaters of the globe" (Jameson 227).

Sophie was a lifetime friend of Emily Carr. As early as 1931, Carr had begun writing Sophie's story: "I have started to write 'The Nineteenth Tombstone' again"

{*Hundreds and Thousands* 27). This is undoubtedly the piece that was published ten years later in *Klee Wyck* under the title "Sophie." In June, 1933, Carr writes in her journal of "finding to my great joy that Sophie was in Brackendale" (where Carr was visiting) . . . "Sophie so much to me and I so much to Sophie" [*Hundreds and Thousands* 35). But Sophie epitomizes the "corrosive and tradition-annihilating effects of the spread of a money and market economy" (Jameson 79). In real life an alcoholic and perhaps a prostitute, Sophie offers a sad affirmation of the fact that traditional values cannot survive in the modern world. A dream recorded by Carr in her journal (Dec. 1930) illustrates how deeply Carr understood and identified with Sophie's dilemma: "Last night I dreamed of Sophie. She had a motor [car . . . or is it Carr?] and was quite a swell in a chiffon dress. I looked at her wondering but somehow I knew she was the same old Sophie underneath and I loved her still [*Hundreds and Thousands* 23). "Motor" was, of course, the nickname given to Carr by her fellow students at Westminster School of Art in London. Like Sophie, and like the Indian woman in "Ucluelet," Carr is faced with an impossible choice: should she behave like a 'nice lady,' or should she remain true to her own values. It is not possible to do both.

The placing of "D'Sonoqua" immediately after "Sophie" in the text creates a resonance between Sophie's impoverished world and the rich mythic past. Through D'Sonoqua, Carr is 'telling herself her own story' (Derrida 49). In this sense, but only in this sense, *Klee Wyck* can be considered autobiographical :

the biographical . . . cuts across both the fields in question: the body of the work and the body of the real subject. The biographical is thus the internal border of work and life, a border on which texts are engendered. The status of the text — if it has one — is such that it derives from neither one nor the other, from neither the inside nor the outside. (Gasche in Derrida 41)

It is something of an oversimplification to say that Sophie is on one side (the 'out' side) of the border, D'Sonoqua on the 'in' side; the border is not a dividing line, but a creative space in which the significance of these two figures — one historic, one mythic — can be explored in a way that illuminates both the clash of cultures and Carr's own inner conflicts. D'Sonoqua was for Carr a powerful personal image: "The story and the picture were special things experienced by me" [*Hundreds and Thousands* 177). In 1931 Carr made one of her first attempts to portray D'Sonoqua:

I worked all afternoon . . . on . . . "Strangled Growth" . . . It is D'Sonoqua on the housepost up in the burnt part, strangled round by undergrowth. . . . I want the ferocious, strangled lonesomeness of that place, creepy, nervy, forsaken, dank, dirty, dilapidated, the rank smell of nettles and rotting wood, the lush green of the rank sea grass and overgrown bushes, and the great dense forest behind full of unseen things and great silence, and on the sea the sun beating down, and on the sand, everywhere, circling me, that army of cats, purring and rubbing, following my

every footstep. That was some place! There was a power behind it all, and stark reality. [*Hundreds and Thousands* 26)

In *Klee Wyck* Carr conveys both the power and the import of D'Sonoqua in words.

KLEE WYCK'S FIRST ENCOUNTER with D'Sonoqua emphasizes the unapproachable *otherness* of the towering wooden image — fierce, terrifying, inhuman. This D'Sonoqua is emblematic of the aphanasis of aboriginal culture; she is seen "gradually paling . . . back into the forest. . . as if she belonged there, and the mist was carrying her home" (33). The second image expresses "power, weight, domination, rather than ferocity" (35). She is, also, an expression of native *ressentiment* at the white's appropriation of their culture:

I saw Indian Tom on the beach and went to him.
"Who is she?"

. . . Resentment showed in his face . . . — resentment that white folks should pry into matters wholly Indian.

This was D'Sonoqua, and she was a supernatural being, who belonged to these Indians. (35-36)

It is only with the third encounter (ironically with a figure which Carr misidentified as D'Sonoqua, but which was actually the figure of a male chief [Rimstead 50]) that D'Sonoqua becomes a "singing spirit," "neither wooden nor stationary" but "graciously feminine" (39-40), the very symbol of the living mother.

In this final image of D'Sonoqua the impossibility of combining power, authority, womanliness, and "Indianness" (which in Carr means unity with nature, the "connect-up that unifies all things" [*Hundreds and Thousands* 190]) is overcome, and D'Sonoqua emerges as a figure of psychic wholeness, of at-home-ness in the world. She stands, in fact, for the end of alienation, "that unity of outside and inside which Utopia will establish in all the dimensions of existence" (Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 143).

Obviously this experience of plenitude can be achieved only symbolically, at the level of psychological affect. The contradictions of modern life are not so easily resolved in everyday life. Nonetheless, in D'Sonoqua, not *Klee Wyck*, Carr might be said to have found her proper name:

Let's suppose I have a secret proper name that has nothing to do with my public proper name or with what anyone may know about me. Suppose also that from time to time some other may call me by this secret proper name, either by uttering certain words or syllables or by making certain gestures or signs . . . not necessarily on the order of language in the phonic sense, . . . but on the order of a gesture, a physical association, *a sense of some sort*, a taste, a smell. . . . This, then, could be the secret name. (Derrida 106, emphasis added)

Lest this should seem to invest too much significance in D'Sonoqua, it is clear from Carr's journal that D'Sonoqua represented something very special to her. In April 1933 she writes, "I think perhaps it's this way in art. The spirit of the thing calls to your soul. First it hails it in passing and your soul pauses and shouts back, 'Coming' " (113). While working on an early version of "D'Sonoqua," Carr refers to "The spirit of D'Sonoqua over it all and what she did to me" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 155), and later she laments that although "the story and the picture were special things experienced by me ... I don't know anybody I can talk it out with. Perhaps I could have once with Lawren, but I am not sure he would have understood, and now that intimacy of our life work is all gone too" (177). Given Carr's reticence even in her journal about her most intimate experiences, these entries seem to confirm the special importance of D'Sonoqua in Carr's artistic life. It is certainly true that after 1930 Carr gradually relinquished her romantic notion of Indian culture, and that she turned more and more to the forest, finding in the "heightened and autonomous language of color" a compensation for the reification and fragmentation of modern life (Jameson, 237). In 1930, after a final visit to the "cat village,"

She returned to her sketches of Indian totem poles and worked several into canvases. But the forest dominated; it was omnipotent. In *Strangled by Growth*, a Koskimo pole — representing D'Sonoqua, the Wild Woman of the Woods — is smothered by twisted ribbons of green and yellow foliage. Up until 1929 her totem poles had always dominated the underbrush and the trees; now the converse was often true.

(Tippett 179)

At Goldstream Flats she sat in the woods, "staring, staring, staring — half lost, learning a new language, or rather the same language in a different dialect" (*Growing Pains* 238). To put this another way, Carr translated her experience of aboriginal culture, in which she saw an affirmation of beauty and a sense of the "connect-up" of things, into a direct experience of nature.

It should also, of course, be reiterated that while *Klee Wyck* may be autobiographical, it is not autobiography :

Though Emily attempted to be as true to places and people as she could, and did not choose to write about anything that was not drawn from her own experience, her stories are not accurate accounts of her past. They are a mere reflection, altered and coloured by literary instinct. (Tippett 249)

It does not need to be added that Carr's writing as well as her painting is equally coloured by what Benveniste terms "unconscious motivation" :

Beyond the innate symbolism of language [the reader] will perceive a specific symbolism which will be formed, without the subject [the writer] being aware of it, as much from what is omitted as from what is stated. And within the history . . . the analyst will provoke the emergence of another history, which will explain the motivation. He [sic] will thus take the discourse as the translation of another

"language" which has its own rules, symbols, and "syntax," and which goes back to the deepest structures of the psyche, (in Silverman 507)

With the exception of "Greenville," "Salt Water," and "Kitwancool," the sketches that follow "D'Sonoqua" are very short. Each one foregrounds a detail from the larger picture, showing the effect of cultural disintegration on individual lives. Their very brevity calls attention to what Levi-Strauss in his discussion of mythical thought calls a "limiting situation":

When a mythical schema is transmitted from one population to another, and there exist differences of language, social organization, or way of life that make the myth difficult to communicate, it begins to become impoverished and confused. But one can find a limiting situation in which, instead of being finally obliterated by losing all of its outlines, the myth is inverted and regains part of its precision. Similar inversions occur in optics. An image can be seen in full detail when observed through any adequately large aperture. But as the aperture is narrowed, the image becomes blurred and difficult to see. When, however, the aperture is further reduced to a pinpoint, that is to say, when *communication* is about to vanish, the image is inverted and becomes clear again. (184)

The "limiting situation" which informs the fragmented, non-linear snapshots of *Klee Wyck* is the historical conjuncture of two entirely different modes of life. In a few sharp images, Carr fixes the "transitional moment," showing "an organic social order in the process of penetration and subversion, reorganization and naturalization by nascent capitalism, yet still, for another long moment, coexisting with the latter" (Jameson 148). For the most part these scenes focus on individuals, picturing them as isolated figures imperfectly adapted to a commodified market economy, and even going so far as to single out particular *senses* in a complete negation of the organic and collective mode of aboriginal society. In "Juice," for example, the sensation of taste is highlighted; in "The Stare" it is sight, and in "The Blouse," touch. In "Chaatl," at first hearing is drowned out by the "awful boom, boom" — the drumlike sound — of the ocean (64), but in the end "the roar got fainter and fainter and the silence stronger. . . . the silence had swallowed up the roar" (66).

"Sailing to Yan" highlights the old values, but "Nobody lived in Yan. Yan's people had moved to the newer village of Masset, where there was a store, an Indian agent and a church" (60), and as *Klee Wyck* works on her painting, the village is gradually blotted out by a creeping mist, "as if it were suddenly aware that you had been allowed to see too much" (61). "Sleep" describes an aboriginal family still whole and secure, entirely at home in the natural world. These are Salish people of the Songhees Reserve which in Carr's childhood housed 2,000 natives who lived side-by-side with the 3,000 non-native citizens of Victoria. In 1835^{trie} Salish numbered over 12,000; by 1915 that population was reduced by two-thirds, and the Songhees were "removed" from Victoria Harbour, as were the

Kitsilano from the shores of Burrard Inlet (Tippett 114). The Haida were devastated, their numbers reduced from roughly 6,000 to 600, as were the Bella Coola people. The Kwakiutl fared little better. Tommy and Jenny Two-Bits are pathetic survivors of the population collapse that hastened the effects of cultural imperialism, stripping the natives of their possessions as well as their traditions. Mary in "The Blouse" covets Klee Wyck's blouse as an addition to "the few hoarded trifles of her strong days," for "Mary had not many things now but she had been important once" (42). In "Juice" an elderly Indian responds to an act of simple kindness — the gift of a partly eaten pear — in a way wholly incommensurate with the action, a pathetic indication of the rarity of such gestures. Klee Wyck comments ironically, "I ... decided that honour for conspicuous bravery was something very easily won" (72).

In all these short pieces the compressed form combines with the privileging of individual senses to emphasize the oppressive and impoverished reality of native people who must attempt to find a niche among the "broken data and reified fragments of a quantified world." In "Salt Water," "the senses become foregrounded as a theme in their own right, as content rather than as form" (Jameson 239). In the opening paragraphs of "Salt Water," sensations are subdued, distinctions nearly obliterated. The text repeatedly refers to the *absence* of sensation, the blurring of the boundaries between external and internal: "There was neither horizon, cloud, nor sound; of that pink, spread silence even I had become part, belonging as much to sky as to earth, as much to sleeping as to waking" (78). The "great round 'O' on the glassy water" contains a soundless echo of the "terrible OO-00-oo-oeo" of D'Sonoqua — an unspoken reminder of the sea's power to annul all human feeling. Within an hour, the boat is "dipping into green valleys, and tearing up erupting hills. ... It seemed as if my veins were filled with sea water rather than blood, and that my head was full of emptiness" (79). At Skedans Bay the land has been bitten and scarred as if by some terrible monster, and the silence is "pinched" out of the village by the "bedlam of waves pounding on the shores" (80). The contest between the sea and the boat that follows — a contest in which "The long dogged pull of the oars challenged death inch by inch, wave by wave" (81) — is punctuated by "screams," "shrieks," "screeches," and "sobs," as if language itself had lost its signifying power.

After the rescue, when Klee Wyck has been "seized like a bale of goods and hurled into the boat," she lies on the deck "among the turmoil with everything rattling and smashing around and in my head no more sense than a jelly fish" (83-84). In the scenes which follow, the bedlam of the sea gives place to a different sort of bedlam: "It was nearly noon when I awoke. I could not place myself underneath the hat. The cabin was bedlam" (87). The roar of the storm has ceased. Now there is "No cloud, no sound, save only the deep thunderous snores coming from the cabin" (88). In this realm of fish boat and packer, human

communication is still minimal. When Klee Wyck is finally stuffed under the hatch to sleep, she is menaced on one side by the deceptively seductive sea, (the engulfing power of undifferentiated nature) which she feels "kissing, kissing the boat" and on the other by the "mechanics of the boat" (91) (emblematic of the "cruel hardness of the machine . . . as if man had ceased to be human, all his flesh and blood and feelings gone" [*Hundreds and Thousands* 231]) which threaten to become part of her.

Sensation returns with a vengeance when she is set down at the Cannery, but it is blind sensation, full of "Breaths cold and deathly . . . from the inky velvet under the wharf," "mud sucking, . . . the click of mussels and barnacles, the hiss and squirt of clams" (92). The only human sound is the sneezing of her fellow passenger, "a bad-tempered Englishman with a cold in his head" (90). From the landing Klee Wyck climbs the perpendicular fish ladder in "a vague black ascent into . . . nothingness" (92) : "Empty nothingness, behind, around; hanging in the void, clinging to slipperiness, was horrible — horrible beyond words! . . ." (93). This ascent into nothingness leaves her alone in the dark, "T-squared against wharf and shed" (93). The unusual verb suggests an aporia — an undefined, or perhaps, undefinable, space between two parallel and equally dehumanizing lines of experience: on the one hand there is raw nature, on the other a reified and fragmented mechanized culture. Throughout her life Carr strove in her art to open up a human space between these two — a space in which beauty and feeling could be "at least imaginatively experienced" (Jameson 237). That struggle can be read as a sub-text of "Salt Water."

In "Greenville" and "Kitwancool" Klee Wyck is once more simply an observer, but now she herself is the marginalized outsider — the Other — and at first she is merely tolerated in her role as recorder of a rapidly disappearing culture. Its eventual disappearance is presaged by the fact that even though the most powerful women in *Klee Wyck*, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Douse, cling "vigorously to the old Indian ways" (74), their children either do not survive, or they adapt, albeit sometimes reluctantly, to the market system. Mrs. Green's "triples" which, had they lived, "could have rocked the Queen Charlotte Islands" (77) "had determined never to open their eyes" (76). Mrs. Douse is a powerful matriarchal figure who reverses the established norms for relationships between white and Indian people, but even she is sufficiently removed from the old cultural assumptions that she wants to have paintings of the "two best poles in the village" (107) — her own poles. Mrs. Douse still speaks with authority, but like the totems, her power is gradually being eroded: "'The young people do not value the poles as the old ones did. By and by there will be no more poles,'" says Klee Wyck. "'I want to make pictures of them, so that our young people as well as the white people will see how fine your totem pole *used to be*'" (101 emphasis added). In Kitwancool, "The Douses were glad for the children to have the big house and be modern"

(104). Guns, oats, lumber, coal oil, the unappetising jam tin all take their place beside "soperlallie" and wild strawberries in the new village. The old village is "quite dead" (100), the shaman's grave neglected.

In "Canoe" the Indians gradually fade from sight. Klee Wyck's travelling companions are "silhouetted on the landing for one moment" while silver passes from her hand to theirs. Then "One solitary speck and a huddle of specks moved across the beach, crossed the edge of visibility and plunged into immense night." The proud, wolf-headed cedar canoe "Drifted away from the moonlit landing, till, at the end of her rope, she lay an empty thing, floating among the shadows of an inverted forest" (111).

CARR WAS, HAPPILY, mistaken about the disappearance of aboriginal culture. She would have been astonished and gladdened at the resurgence of First Nations art and culture that is taking place throughout B.C., and indeed in the whole of North America today. However, Carr cannot be dismissed as a simple woman who patronized her Indian friends without really understanding their situation. *Klee Wyck* undoubtedly raises questions about the appropriation of the experience of a marginalized people. What sets it apart from works that presume to speak for or about aboriginal people is that Carr is speaking as much for herself as for them, and she does not pretend to objectivity or detachment. She responds as an artist and as a woman to the women who are the controlling figures in *Klee Wyck* — Sophie, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Douse, and above all the singing spirit, D'Sonoqua; through them she is able to get in touch with her own creative spirit, to discover her secret name. In the character of Klee Wyck in her canvas trousers and mosquito netting, clutching her ridiculous griffon dog, Carr creates a comic double of herself, and through her she confronts the contradictions in the lives of the aboriginal people of B.C. and in her own life. A seeker who ventured deeply into the forest, and who was aware that she had sometimes "been allowed to see too much" (61), Carr returned bearing a message of disintegration and loss. Like Gregory Bateson, she lamented the loss of the sense of universal connectedness in the modern world :

We have lost the core of Christianity. We have lost Shiva, the dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction, but in whole is beauty. . . . We have lost totemism, the sense of parallelism between man's [sic] organization and that of the animals and plants. (Bateson 19)

He goes on to observe, however, that

there have been, and still are, in the world many different and even contrasting epistemologies which have also stressed the notion that ultimate unity is *aesthetic*.

The uniformity of these views gives hope that perhaps the great authority of quantitative science may be insufficient to deny an ultimate unifying beauty. (19)

In Bateson's definition, *aesthetic* means "responsive to *the pattern which connects*" (9), a definition which was surely shared by Emily Carr. In her painting Carr strove to capture "not the accidentals of individual surface," but "the universals of basic form, the factor that governs the relationship of part to part, part to whole and of the whole subject to the universal environment of which it forms a part" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 25). It is the genius of Emily Carr that she was able to assimilate the aboriginal aesthetic of ecological awareness and to reclaim it in a form accessible to the modern consciousness. In this sense her painting can be properly described as Utopian — as a message of hope. Readers who look below the simple surface of the text will discover that "the pattern that connects all living things" is also to be found in *Klee Wyck*.

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